

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church

Lenten Vesper #4, February 27, 2008

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Mark 14:42-52



“Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!” Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: “The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.” Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, “Rabbi” and kissed him. The men seized Jesus and arrested him. Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, “that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scripture must be fulfilled.” Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind.

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God:

I got an e-mail the other day – a page from a newspaper in England. It told the story of a woman named Lorraine. Lorraine had a baby in her tummy – for four months – when it became painfully obvious something was terribly wrong. They ran a whole bunch of tests – exceedingly careful not to hurt her little unborn baby. Everyone’s worst fears came true. Lorraine had a horrible kind of cancer. Medical people told her she needed to put to death the baby in her tummy – then to begin aggressive treatment of her cancer. Lorraine loved her little unborn baby so much – she said she would not – she could not do anything that would hurt her baby. Every day the baby was safe inside – he grew bigger and stronger. Then – suddenly – November 18th – little Liam was born. Just 1 lb. 11 oz. – Jesus made Liam as strong as he needed to be. His little body bright red – because his skin wasn’t thick enough to cover up the color of his tiny muscles. All kinds of wires monitored his vital functions. Tiny little tubes supported his heart and his breathing. Now – and only now – did they begin to treat Lorraine’s cancer. It was too late. In just a few weeks – Lorraine died. She died without regret. She loved her son so much – that she was more than willing to lay down her life – to save one tiny life! How great is the love God the Father has lavished on us – that we should be called children of God – for Jesus’ sake! Jesus laid down his life to wash away all our sins and mistakes. Today again – we stand beside Jesus – as we see him suffer to save us. Today we stand by Jesus as the crossroads:

From Gethsemane to the Sanhedrin

- 1. Jesus was betrayed**
- 2. Jesus was abandoned**

Down through history there have been traitors – people who betray their friend. Most of the time – these traitors – these betrayers have been very clever – very sneaky! Take the classic example of the assassination of Julius Caesar. On March 15th – a group of senators called Caesar to the forum to read a petition from the senators. The petition was a fake. As Caesar started to read the fake petition a man named Tillius – grabbed at Caesar’s tunic. Caesar cried out – that is

violence! In a panic a man named Casca – pulls out his dagger and makes a wild stab at Caesar’s neck. Caesar – an experienced soldier catches Casca by the arm and says to him, “Casca, you villain, what are you doing?” Casca cries out for help – from his fellow conspirators – fellow assassins. They say Caesar tried to run – but blinded by blood trips and falls as those around him stab him. They say there were some 60 assassins – some 23 wounds – only one wound – the second one to the chest – that was fatal! Caesar was betrayed – even by Brutus – the man he thought was his friend. Jesus was betrayed – by his friend Judas. But Jesus wasn’t caught off guard. Jesus was not surprised. And Jesus didn’t try to run. God’s Word says Jesus said, **“Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!”** Just as he was speaking, Judas, one of the Twelve, appeared. With him was a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: **“The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard.”** Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, **“Rabbi”** and kissed him.

Jesus knew exactly what was going to happen. In the upper room – celebrating the Passover with his disciples Jesus said, **“He who shares my bread has lifted up his heel against me.”** How sad is that? One who would quite literally tear off a piece of flat bread and dip it into a bowl of olive oil and sauce – would literally betray his Savior. If this wasn’t clear enough God’s Word goes on. **Jesus was troubled in spirit and testified, “I tell you the truth one of you is going to be tray me.”** His disciple stared at one another, at a loss to know which of them he meant. One of them, the disciples whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him. Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, **“Ask him which one he means.”** **“Leaning back against Jesus, he asked him, “Lord, who is it?”** Jesus answered, **“It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish.”** Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot, son of Simon. As soon as Judas took the bread, **“Satan entered into him. “What you are about to do, do quickly,”** Jesus told him, but no one at the meal understood why Jesus said this to him. Since Judas had charge of the money some thought Jesus was telling him to buy what was needed for the Feast, or to give something to the poor. As soon as Judas had taken the bread, he went out. And it was night!” *John 13:18b following*

Judas betrayed Jesus – sold him out for 30 silver coins. When I was little I always wondered – if 30 silver coins was a lot of money, or not. Look it up and it says 30 silver coins were worth about 120 denarii. That didn’t help me understand! Laborers customarily received a denarius for a day’s work. So – still wondering? Day laborer wages – like landscapers, painters, construction workers and house keepers and such in Chicago – make \$9.37 in the summer and \$7.61 in the winter. So the average of the averages--\$8.50 per hour. Times 8 hours--\$68 per day times 120--\$8,160! If Judas sold Jesus for \$8,000 or \$80,000 or \$8 million dollars he sold Jesus for cheap! What is your immortal soul worth? It’s worth more than you could ever pay with gold or silver or precious gems and jewels. It’s worth more than all the stock in all the companies on the world of stock exchanges. Your immortal soul is worth the innocent life and the tortured death that Jesus endured. Only Jesus could buy back your soul and he did. Jesus died on the cross for Judas who betrayed him then despaired of his forgiving love. And Jesus died for you and for me – to save us from all our mistakes!

Then one of those standing near drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his ear. “Am I leading a rebellion,” said Jesus, **“that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I was with you, teaching in the temple courts, and you did not arrest me. But the Scripture must be fulfilled.”** Simon Peter lashed out in violence. This is certainly not difficult to understand. It’s painfully wrong – but certainly

understandable! We have all been lashing out – ever since we were little – *really* little! Try to put a snow suit or a seat belt or a onesie on a very little person – and they will kick as hard as they can with their pudgy little legs and dimpled knees and their tiny fists. They will work themselves into a red faced sweaty little fit! When they are a few years older – they will not have to be taught how to hit! A little bit bigger and they understand how to pinch and scratch and kick – and pretty many go through a stage where they even bite! Bigger and stronger – and if we lash out it can cause genuine damage – slamming someone against their locker. Sucker punch someone – and in a moment all the air goes out of them. Punch them in the face and you can make a *purple as a plum* bruise all around their eye. You can bloody their nose and chip their teeth. You can even knock them off their feet – unconscious from a punch or from hands tight around their neck. This doesn't begin to mention the fatal harm that can be done with guns and knives – actual weapons. Simon Peter cut off Malchus' ear. And Jesus put it back – in an instant – with a touch – Jesus repaired the harm Simon Peter had done. If Jesus wanted physical protection he could protect himself. If he wanted physical protection – all he had to do was pray to His Father – and there would have been angels everywhere to keep him safe from this pathetic rag tag bunch of Keystone Cops – come out in the night to try and capture him. **But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen this way?** How indeed?

Then everyone deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind. Run for your life! Save yourself! Jesus' disciples ran away from him. When they realized that Jesus wasn't going to simply walk away and save himself – they all deserted him – running into the night. Grab a hold of one of them – and they would literally pull out of their clothes and run away bare naked! How sad is that? By the grace of God – we live in a country – where we have freedom of religion. We live in a country where we can come to church – and there are no secret police out in our parking lot writing down our license plate numbers. We are not in danger of being thrown in jail for nothing more than wearing a cross on the lapel of our suit coat. We are not in danger of losing our job – or having our home ransacked or being beaten bloody or being thrown into prison because we confess Jesus. But there are places where such dangers literally exist! If you were threatened with physical violence for coming to church – pretty early on you would have to decide just how much of a Christian you were going to be! The day is here – when using Jesus' name to curse and swear – which once upon a time – was thought to be simply wrong – now happens almost every day and evening – not just on cable – but on regular TV and on the radio – *all the time!* The day may come when the mockery and ridicule that we sometimes hear – when we confess our Savior – might turn to actual physical violence and actual physical loss. The day may come – when calling gross public sins what they are – gross public sins – may well be called hate crimes against minorities – and there could be actual physical consequences. *Self-confident* and *self-reliant* we will end up deserting Jesus like the 12 did. Only trusting in Jesus' strength and love – will we stand by him and confess him faithfully!

Then everyone deserted him and fled. People are deserting Jesus all the time. If you go to Adult Bible Class on Sundays – that next to last wall has a bunch of confirmation class pictures. If you go to have supper tonight – that next to last wall has confirmation class pictures. Look and see if your class is there. If it isn't – we would be very pleased to borrow a copy to scan and print. We are far from the 150+ pictures we might have down there. It was front page news the other day – that more and more people are falling away from Church. The fact is – the average confirmation class – who promise when they are 13 or 14 years old – to suffer all – even

death— rather than fall away from Jesus— by the time they are between 18 and 21— do not go to Church *anywhere!* Do you believe that? Half of the young people who wear white gowns that they now get to keep— wearing a red rose— having their picture taking— holding their \$40 Concordia Self-study Bible— within the next 4 to 7 years don't go to church *anywhere?* How can that be? Can it be true— of the people whose pictures we see in the basement of our Church? Can it be that our children— our grandchildren— our God-children are falling away? Is the pull of the pleasures of this world— the beer and brandy and pot and cocaine— the pull of sports on flat screen high def TVs— the love of expensive cars and beautiful homes with three car garages— so attractive— that we abandon Jesus for the things and stuff of this world? Or have we persuaded our selves that if we try to be good— if we can easily name a half a dozen people who are far more hurtful and selfish and nasty than we are— that somehow God will have to let us into heaven? Or are we so busy trying to pay our bills and get ahead at work and hang on to our homes and our marriage and our children— that we have enough troubles with this life and this world that we can't be bothered thinking about what's going to happen when we die? There is danger if we become lukewarm— nothing against organized religion— I can take or leave Church. It is pretty chilling to read in Revelation about the church in Laodicea. **"I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm— neither hot nor cold— I am about to spit you out of my mouth."**
Revelation 3:15,16

Then everyone deserted him and fled! It is called survivor guilt or survivor syndrome. It's the feeling you get when you are spared while those all around you perish. Survivor guilt— is something I thought would have been around practically forever. They say— actually— it was back in the 1960s that they first began to diagnose it— actually recognize it— at first— from people who survived the *Holocaust*. People kept asking in their heads— Why did I survive? Why didn't I perish? What am I going to do now? There was so much self-blame and depression born of the fact that people did not feel worthy to survive when the people around them— people that they loved more than life itself died. They also say people have survivor guilt from being in combat— in war— in battle— when people are killed and they are not. There is survivor guilt from being in a natural disaster— *Hurricane Katrina*— and people are swept out to sea and drown and you don't. They even say there is survivor guilt in the hearts of rescue people— like 9/11 who think if I had been just a little bit stronger— a little bit smarter— a little bit quicker I could have saved one more. But I didn't. I failed. I fell short— and now I'm ok but they are not! They say— when little Liam— little 1 lb. 11 oz. born on November 18th Liam was born they don't plan to tell him about his mom and her cancer— and how she gave up her life to save his. They don't plan to tell him. But you know what— I think eventually they will have to! They will have to tell Liam about his mother's unconditional love for him. And even more— even more important than that— they need to tell Liam about Jesus' love. Jesus' love led him to go with those who were sent by the chief priests and the elders— with swords and clubs— to capture Jesus. Jesus went with them— to endure sham trials and false accusations. Jesus allowed them to nail him to a cross— where he would bleed and suffer and die to forgive all our sins and mistakes. Jesus was betrayed and left all alone— so we will not be alone for eternity. We will be with Jesus forever in the mansions he is preparing for us. Jesus was all alone— so we will not be alone— for all eternity. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz