

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Psalms 24 selected verses
Palm Sunday, March 28, 2010



The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it; the world and all who live in it; for he founded it upon the seas and established it upon the waters. Who may ascend the hill of the LORD? Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, he will receive blessing from God his Savior.

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

It's tax time! Does that make you *nervous*? The rules – the Federal Tax Code is some 6,000 pages. Did you ever read it? Did you ever see a copy? Imagine a guy out in California who owns a small business – a modest car wash. He learned from the federal tax people – that he had made a mistake on his taxes! How big a mistake? 4¢! Well, you say to yourself – how bad could that be? The tax man came in person to see the small business owner – who thought – how silly! It would be silly to send an envelope with 4 pennies in it – because a stamp costs what – 44¢? But wait! The tax mistake was 4¢. You forgot penalties – and fees – and interest! What the tax man wanted now – to make up for the 4¢ mistake made 4 years ago was \$202.31! Taxes are so complicated – and they are only money – green, wrinkled, filthy germy stained pieces of paper – with pictures of dead presidents and numbers on them. What about our debt of sin? What about the countless mistakes we make – over and over again? We do things that are wrong – all the time! We do things that are painfully wrong – even during the 59 minutes of Church each Sunday. We are guilty. We are to blame. We are without excuse. Today – Palm Sunday – the beginning of Holy Week – we will:

Praise the LORD!

1. *Everything belongs to Him*
2. *He alone washes hands and hearts*

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – part of the Psalm we sang this morning – is Psalm 24. The Psalm that comes right after undoubtedly the best known Psalm of all – the 23rd Psalm. **"The LORD is my Shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul!"** Green pastures – still waters. In the land of Israel – where so much is wilderness – creamy rock and stone and thorns and thistles and sticker bushes – green pastures and still waters – are the nourishment and refreshment that sheep need. But far more precious than the food we eat – the orange juice and oatmeal – the toast and bagels and English muffins – the roast beef and baked potatoes and oatmeal cookies with raisins – is the nourishment we find in God's Word for our souls! When your soul is in pain – I don't care if you have fresh Maine Lobster and melted butter to dip it in and the finest French wine to wash it down – it's hard to swallow. On the other hand – when your heart and soul are right with God – a little cheese and crackers – a little cup of soup – a little mac and cheese is good beyond words – when you know all your sins are washed away! The 23rd Psalm – the LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One is my Good Shepherd – is comfort when you are at death's door.

It is not coincidence that the 24th Psalm comes next. The LORD is not a small "g" god. He is not some small deity who is good for taking care of a few sheep in Israel – in pastures in the middle of nowhere long ago and far away. He is not some small "g" god – who is convenient for little people in Sunday School – back in the innocent days of the tooth fairy and the Easter bunny. Not a small "g" god – who is a comfort to little children when they need to grow up to be good – so they don't get on drugs or drink or get a baby in their tummy before they are married and so they will have a good marriage – and then is nice when you are a little grandma – so you can come to Church and the Ladies Aid and have nice sandwiches in the Church

basement—when the little grandpa passes away. Our God is not a small “g” god. Psalm 24 begins with the words, **“The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.”**

This *planet*—belongs to the LORD! Palm Sunday—Jesus rode in lowliness and humility into Jerusalem—to die for the sins of everyone on planet earth! Estimates are—104 billion people have lived on earth—since creation. Jesus knows exactly how many people—because he died to redeem them all. Matthew chapter 21 is the record of Jesus’ triumphal entry—Jesus’ visit to the Temple—like at the beginning of his public ministry! **Again he drove out all who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changes and the benches of those selling doves. “It is written,” he said to them, “My house will be called a house of prayer, but you are making it a ‘den of robbers!’” The blind and the lame came to him at the temple and he healed them.** Do you see—do you understand what’s happening here? The same sins that offended Jesus three years ago—were back again! We backslide! We do a little better for a little while—and then—if we aren’t careful—it’s back to business—literally—business as usual! There was a Senator on the news the other day who said, “People don’t change!” We must change! The Gospel is all about change! It’s about the powerful changes that the Holy Spirit works in the hearts and then the lives of believers in Jesus Christ! The Gospel changes everything. It changes us in the most essential and fundamental ways! We need to expect change—look for change—and recognize change in the lives of brothers and sisters in Christ. Notice also—Jesus has barely cleansed the Temple—and he is working miracles of healing. Jesus opened the eyes of the blind—and made it possible for people who were crippled to walk! Again—the sinfulness of people cannot spoil the grace and goodness of God!

Matthew chapter 21—Palm Sunday—cleansing of the Temple—the fig tree—the unfruitful fig tree withers and Jesus’ authority is questioned. Then come the parables. We read one in church last Sunday—the parable of the tenants. The parable of the wedding banquet. The question about paying taxes—**give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.** There are the seven woes—**“Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!”** Then come the signs of the end of the age. Remember? **There will be wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed... There will be famines and earthquakes in various places...the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken!** The earth is the LORD’s and everything in it... The planet belongs to the LORD! A volcano erupted in Iceland the other day. Shortly before midnight—a glacier—thick with ice and snow—suddenly started to spew smoke and lava about a kilometer high! Airplanes—flying from the United States to Europe—flying by the curve of the planet—need to be careful—lest the smoke—and all the bits of rock could throw off plane navigation. This volcano was dormant since **1821**. There was little warning of an eruption before it started. And how long will it last? “It could end tomorrow, it could go on for a year or two...” The earth is the LORD’s! He decides! He is in absolute control of everything!

The earth is the LORD’s, and everything in it; the world and all who live in it. The point—of course is people! Jesus came to save people—from their sins. To save them for eternity! There is a bridge over the highway in Gaithersburg, Maryland. A young man—in despair was going to jump off of that bridge—into the traffic—when a police officer saw him and ran and grabbed hold of one of his arms. As much as the man struggled to throw himself from the bridge—Officer Jones held on to him. How hard would you have to hold on to someone—that was trying to fall? Soon another officer came—and grabbed the young man’s other arm—and held on, too! The young man in despair kept yelling, “Let me go!” He climbed part way up—and then pushed as hard as he could—with both his legs—determined to fall! Still the officers held on tight! They had to. It was literally a matter of life and death! They held on to this man they didn’t even know—determined to save him! Think how tightly Jesus holds on to you and me! Jesus holds us tight in his nail marked hands. He will never leave us. He will never forsake us. He will never fail us!

Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, he will receive blessing from God his Savior. Who can stand in the presence of the One true God? A person with **clean hands and a pure heart!** If we look at our hands—they are anything but clean. I have said before—Pastors probably shake more hands than anyone! There is a little girl named Heather. She was one of my sheep at Peace, Love’s Park, IL. There were only about 55 sheep in Church on any given Sunday. One Sunday Heather and I shook hands—

and she went back around – behind me – and shook my hand again. Every third person through the line was Heather. After 5 times I started keeping track. 17 times I shook her small hand! That’s a 30 year record. Pastors shake farmer hands – strong hands that can literally crack and bleed in the cold of winter. Baby hands that hold your finger. Mommy hands – with vanilla scented lotion. Our hands are clean and our hearts are pure – because Jesus made them so. Jesus washed our hands with the blood he spilled – when his hands were pierced by nails that Friday afternoon when the sun stopped shining!

Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, he will receive blessing from God his Savior. The ultimate blessing – of course – is an inheritance in Heaven. There is a list – for sale. It is a list written on 13 pieces of paper. It’s a list of names – 801 men’s names along with their birth date and their occupation. It’s one of 7 original copies – only 4 of which still exist – three in museums – one for sale to the highest bidder – beginning at \$2.2 million! It’s of course – Schindler’s List – the list of the people that Oskar Schindler – spent his fortune to save. I will never forget – when the War ended – I thought Oskar Schindler would rejoice – would do the dance of joy – would celebrate that the danger had passed – that his friends and his workers were safe! Instead he was painfully sad! He felt terrible guilt! He took off his golden ring and said, “I could have sold this and saved another life! I could have sold this golden lapel pin – and saved more lives! I could have done something – anything – and saved another life!” It is the essential Gospel that Jesus died for all! Jesus died for the sins of people who would ultimately reject his forgiveness and burn forever in the unquenchable flames of Hell. Jesus didn’t just die for believers. Jesus died for all! So great is the love God the Father has lavished on us that we should be called children of God – and that is what we are – for Jesus’ sake!

Who may stand in his holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, he will receive blessing from God his Savior. Life can be pretty scary – when you think of all the things that could go wrong – and sometimes do! There are kidney stones, gall stones, appendicitis – tumors and blood in all the wrong places – car accidents – crime and violence – all the terrible things you read about in the newspaper! I heard the other day – when you are worried and stressed – you should think about something else – like a math problem! Like if you had 4¢ and the next day you doubled that-- 8¢ and the day after that you doubled that 16¢. By the end of the month how much money would you have? Think about it – concentrate – how much money would you have? Do you know? Hundreds? Thousands? I’m not the best math person – but I figure it’s more than \$2,146,000.! That’s a lot! Think about your sins – how they add up – over a lifetime! And then remember – our hands and our hearts are pure – because Jesus died and rose again to save us. That’s why one day we will join 10,000 times 10,000 angels to sing our *Hosannas* to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Amen!

To God alone all glory!



Rev. Anthony E. Schuttz