

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz**  
**Maundy Thursday, April 9, 2009 Matthew 26:45,46**



Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go! Here comes by betrayer!"

Fellow redeemed, saved by grace alone, by faith alone, by Scripture alone:

Don't go in the basement! Sounds like the title of a scary movie. Don't go in the cellar! When I was little we lived in a very big old farm house. The basement – the cellar – you had to go outside – and open these big wooden doors to go down into the basement – almost a root cellar. There's a basement smell – sort of musty and moldy – a little bit damp and earthy. Basements are places people store stuff. Not valuable, precious, important stuff. Basements are where you put things that are busted, broken, worn out and pretty much used up but we don't throw them away. We put them in the basement. Basements have coffee cans of bent and rusted nails – mayonnaise jars of nuts and bolts. Basements have piles of newspapers in yellowed stacks that are falling over. Basements are where we put books we never read – clothes we never wear – tools we never use. Basements are where we store cans of pain that aren't closed quite tight – and brushes stiffer than scrap lumber because we didn't clean them well enough the first time we used them. Basements can be dark, dusty, damp dirty places. But you can ignore them. People don't live in their basements. They go down there when they have to – get frustrated looking for something they can't find – curse the confusion and mess – then go back up stairs. The basement isn't a bad picture of our soul. You can ignore it until it gets so bad – the spring rains mighty muddy flood sloshes up the basement steps and you are forced to confront it. Here in God's Word we need to look to Jesus to forgive us and rescue us.

Tonight we meet the Lord Jesus with his students and followers in the dead of night in the Garden of Gethsemane. It has been a long week. Sunday they came into Jerusalem – Jesus on a little donkey – children singing everywhere. This was the best part – the little children singing! Then there was this fig tree. It was full of leaves. There should have been figs on it. When Jesus went to get a fig he didn't find any. So Jesus cursed that fig tree. He said to the tree, **"May no one ever eat fruit from you again."** Mark 11:14 That was it. Jesus had pronounced judgment on that tree – swift and terrible. That tree withered immediately. The next day the disciples noticed it. It wasn't just that the leaves were a little dry and crispy on the edges. The tree was withered from the roots up – bone dry and dead – through and through! Don't miss the point! Jesus said, **"I tell you the truth, if you have faith and do not doubt, not only can you do what was done to the fig tree, but also you can say to this mountain. 'Go, throw yourself into the sea, and it will be done. If you believe you will receive whatever you ask for in prayer.'** Matthew 21:21,22 Here were words of wondrous promise and a graphic visual aid besides. Tuesday morning the disciples saw the dead fig tree. Thursday night Jesus asked them to pray – to watch and pray so they wouldn't fall into temptation.

Jesus prayed. The physician Luke records, **"And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground."** Luke 22:44 When Jesus came back and checked on his disciples, God's Word says, **"Then he returned to the disciples and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.'"** The disciples fell asleep. They dropped off. They slept. It was late. It was dark. God's Word says their eyes were heavy. But none of these things

were an excuse for their falling asleep. To sleep – perhaps to dream. They needed to pray. Instead of sitting down, lying down, curling up – they needed to get up and walk around – to get down on their knees and to pray. They knew what they needed to do. They weren't stupid. The spirit was willing but their flesh was woefully weak. They slept. They gave in to laziness and sin. Self discipline was lost to exhaustion and self-indulgence. These disciples who promised they would all die with Jesus couldn't even stay awake for Him.

Jesus asked them, **“Are you still sleeping and resting...?”** What would Jesus say to us today? **“Are you still sleeping and resting...?”** Are you tired? What wore you out today? Did you stay up way too late last night watching American Idol and Fox News? Did you eat big bowls of munchies washed down with lots of diet soda with caffeine and then couldn't fall asleep last night? Are you tired out from work – from a boss that is too critical and customers that are unreasonable? Are you tired from cleaning and cleaning – scrubbing until your back aches and your hands are all pruny and your nails are broken? Are you tired from being sick? From a cough and cold that won't go away – from germs and viruses that have made your body their new home and it looks like they are unpacking – planning to stay for a long time? What wears us out all boils down to sin.

Oh, we can be like the disciples. We can curl up in the little unborn baby position. We can punch our pillow until it's right. We can pull the blankets up to our chin – pull the quilt over our head – turn out all the lights and threaten the life of any pet or little person who dares to disturb us. But that doesn't make the problems go away. You can't snooze and snore your sins away. We need to wake up and open up our eyes to the dangers and temptations all around us. We have to stop looking for safety and answers in all the wrong places. Money is not the answer to the emptiness – the hollow hole deep in our hearts. Oh, you can spend and spend and spend your way deeper and deeper into personal debt. But Easter isn't about who has the most expensive dress or the shiniest shoes or the biggest solid chocolate bunny. Happiness is not on the menu at the place that has the most expensive fish fry. Real happiness isn't a matter of having the coolest clothes or the newest car or the most expensive sports equipment or the perfect figure. Joy the devil can't spoil comes from sins forgiven and heaven won.

Don't repeat the mistakes the disciples made – of sleeping when you need to watch and pray. Remember that fig tree! Think about moving some mountains! That means trust. It means believing the powerful promises of God. To believe the promises you need to listen to them. You need to know them. Sermons and Bible classes are a good start. But they are only a start. You need to read your Bible. It will open your eyes to the danger the devil poses to you. God's Word will wake you up to how terrible our sins really are.

Jesus told his disciples, **“Look, the hour is near, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.”** *Betrayed*. The Greek word here literally means to hand over – to give over to someone. Judas would in a sense hand Jesus over into the hands of sinners. The word for *sinners* here means literally those who miss the mark. That's us. If we had been in Jerusalem almost 2,000 years ago where would we have been? If we weren't with the disciples sleeping we would have fit neatly into the group that came looking for Jesus. Sinners are people who fail to hit the mark. We all fail. Sometimes students don't study and they get a big red “F” on their paper. And sometimes teachers don't do a very good job of explaining the material. They have missed the mark – and the failure of the whole class says that pretty loudly. Ministers miss the mark if we try to do all the Gospel work ourselves instead of doing what Paul says we are called to do – **to equip the saints for works of service** – so that God works through you – to build up the body of Christ. We miss the mark if our faith life becomes one more spectator

sport—where we sit back and cheer on professionals instead of becoming a participant ourselves!

Judas didn't sneak up on Jesus. Jesus didn't have his eyes tight shut in prayer. And then when he heard a twig snap—looked up to see Judas and the soldiers and guards had him surrounded. Quite the opposite! Jesus told his disciples, **“Rise, let us go! Here comes my betrayer.”** Jesus didn't run away. Jesus went to meet those who were looking for Him. Jesus knew that Judas' kiss was the signal—the act of betrayal. Jesus knew before He asked, who they were looking for. And Jesus knew once they tied him up His disciples would all run away like sheep frightened by the wolf.

Judas is perhaps the most tragic person in all of scripture. For some 3 years he was by Jesus. Judas Iscariot must have sat on that grassy hillside. He must have heard Jesus say, **“Everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”** Matthew 7:26,27 Judas Iscariot must have been with Jesus on the Sea of Galilee when the storm blew up—waves wept over the boat. It was being swamped. He must have heard Jesus say, “Peace! Be still!” And suddenly it was completely calm. He must have been with Jesus when they were walking into Nain—at the same time a dead young man was being carried out to the cemetery—he the only son of his widowed mom. Jesus touched the stretcher carrying his dead body and woke him up and gave him back to his mom! Judas must have been with Jesus when he called Lazarus out of his grave—back from the dead. And Lazarus had been dead for 4 days! In spite of seeing and knowing all of this—still Judas betrayed his best friend—then despaired of his forgiving love.

What happened to Judas ought to serve as a chilling warning to every one of us. Those within the closest circle of Jesus' disciples were among the devil's favorite targets. And that's nothing new. In the Old Testament the devil went after Eve and Adam—who were created perfect and knew their Creator in a most intimate way. He seduced them into doing the only thing in all creation that was wrong! The devil seduced faithful Noah into drunken oblivion and naked passing out shame! The devil seduced King Saul—head and shoulders above all in Israel—into murderous rage and self-destruction despair so that he died on the tip of his own sword. The devil seduced King David into actual physical adultery—and then contract murder to try and cover up his sin. The devil frightened Simon Peter into denying Jesus with curses and oaths—I don't know this man! And the devil is after us. Satan has targeted you and me—every single one of us. It doesn't matter to the devil if he wears us down—using the sandpaper of sin—the saw dust of self-righteousness piling up hour after hour. It doesn't matter to the devil if he gets us with one mighty blow—the sudden and tragic death of someone we love—or the hurtful hate filled words somebody says to us that offend us. As long as there is breathe in our bodies the devil will be after us. And only Jesus can keep us safe.

Judas sold his Savior out for 30 silver coins. How much would that be worth today? When I was little this always bothered me. 30 silver coins would be worth about 120 denarii! How much is that? A Denarii was like one day's wages back Bible times. The workers in the vineyard who worked all day long were paid a denarius. I tried to Google how much does the average American earn in a year? It is all very complicated—apparently! It depends what part of the country—depends on how old you are. If you are 25 years old—average income \$28,000. 65 years old—average income \$42,000. Average of the averages is \$35,000. \$700 per week with two weeks vacation. \$17.50 per hour times an 8 hour day equals \$70 a day times 120 days -equals \$8,400! In today's dollars Judas sold his friendship with the Son of God for \$8,400! Does that sound like a lot? If Judas had sold Jesus for 8 million or 8 billion dollars he would have sold him

for cheap. Jesus redeemed us – bought us back with his innocent life and his tortured death – because he loved us so much! This Maundy Thursday and every day – we will thank and praise – serve and obey him – to thank him for all he did to rescue us! Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

*Rev. Anthony E. Schultz*