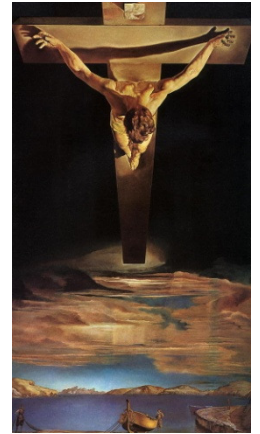


**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS**  
**Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz**  
**June 7, 2009 Trinity Sunday John 3:16**  
**25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of**  
**Mr. Timothy Torgerson's Teaching Ministry**



**"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."**

People of God – rescued from the flaming lake of fire in hell by the innocent blood of the very Lamb of God – and especially you *Mr. Torgerson*:

I have talked before about my Kindergarten teacher Mr. Meezer! Mrs. Meezer had soft white hair. She had parchment skin – you could see the little blue and purple veins. She would give us cold milk and warm cookies. We would have little rugs to curl up on – while she read us stories. I remember our Kindergarten room – down stairs. We had really big blocks made of plywood – that we could build with. We had Crayons for coloring – concentrating – so you didn't go over the lines. I remember one time – we made tree trunks out of construction paper. Then we took a little piece of sponge – and mushed it in Tempera paints – golden and pumpkin and cranberry and cinnamon – then mushed it on the paper – to be the autumn leaves! I still remember that! I remember Mrs. Lemke teaching us how to read about fun with Dick and Jane and their dog Spot. Bad Spot. Run, Spot, run! I remember Miss Bier – and her hundreds of butterflies and moths and beetles – with pins through their bodies – all on sheets of cotton – with their Latin names typed on little pieces of paper! I don't remember if my teachers had wonderful block plans and lesson plans. I don't remember if my teachers wrote propositional statements on the chalk boards – then asked those perfect questions – not yes or no questions – but the questions about why and how – applications questions and imagine and explore questions! I remember that my teachers loved me. My teachers loved their students and they loved learning. This morning – as we come to God's House – to grow in faith and understanding – we are going to see Jesus – the Rabbi – the teacher – teaching a teacher named Nicodemus about the Kingdom of God. We are going to see how:

**The Trinity Loves Us!**

- 1. We will not perish**
- 2. We have eternal life!**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today is part of the Gospel of the disciple Jesus loved. Jesus doesn't do things the way people would. That is more and more obvious the older you get – God's ways are unsearchable – his paths beyond tracing out. You can't figure out God – you can't! When we get to Heaven – I don't expect to understand everything. God will still God and we will still be his lambs and sheep. There are lots of things the Good Shepherd knows – that we won't. But we will surely understand much *much* more. It is enough in the meantime – for us to remember Jesus is in charge. And Jesus always knows exactly what he is doing. If it was up to you and me – chances are we would have written one Gospel – exceedingly accurate and exceedingly detailed. Jesus didn't. Instead Jesus had four different people – a Tax Collector named Matthew – a student and follower – not one of the Twelve – named John Mark – a Physician named Luke – who did research and spoke with eyewitnesses – and then – apparently quite some time later – God chose a 4<sup>th</sup> writer – the

disciple Jesus loved – to write a Gospel unlike any of the first three. This was the perfect plan! John doesn't spend so much time telling us what Jesus did – as much as telling us – who Jesus is and what Jesus said. How wonderful is that? Remember how the Gospel starts? **"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness but the darkness has not understood it."** John 1:1-5 Jesus is the Word of God made flesh. Jesus is the fulfillment of everything his Heavenly Father promised all through the 4,000 years of the Old Testament!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – is from the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. The words we are concentrating on – are part of Jesus' discussion with a Pharisee named Nicodemus – who came by Jesus under cover of darkness – because he was afraid of what other people might think. Pharisees were a sect – a group – not to be confused with the Sadducees, the Essenes and the Zealots. There were Pharisees some 200 years before baby Jesus was born. If you study Word of God class – you know about Pharisees. Pharisees loved the Torah – the law – the five books of Moses. They loved rules and regulations. They sinfully considered equal with God's Word – the law God gave through Moses – they counted equal with that – *oral tradition*. That's a fancy way of saying, "We always did it that way!" That's tempting – to become so comfortable doing something the same way – that if someone or something comes along and changes it – we think – *that's just wrong!* It's wrong to do it differently! The Pharisees had a rather complicated system of angels and demons. That's not in the Bible either. God's Word talks about Michael – the Archangel – but doesn't say exactly what that means. There are cherubim and seraphim – but again – exactly how that works – or how they are different – the Bible doesn't say. Satan was an angel of light – who rebelled against God and was thrown from Heaven into Hell by Michael and the good angels – but which demons are beneath which – God didn't tell us. The Pharisees believed in life after death – which set them at odds with the Sadducees – who didn't. The Sadducees thought this is it – this life – this world – and then the end – black numb nothingness. Live for here and live for now – because when you're dead it's all over. The Pharisees – on the other hand – believed in an ultimate judgment – where you were rewarded for being good and punished for being bad. Again – this attitude is hard-wired into people. Be good and good things will happen to you. Be bad and the bad things you deserve will happen to you. Be good – do the right thing – and when something painful happens to you – you complain – *why is this happening to me?* I never ever did anything to deserve this! It's logical. It's reasonable. It's just not Scriptural. It's not what the Bible says! What my sin – my rebellious heart deserves is eternal destruction in the forever flames of hell. That's what my sin – my stone cold dead heart of sin deserves – is to be eternally cut off from the goodness of God. How dare I shake my puny fist at my Heavenly Father – and accuse him of not giving me what I deserve? My sins deserve the fire and brimstone that scorched Sodom and Gomorrah off the face of the earth. My sins deserve what happened to Nadab and Abihu – the sons of Aaron. Do you remember them? Nadab and Abihu? God's Word says, **"Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu took their censers, put fire in them and added incense; and they offered unauthorized fire/strange fire before the LORD, contrary to his command. So fire came out from the presence of the LORD and consumed them, and they died before the LORD. Moses then said to Aaron, 'This is what the LORD spoke of when he said: 'Among those who approach me I will show myself holy; in the sight of all the people I will be honored.' Aaron remained silent."** Leviticus 10:1-3 Exactly what or how Nadab and Abihu did wrong – I won't say isn't clear – because that sort of implies like God's Word somehow is at

fault. It might be better to say – God’s Word is perhaps purposely vague. It’s enough to know they made a mistake. And they paid for that mistake with their physical life! Suffice it to say – the LORD takes exceedingly seriously – anyone who does anything wrong – especially when we are serving him! We always need to be very careful to do everything the best we possibly can!

The emphasis of the Pharisees’ teachings was ethical rather than theological. That means they were far more concerned about people – and what we do – than about what *God* has done to forgive us. They were in all concerned about 365 more rules and regulations that people made up – than they were about God’s Word. That’s why Jesus said seven – count them – seven times **“Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites!”** Jesus can say that! Jesus can call people hypocrites – because Jesus alone could see into their hearts – and see their hypocrisy. Jesus could see that they said and did all the right things – while their hearts were foul and ugly with evil and unbelief! The veneer of godly behavior didn’t fool Jesus – who looked past the outside to the inside! Just about now – are you thinking to yourself – I’m sure glad I’m not one of those Pharisees? I’m sure glad I’m a humble conservative – Lutheran? There are the seeds of Pharisee-ism inside every one of us. It is only by the grace of God – that we know we are forgiven by grace through faith – and not by being good. We are forgiven because Jesus lived without sin – and then died with our guilt – then rose triumphant on Easter morning.

**“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** Jesus is the *only* Way to Heaven! I was on my way to breakfast Bible Class at Perkins on Thursday morning – listening to an essay about sports. It was about golfing – taking golf lessons. The point was – there are all kinds of ways to hit a golf ball – all kinds of styles and techniques and approaches. And it just kind of got slipped in. The sports writer said, “Have mercy on us – if there isn’t more than one way to get to Heaven!” Think about that! “Have mercy on us – if there isn’t more than one way to get to Heaven!” Jesus is the **Way, the Truth and the Life!** Jesus said, **“No one comes to the Father, except through me!”** *There is no other way.* Do we really believe that? Do we really believe that apart from faith – love and trust in Jesus as our crucified and risen Savior – there is an eternity in unspeakable agony and unending horror in the flaming lake of fire in hell? If we do – it will make a difference in how we live. It will make a difference in our priorities. It will make a difference in what we say and what we do. It simply has to!

**“Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** There are only two possible outcomes – to perish or to have eternal life. It was about half a year ago – that there was a young person up in Canada who loved to play a video game – about how he started to have trouble in school and his grades started getting worse and he started lying and stealing. And when the father took away his video game he got so angry he ran away from home. The searched for him and searched for him. Literally hundreds of people searched. At first all they could find was his bicycle – with the flat tire. And then they found him – but he was already dead. How sad was that? To be eternally lost – to perish forever – is the ultimate tragedy. There is nothing more precious than to grow up close to Jesus – to learn about him more and more. There is no place safer than beside the Good Shepherd – to live for him here – and to live with him forever in Heaven by grace through faith!

**Whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”** The essence of the Gospel gives us both the motive and the ability to live lives dedicated to the glory of God. In this world where people everywhere are worried, anxious, sad and depressed – we can do what Paul told the Thessalonians **“Be joyful always; pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for**

**this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."** 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 I have said before – that part of the problem with life in our world – it's never like a musical. I love musicals – where every couple of minutes – everyone drops what they are doing – and they sing and dance! In groups of 5, 10 and 15 – they dance – jumping up on tables and chairs – smiling and singing. I said this never happens. Well, I was wrong. I was at the Piggly Wiggly – the grocery store by the Upper Crust – when two people came dancing and singing – from the end of the soda aisle – into the liquor department – people singing and dancing! Then – Wednesday night – someone showed me on the Internet – how at the train station at Antwerp – all of a sudden – without any warning – someone began to play the music from *The Sound of Music* – and all of a sudden people started to dance – around and around they went! And the other people – the rest of the people in the train station – couldn't help but smile. They were caught up in the contagious joy! How about that! Again we have reason – we have reason in our Trinity St. Luke's School – reason in our Church – reason in our lives **to be joyful always – to pray continually – to give thanks in all circumstances** – because we believe in Jesus. We shall not perish – but have eternal life. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

*Rev. Anthony E. Schuttz*