



# Mixology and Theology

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## Week Sixteen: Suffering Fools and Theology of the Cross

### Mixology: Suffering Fools

This bourbon and gin drink from New York restaurant WD~50 was created by Kevin Denton and is inspired by the Suffering Bastard, a classic cocktail developed during in Cairo during WWII.

#### **Suffering Fools Cocktail**

1 oz bourbon  
1 oz gin  
1 oz lime juice  
1 oz ginger juice  
1/2 oz honey  
cucumber slice for garnish

1. Combine bourbon, gin, juices, honey, and 3 oz water in a cocktail shaker filled with ice. Shake vigorously.
2. Strain into a Collins glass filled with ice.
3. Garnish with cucumber slice.

#### **Sufering Fools Mocktail**

6 oz ginger ale  
1 oz lime juice  
1/2 oz honey  
rosemary sprig  
cucumber slice for garnish

1. Combine lime juice and honey in bottom of tall glass. Stir until honey is dissolved. Add a little water if needed.
2. Add rosemary sprig to glass. Pour ginger ale over rosemary. Stir with rosemary sprig to mix lime/honey with ginger ale.
3. Add ice. Garnish with cucumber.

# Theology: Theology of the Cross

## Introduction

Any discussion of a theology of the cross needs to begin with what it isn't. Because of the long history of Christian atonement theories about the cross, some of which are helpful and some not, people often hear "theology of the cross" as an exploration of atonement theory (substitution, satisfaction, debt payment, victory over evil). This is not what we mean here — it certainly isn't what Martin Luther meant when he first used the phrase.

So begin with a brief definition: A theology of the cross is an interpretation of who God is for humanity as God has revealed God's self in the cross of Jesus. There's a lot to explore there, but first let's consider important biblical texts that inform a theology of the cross.

## Biblical Texts

### Psalm 22:1-11

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? <sup>2</sup> O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer; and by night, but find no rest. <sup>3</sup> Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. <sup>4</sup> In you our ancestors trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. <sup>5</sup> To you they cried, and were saved; in you they trusted, and were not put to shame. <sup>6</sup> But I am a worm, and not human; scorned by others, and despised by the people. <sup>7</sup> All who see me mock at me; they make mouths at me, they shake their heads; <sup>8</sup> "Commit your cause to the LORD; let him deliver-- let him rescue the one in whom he delights!" <sup>9</sup> Yet it was you who took me from the womb; you kept me safe on my mother's breast. <sup>10</sup> On you I was cast from my birth, and since my mother bore me you have been my God. <sup>11</sup> Do not be far from me, for trouble is near and there is no one to help.

### Daniel 3:21

<sup>21</sup> So the men were bound, still wearing their tunics, their trousers, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>22</sup> Because the king's command was urgent and the furnace was so overheated, the raging flames killed the men who lifted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. <sup>23</sup> But the three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell down, bound, into the furnace of blazing fire. <sup>24</sup> Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up quickly. He said to his counselors, "Was it not three men that we threw bound into the fire?" They answered the king, "True, O king." <sup>25</sup> He replied, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the middle of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the fourth has the appearance of a god." <sup>26</sup> Nebuchadnezzar then approached the door of the furnace of blazing fire and said, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out! Come here!" So Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. <sup>27</sup> And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men; the hair of their heads was not singed, their tunics were not harmed, and not even the smell of fire came from them. <sup>28</sup> Nebuchadnezzar said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants who trusted in him. They disobeyed the king's command and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God.

### Mark 8:29-35

<sup>29</sup> He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." <sup>30</sup> And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him. <sup>31</sup> Then he began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. <sup>32</sup> He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup> But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things." <sup>34</sup> He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. <sup>35</sup> For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.

### 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

<sup>18</sup> For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." <sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

### Philippians 2:5-11

<sup>5</sup> Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, <sup>8</sup> he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. <sup>9</sup> Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, <sup>10</sup> so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, <sup>11</sup> and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### **Martin Luther's Theology of the Cross and Theology of Glory**

Shortly after Luther posted his 95 *Theses* attacking the church's use of power and domination, Luther defended his teachings at a meeting in the Augustinian order in Heidelberg in April, 1518. He wrote the *Heidelberg Disputation* to present his defense in 28 theses. Within this theological defense, he spoke for the first time of his theology of the cross, and does so by contrasting with the theology he saw as predominant in the church, a theology of glory.

18. It is certain that man must utterly despair of his own ability before he is prepared to receive the grace of Christ.

19. That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the invisible things of God as though they were clearly perceptible in those things which have actually happened [Rom. 1.20].

20. He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

21. A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the things what it actually is.

Luther challenged the whole tradition of theology that began with presuming to know who God is prior to God's own self-revelation in Christ. Theology that begins with God's presumed power and might inevitably tends toward a theology of glory. Theology that begins by knowing God as revealed in the cross of Christ is a theology of the cross.

### **Theology of Glory**

- Theology of Glory is Triumphalism
  - A worldview that presents itself as a full and complete account of reality, leaving little if any room for doubt and debate, expecting adherent's unflinching belief and loyalty
    - Marxism, capitalism, nationalism, militarism
    - Christendom, fundamentalism (of any religion)
    - Winning, power, defeating all enemies, holding all truth, certitude
    - Oppression and persecution of people and truth that don't fit (and threaten) the worldview
- History of Christendom is about seeking power, absolute truth, oppressing the "enemy," converting or killing the unbeliever
  - Religious triumphalism is perhaps the most dangerous because of its claim of absolute truth connected to God
    - Mixing nationalism with religious triumphalism is most often a recipe for disaster, oppression, war making, elimination of the "enemy"
- Theology of Glory sees God revealed in the great, powerful, impressive, successful things of the world
  - They're great, and God is great, so God must be in there!
  - Usually emphasizes blessing over suffering, winning over losing, growing over shrinking, fighting for the truth instead of witnessing to the truth at great cost
  - Quickly becomes idolatry of belief, or person, or nation, or self

### **Theology of the Cross**

- Rejects any human attempt to have all the truth
- Sees God hidden in the reality of this world's suffering and struggle
- God in the cross of Christ is where God comes to encounter and join us in the reality of human life
- Able to live with tension, incompleteness, reality of suffering and death, lack of control over the way things are, doubt

### ***The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World* by Douglas John Hall (2003)**

- “Because for Luther human existence is a frail and uncertain business, divinity for him is not first of all sovereign omnipotence (as it was for Calvin) but astonishing compassion.” (Hall, p. 22)
- Compassion = to suffer with
- God is knowing primarily as the one who suffers with and for his creation because God is completely committed to it and to bringing it to fulfillment
- The cross is always the starting point, not the ending point, for understanding and knowing God
- The cross, in this way of thinking, is not seen as punishment or debt payment (substitutionary atonement), but a divine choosing out of love to suffer with humanity in order to bring it to God (see Hall p. 24)

### **Theology of the Cross and Being Human**

- Triumphalism is rooted in a deep fear and anxiety about the reality of the human condition
  - We are small
  - We necessarily suffer
  - We fall short of being truly human
  - We all die
  - We do not possess the truth
  - We do not control God
- Theology of the Cross embraces the very reality of being human and sees God entering it, justifying it, and redeeming it. God’s full embrace of human reality opens up our own embrace of our humanity.

### **A Radically Incarnational Theology**

God’s deep compassion for humanity comes to its most profound expression in Christian theology in the incarnation — God “becoming flesh” in Jesus, fully taking on human experience and reality in order to redeem it. This incarnational choosing necessarily means taking on human suffering, taking on all the theologies of glory that reject God’s compassionate embrace, taking on the cross.

### **The Church of the Cross: Suffering with and for the World**

Hall writes (p. 137): The theology of the cross gives rise to a church of the cross. Indeed it could be said that the whole purpose of this theology of the cross is to engender a movement —a people—that exists in the world under the sign of the cross of Jesus Christ: a movement of people called into being by his Spirit and being conformed to his person and furthering his work. A cruciform people.

...we have to reckon with the fact that there is more in the New Testament about the suffering of the church than about any other single theme of issue of ecclesiology.

The suffering the church is called to is not primarily a church-centered suffering, not suffering for the sake

of building up the church (a strange sort of theology of glory about suffering).

The suffering the church is called to is oriented toward life. It is not suffering for its own sake, suffering as redemptive in and of itself, but suffering that is necessary in order to bring life to others.

The suffering of the church is not the goal, but the consequence of faith.

What does the church look like when it is living as the compassion of God? How does it respond to others who are suffering from hunger, physical ailment, injustice, social rejection? The church suffers with and for so that it may be the means of alleviating suffering as a witness and enactment of God's compassion and love.

At the same time, a church of the cross must continually reject its own tendency toward theology of glory, toward self-importance, toward institutional self-preservation, as all human institutions tend toward.

For any religion to avoid triumphalism and a theology of glory, it must permit radical self-criticism from within. This is very rare!

The biblical witness is in large part an astounding witness to deep self-criticism that ends all human pride and idolatry.

“The only antidote to religious triumphalism is the readiness of communities of faith to permit doubt and self-criticism to play a vital role in the life of faith.” (Hall, p. 18)

The following two pages are from Daniel Erlander's *Baptized We Live: Lutheranism As a Way of Life*. They give an excellent overview of the theology of the cross and theology of glory.

## Resources

Jurgen Moltmann. *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*. 1993. <https://www.amazon.com/Crucified-God-Foundation-Criticism-Christian/dp/0800628225>

Douglas John Hall. *God & Human Suffering: An Exercise in the Theology of the Cross*. 1986. <https://www.amazon.com/Human-Suffering-Douglas-John-Hall/dp/0806623144>

Douglas John Hall. *The Cross in Our Context: Jesus and the Suffering World*. 2003. <https://www.amazon.com/Cross-Our-Context-Jesus-Suffering/dp/0800635817>

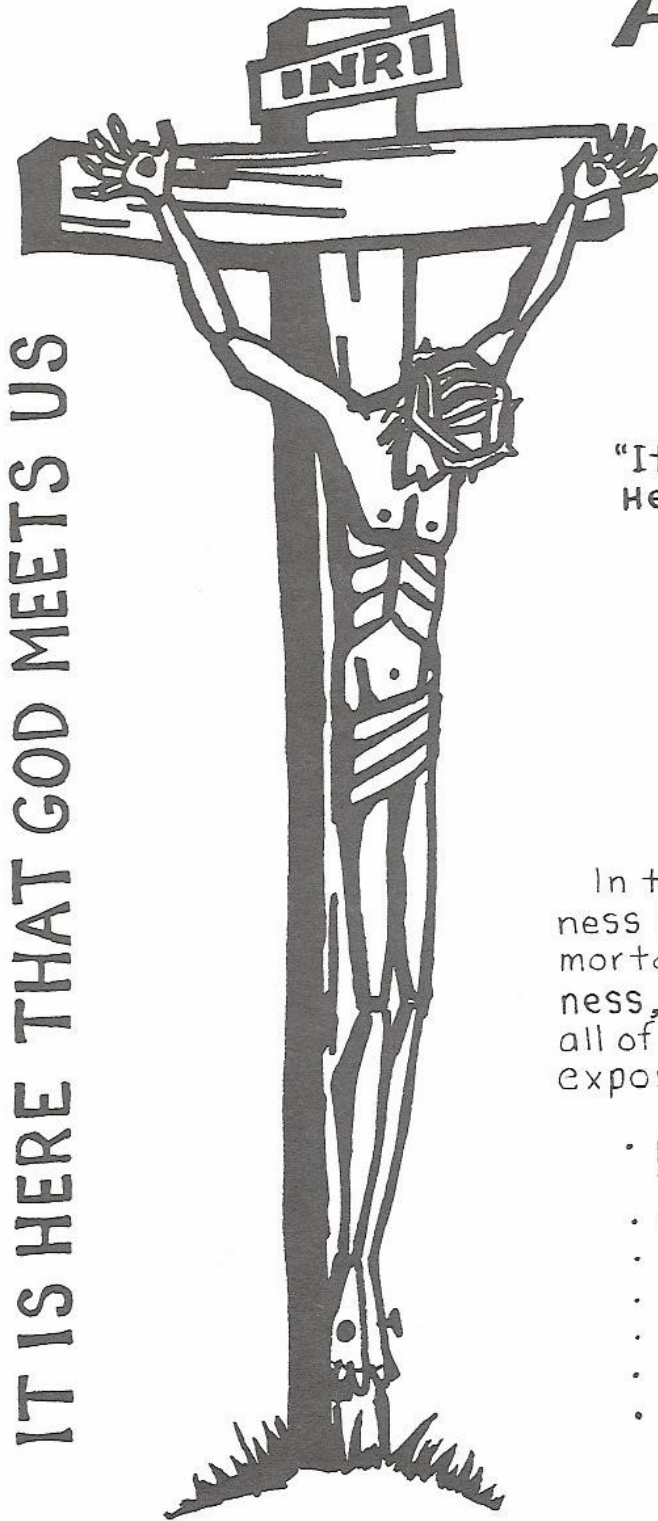
<https://www.reformedworship.org/article/december-1993/friday-voice-faith-serious-theology-cross-requires-serious-practice-lament>

<https://postbarthian.com/2019/04/18/jurgen-moltmann-on-good-friday-the-theology-of-the-cross-is-the-reverse-side-of-the-theology-of-hope/>



## CHAPTER ONE

# A WAY OF SEEING



The central visual symbol in almost every Lutheran worship room is the cross, the cruel instrument of torture and death which the Roman Empire reserved for rebellious slaves, violent criminals and threatening political subversives.

This symbol is central because we confess, "It is here, on the cross, that God meets us." Here God makes himself present...

- hidden in weakness
- vulnerable
- suffering
- forsaken
- dying

In the abyss of despair, in the deepest darkness God comes. In the painful reality of our mortality, our ultimate loneliness, our weakness, God encounters us. As we view the cross all of our human attempts to find him are exposed as illusions. We do not find God by..

- proving his existence by the wonder of nature or the power of logic.
- validating his presence by visible blessings.
- having a prescribed religious experience.
- earning divine love by our good works.
- building glorious religious institutions.
- reaching a high level of personal morality
- saving ourselves through status, wealth, knowledge, consumption, chemicals, positive thinking, correct religious doctrine self help groups, health foods or exercise plans

We do not find God. **God finds us** - in our darkness, our pain, our emptiness, our loneliness, our weakness.

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God meeting us in our darkness is based on Luther's theology of cross which is discussed further in Ch. 4. This understanding does not deny God's presence in our joyful, happy moments. Of course he's there. He's everywhere! Also, this understanding does not say we must be emotionally depressed to be found by God. Rather, God meets us most profoundly at the point of our deepest reality - our honest confrontation with weakness, pain, solitude and death.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# A WAY OF FOLLOWING



Central to the Augsburg Confession is a concern that the church be shaped by the Gospel - the good news of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

**What do we mean by being "shaped by the Gospel?"**

We mean accepting a reality that we humans would do almost anything to avoid, to ignore, to escape, to evade. That reality is this:

## WE ARE CALLED TO DIE IN ORDER TO LIVE.

Luther called this reality **THE THEOLOGY OF THE CROSS**. Its opposite is **THE THEOLOGY OF GLORY** which is...

- any way to live a religious life without "dying."
- any way to worship Jesus Christ without radical obedience.
- what great teachers of the Lutheran tradition have called...



Martin Luther

"the word without the cross"



Søren Kierkegaard

"Admiring Christ instead of following Christ"

"Cheap grace rather than costly grace"



Dietrich Bonhoeffer

The theology of the cross is...

- ✚ meeting God where he chooses to find us - in our sorrow, our pain, our weakness.
- ✚ hearing God's gracious word manifest in the death of Jesus on the cross.
- ✚ following Jesus in his death and resurrection.

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Luther's phrase "the word without the cross" refers to the announcement of God's mercy and forgiveness without the call to obedience. Its opposite is "the cross without the word" - the legalism of the Medieval church which demanded obedience without offering the gracious word of justification.