

9.13.2015 Trinity 15 "I am crucified with Christ"

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"Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart. be always acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength and my redeemer." (Psalm 19:14)

English is the only language I know. The words that make up my vocabulary have been compiled over a lifetime of listening, reading, and speaking this language on a daily basis. Today, even with 45 years of experience, there are times some of these words can still be confusing.

Especially those that are pronounced - and even spelled exactly the same - but have more than one meaning. Now, before we focus our attention on today's second lesson and the meaning of a very powerful word; here are a few examples that fall on the lighter side. Imagine reading the Mail Tribune and coming across these headlines:

Woman kicked by horse upgraded to stable.

Man who fell into upholstery machine is fully recovered.

Homeowner who forgot to pay exorcist gets repossessed.

You see what I'm saying... Most common content words in our language don't have a single meaning, but instead derive a number of related meanings depending on how they are used in a sentence. While this must be difficult and often frustrating for a person trying to learn English as

a second language, for those of us who grew up with these words it may at times be a bit confusing – but more often than not – it’s just funny. That is, if you get the joke – if you recognize an alternative meaning.

For example, if I say to you that a woman kicked by a horse was upgraded to stable – or a man who fell into an upholstery machine is fully recovered; it’s only funny if you have this mental picture of a woman being transported to a stable or a man fully recovered in perhaps... a striped blend of cotton and polyester. If you overlook the second meaning, the word has lost the power to transform the conversation. If you only recognize one definition, that word will always move the conversation in the same direction. If, however, you know another way to define that word – the dialogue can take a completely different course. The conversation is transformed.

Listen to the words of St. Paul, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.”
(Galatians 2:20)

As we consider these words this morning, let us pray this conversation is transformed – that our lives may be transformed by a greater understanding of every word of God. Paul said, “I am crucified with Christ.” When we speak about the crucifixion of our Savior, often we also

refer to the events leading to the crucifixion – His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, The Last Supper, the agony He suffered in the garden of Gethsemane, His betrayal and arrest, the trial, the mocking, the scourging, the crown of thorns, the Crucifixion. When we speak of all these things we are speaking of His Passion – The Passion of the Christ.

Two weeks ago we used the word passion during the Litany as we prayed, “By thine Agony and Bloody Sweat by thy Cross and Passion...” St. Luke also uses the word passion. In the Book of Acts - referring to Jesus - he says (Acts 1:3), “To whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs...” Study the word a little further and you will discover the Greek and Latin word for passion are both defined as suffering. I don't remember ever thinking of the passion of our Savior in any way other than His suffering and crucifixion. In the past my thoughts have always moved in a single direction, but no more. Ask me today, and our conversation will be different – even transformed, because I have come to the understanding that even in this context (the context of the Cross) there is more than one way to define passion.

You see, we don't normally equate the word passion with suffering – to most of us this word is defined as intense desire. If you look around this room you will find people that are interested in music, writing, art, sports, the

outdoors, and all types of hobbies or occupations; but there is no guarantee that you will find someone with real passion for any of these things. The passion that leaves a person barely able to control their emotions... The passion that compels a person to set aside everything – in order to devote themselves fully to one thing...

The question is: Should we define our Savior's passion that way? Can we say the passion of the Christ refers not only to the pain and suffering, the thorns and nails; but also to a desire for such punishment and death? If you've seen the movie *The Passion of the Christ* can you see it re-named *The Desire of the Christ*? The world would say no... (1 Corinthians 1:18) "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness..." This could be no man's desire – and for the Son of God to endure such humiliation and be killed is to them "foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God." The unimaginable truth is this: It was the passion of the Christ, His intense desire, to suffer and die for the sin of the world (1 John 3:5, John 3:16); and as is so often true when we speak of real passion, it was apparent at a very young age.

In the second chapter of the Gospel according to Luke (2:39-52) we read about a 12 year old Jesus at the Temple in Jerusalem. (Luke 2:41) "His parents went to Jerusalem every year at the Feast of the Passover." This

year, as they returned home, they realized the boy Jesus wasn't with the group of people travelling back to Nazareth. When they returned to look for Him the Bible tells us that (Luke 2:46-47) "... after three days they found Him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard Him were astonished at His understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? knew ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"

I don't know what you were doing when you were twelve, but this passage shows us that Jesus is already feeling an intense desire, a necessity, a passion to do the Father's will. Jesus said, "He must be about His Father's business!" There are at least ten other times Luke uses the same word to describe Jesus' passion to do the will of the Father. Luke tells us that Jesus said (4:43), "I must preach the kingdom of God..." (9:22) "The Son of man must suffer many things..." (24:7) "The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again."

It was Jesus that said these things "must" happen, and even at the age of twelve He was at the Temple – the very

center of every aspect of Jewish life – and was “astonishing” the most learned men in Jerusalem with His understanding and answers. He knew the Scriptures. He knew how many things the promised Messiah would suffer – but still He says “I must!” He knew the end, yet with great passion He sets everything else aside so that He may faithfully do the will of God.

Years later, at the beginning of His ministry, Jesus was led into the wilderness by the Holy Spirit to be tempted by the enemy. After Jesus had fasted “40 days and 40 nights” – Satan came to Him with three temptations. The Gospel of Matthew records the third and final temptation this way (Matthew 4:8-10), “Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto Him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.”

So, let’s be honest, every single day we are all tempted, and with so much less than “all the kingdoms of the world”; but when was the last time we followed the example of Jesus and met temptation His way – with such great passion. “Go Satan!” “For it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve.” The Bible tells us (1 Peter 5:8) “Be sober, be vigilant; because

your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” That day, it was the aim of Satan to bring Jesus to sin against God, to rebel against His perfect will and put an end to God’s plan of Salvation. Today, he prowls around hoping to lure us into sin – to bind up the Church, the very hands and feet of Jesus; but we see in this fully human example of Jesus that our enemy can be resisted. “Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.” (James 4:7) When he attempts to keep us sitting in our pews, we must resist the devil and stand up for Jesus. When he lures us into serving ourselves, we must resist the devil and step outside our own little world to love and serve our neighbor. When he tries to prevent us from advancing the kingdom of God, we must resist the devil and stand shoulder to shoulder with Christians throughout the world and declare: This is the Church Jesus Christ built “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18)

So, whether we look at Jesus as a 12 year old boy in the Temple, as a man at the beginning of His public ministry, or our Lord crowned with thorns hanging on a Cross; every time we see Him we see great passion. This helps us to understand the Passion of the Christ can be defined not only as His suffering and death, but also as His intense desire to suffer and die for the sin of the world! When we recognize both ways to define this word our lives

will be transformed, because to recognize both definitions is to understand: This is personal! To be passionate about something or someone is to be willing to set aside everything else to devote ourselves fully to this one thing; and when we speak of Jesus' death on the Cross that one thing He is fully devoted to is you – it's me. While it is true that "God so loved the world..." as we come to a greater understanding of every word of God, we will echo the words of St. Paul, and say, "... I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me."

"To the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever. Amen." (Jude 1:25)