

*St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church*  
*Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz*  
*March 12, 2008 Lenten Vesper #6.*  
[Luke 23:4-12](#)



**Then Pilate announced to the chief priests and the crowd, “I find no basis for a charge against this man.” But they insisted, “He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.” On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends – before this they had been enemies.**

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

I opened the Internet the other day – to a home page of news with the headline – Ten Scariest Escapes from Death! Yikes! – I thought. There was the story of a guy named Andy. He was an experience skydiver – a man who has repeatedly jumped out of an airplane. Well, the other day he jumped – but apparently not hard enough. His foot got caught in the wheel of the plane. So he’s just hanging there. The plane is going about 100 mph – so he can’t like bend at the waist and pull his foot loose. So – they fly around until they are almost out of fuel – so they have to land. The plane touches down – Andy touching down – before the plane does. Ouch! But the good news is – Andy’s ok. Remember it’s the Scariest Escapes – from Death. These guys escape. They don’t die. What a relief! There’s another sky diver guy. His name is Michael. He jumps out of a plane, too, clear of the plane – but his chute – which he must have packed himself – doesn’t open. His friend is by him – near him – but helpless to save him. Down and down and down Michael goes – still his chute doesn’t open. It never does! Yikes again! But Michael is ok, too. He escapes, too. How can this be? Michael lands on a blackberry bush! That would have to count as a miracle, too, don’t you think? The trouble is – even if you are in a most horrible and scary situation – when you think for sure you are going to die and you don’t – the day ultimately will come – when we do die. Unless Judgment Day comes first – every single one of us is going to die. Perhaps it will be in a terrible crash or explosion. Maybe it will be very quietly in our sleep. The fact is – because Jesus died and rose again – we don’t need to be afraid. We don’t have to doubt and wonder what will happen. We will close our eyes in this world and open them to see Jesus. That’s a fact of God’s grace and mercy for Jesus’ sake!

Today we stand beside *Jesus – Before Pilate – to King Herod – and Back to Pilate.*

- 1. Jesus will not be ignored**
- 2. Jesus will not entertain**

Pilate knew the right thing to do. This is part of what we call the natural knowledge of God. Part of the natural knowledge that the LORD put into our DNA is our conscience – the little voice inside that tells us – this is right and helpful and good – and this is wrong – it’s hurtful and evil and just plain wrong. You don’t have to have Jesus in your heart – to know some basic aspects of right and wrong. God put the fundamentals in the heart of everyone! If he didn’t – this world would be even more horrible than it already is. It’s wrong to tell a lie – to say something you know isn’t true. It’s wrong – to tell your boss you are sick and can’t come to work – and then you go to the Brewers’ opening day. It’s wrong to promise your children you will spend Saturday playing with them – and then you watch basketball and drink beers and tell them to go somewhere else – because you work hard all week and need to unwind. It’s wrong to cheat on your spouse – to say hurtful and abusive things to them – and then to have “hugs and kisses” on the side. It’s wrong to cheat on a test – to use your cell phone to get the answers that you are supposed to know. Even unbelievers know that. Sometimes we too – even though we are children of God – lie and steal and cheat and commit adultery, too. The difference is – the Holy Spirit works repentance in our hearts and we know that Jesus died to wash that guilty stain away. The right thing for Pilate to do was declare this Jesus of Nazareth innocent of any wrong doing. Then to let Jesus go – and to guarantee his physical safety with as many Roman soldiers as it took. That was the right thing to do – and Pilate knew it. The problem was – Pilate didn’t have the stomach for the right thing. He didn’t have the backbone to do what he knew was right.

The Jewish leaders of the Church **insisted, “He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here.” On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod’s jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time.** It was Charlie Brown who once said – no problem is so big or so complicated – it can’t be run away from. Before we are too hard on Pilate for trying to get out of making a decision we need to look at our own heart and our own life. Sometimes daddies don’t want to deal with their children – so they say – go ask your mother. Sometimes mommies don’t want to deal with naughty children – so they say – wait till your father gets home! Sometimes there is something wrong in a marriage – but instead of dealing with it – talking it through – people work extra hours – staying at work or go to bars or play sports – do almost anything – other than go home – and deal with the problem! Sometimes – when brothers or sisters have a misunderstanding – like a squabble over who gets grandma’s dresser or grandpa’s pocket watch when they go to heaven – they stop talking to each other for years – rather than finding some compromise – realizing their squabble is over dumb things and stuff! Pilate tried to get out of doing the right thing – and if the truth be told – we do to – all the time!

**When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle.** King Herod didn’t understand. From what he had heard about Jesus – Jesus was able to do many things that were obviously super-human. There were a hand full of food service people in Cana who knew Jesus turned well water into the finest wine you have ever tasted! There were crowds of people who had listened to Jesus preach on a grassy hillside beside the Sea of Galilee – who had eaten dried salted fish and barley loaves – again the best they had ever tasted. And there was so much food – that when thousands had eaten – there were a bunch of baskets full of fragments – all picked up so nothing was wasted! There were Jewish people in

Capernaum – who knew a very compassionate Roman Centurion who had a servant who was dying. Jesus made that servant better – without even looking at him or coming near him. There was a Samaritan woman who had led a scandalous life – who was so ashamed of her self – that she didn't even come to the well for water – when she might bump into her neighbors. This woman – now – wasn't afraid to tell anyone and everyone that Jesus told her everything she had ever done. Don't believe her? Come and see for yourself! There was a widow woman in the little village of Nain – who said Jesus had stopped the funeral procession of her only son – and made him alive and gave him back to her! There was a man named Jairus – who said his little daughter had died – and Jesus woke her up – as if she were just taking a nap! There was such a crowd around Jesus once – that they actually took apart part of the roof to slower a paralyzed man – that Jesus told – roll up your bed and go home. There were 10 lepers – and Jesus simply told them – go show your self to the priests – and on the way – their skin became as soft as a baby's! And I could go on! Word had spread that this Jesus could do miracles! King Herod thought this would really be entertaining! Jesus could have walked across his swimming pool – but he didn't! Jesus never used his unlimited power to entertain. Nor did he use his power to make bread to ease his hunger nor to hurt his enemies nor to satisfy the idle curiosity of his enemies. Jesus always and only used his power and authority to help and to do good. The purpose of church and worship and Bible study is not to entertain either. It is to give glory to God and to build up faith through the means of grace.

**Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.** They mocked Jesus. They ridiculed him – made fun of him – laughed at him – pushed him around – dressed him up and when it wasn't fun any more – they sent him back to Pilate. Would we do that to Jesus? Of course not! We would not mock the Son of God. But would we mock a class mate at school? Would we make fun of someone who doesn't wear new expensive sneakers with that essential trademark swoosh? Would we make fun of somebody who only has clothes that are too big or too small? Would we make fun of someone who is less than flawless on the outside? Would we make fun of someone if their eyes are not perfectly symmetrical – their teeth not perfectly straight and white – their ears too big or too out on the sides? Would we make fun of someone who gets an answer wrong in class – laugh out loud when they make an obvious mistake? Would we make fun of someone at work – because they are such a dufus – trying too hard? Would we make fun of a customer – when they are walking away – roll our eyes like I can't believe they are so dense? Would we make fun of our parents – because they don't know how to send a text message – or how to take a picture with their cell phone? Would we make fun of anyone – fooling our self into thinking – if we push and pull them down – that somehow this pushes us up? When we treat other people – our neighbor – our family like that – we are really treating Jesus like that – and that's painfully wrong!

**Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.** I was at the doctor the other day – at UW Madison. They took an x-ray looking for gravel by my kidneys. They had my x-rays on the computer monitor between when the student doctor talked to me – and my regular doctor. So I took a look myself – my kidneys – and so? I looked very closely at part of the insides of me! And I thought – how funny is this? My spine – little bones – one above the other – my pelvis – just like on TV when they put those heavy x-ray films on those lights. It's a humbling thing to look inside – looking for something – anything that's wrong. I thought to myself – the really terrible things inside me don't show up on an x-ray. Frustrations – worries about all the people I love – worries that I might make a mistake and say the wrong thing –

worries – bad dreams that it’s church and I’m supposed to make a sermon – and I can’t remember what comes next – and everyone is disappointed and walking out – and people in the balcony are shaking their fists! What is wrong with me and with you is deep on the inside. And Jesus knows what’s wrong – deep inside. He isn’t looking for fault. He isn’t like a white squad car – camouflaged by a snow drift – hidden behind a clump of pine trees – watching for someone going over 30 in a 25 zone – on the edge of town – speeding up too soon before the 45 mph sign. Jesus takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked – but rather that the wicked – that would be us – would turn from their sins and live! Jesus endured all the abuse people could heap on us – so that we might know the peace and rest of heaven!

**Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate.** Jesus remained a prisoner – so that we might go eternally free! I heard the other day – about a cruel dictator not too many miles south of Florida who was retiring for health reasons. It was common these past weeks – to look back on his 50 some years of rule. They say he put many people in prison. That these people were kept under horrible conditions. That they lived in absolutely filthy conditions – with not even clean water to drink – with only the most disgusting things to eat. But perhaps the cruelest part of all – they had a welder come and weld their jail doors shut. They literally melted the door to the frame – melted the hinges. Every time the prisoner looked at the door to his cell he would be reminded – they never ever intended to let them free. They never intended to open that door again! How horrible would that be? How long would it be – if you were in that cell – before you gave up all hope? How long would you hope against all hope? We were hopeless prisoners of our sin and guilt! Jesus suffered and died to take all that guilt away. We are set forever free – even from the cold clutches of death. The more you understand and appreciate that rescue and relief – the more you simply must tell your family and relatives and friends – Jesus loves you too! Worship him. Thank him. Praise him and share him!

Ten terrible escapes from death? There as a guy named Ivers. He was on a crane 200 feet up. That’s like a twenty stories up – when the peak of church is what – maybe 3 stories up. Ivers is on a crane 200 feet up – with fire everywhere beneath him – flames coming higher and higher – closer and closer. Ivers’ only hope is a helicopter some 80 feet above him – eight stories up – dangling a rope – with one guy going to grab him – and did I mention the radios didn’t work? The guy who’s going to grab Ivers – can’t talk to the guy flying the helicopter. Would you risk your life – hanging from an eight story rope – to take hold of a guy you don’t even know? A guy who could very easily panic and pull you down – and you both fall going on 300 feet – into the flames? Jesus did so very much more than that – to rescue you and to rescue me from the forever flames of hell. Jesus didn’t hesitate for a moment. Like a sheep before her shearers is silent – Jesus didn’t open his mouth. Without complaint Jesus endured the flames of hell to save us for eternity. That’s how much Jesus loves you. Pilate didn’t want to deal with Jesus. He was afraid to set him free and he certainly didn’t want to condemn an innocent man. Pilate tired to pass the buck – to make someone else decide. And that didn’t work. Pilate would condemn Jesus. Just would suffer death at the hands of the Gentiles. He would be pierced and hung on a tree – to save us from our guilt. Jesus died that we might live. Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

*Rev. Anthony E. Schultz*