

St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Matthew 16:21 Pentecost 15 August 24, 2008



From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

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

Vacation – a Sabbath rest – is a gift from the Lord Jesus. We were on vacation – at a bed and breakfast in Door County. It was wonderful – sleeping in this antique bed – that was so high you had to really jump to get into it. On the wall was a thick antique picture frame – the antique painting of a guardian angel watching over a little boy and girl picking wildflowers by the edge of a cliff. Just outside our room was a pasture – full of sheep. First thing in the morning – your breakfast was delivered in a big basket. There was sweet fresh baked bread – still warm from the oven. There was a pot of fresh brewed coffee. A container of fresh squeezed orange juice. There was a little cup of fresh fruit – melons, blue berries, tart raspberries – linen napkins. You could sit on the porch – surrounded by wildflowers! It was so peaceful – so restful – so quickly over! Today – vacation is over. It’s time to go back to work! Back to school – to the blessed work of teaching and learning God’s Word – teaching and learning all about the wonderful works of God! As lots of schools and lots of classes begin it is most important of all that we each recommit ourselves to:

Learn About Jesus’ Love

1. **Jesus suffered because of my sins**
2. **Jesus rose again to save me!**

As we catch up in spirit with the Lord Jesus today – Jesus is nearing the end of his public ministry. For most of his life here on earth Jesus was a carpenter. Jesus worked with his hands – turning trees into rough lumber. Then with very sharp hand tools and a wooden hammer – turning those boards into very practical things made of wood. Jesus made doors. He made tables. He made little stools to sit on while milking a goat. When he turned thirty – Jesus began his public ministry. On the Sabbath he was in the synagogues – the Bible schools – where God’s people gathered to hear the scriptures read and explained and applied. Jesus didn’t stay in one place. Not appreciated in Nazareth where he grew up – Jesus made Capernaum his sort of home base. From there he walked everywhere – to Tyre and Sidon in the north by Lebanon. One of the very last times when the present day country of Israel was being shelled by Hezbollah – they fired their rockets from Tyre. Jesus taught all the way to the south – to Beersheba – where we heard just a few Sundays ago – Elijah went – to hide from murderous Queen Jezebel – until the still small voice – the whisper of the LORD said, “**Elijah, what are you doing here?**” Jesus **had compassion on God’s people because they were like sheep without a shepherd.** Now the time was drawing near for Jesus to sacrifice himself to wash away the sins of the whole wide world. **From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things...**

The message of law and gospel is something that you learn. For three years Jesus – the Rabbi – the Teacher – had been preparing his disciples. He had been teaching and instructing

them. Jesus taught the teachers – like Nicodemus. Remember? Jesus told Nicodemus – **you must be born again!** Nicodemus said – **“How can this be?”** Jesus said, **“You are Israel’s teacher and do not understand these things?”** Jesus taught Nicodemus, **“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.”** By God’s grace – we know that. There is a world of people out there who don’t! Who will teach them? There are people who are studying to preach and teach God’s Word – and losing their life in the process. One of the students who was a second year Seminary student – preparing to teach God’s Word to the people in the Amazon with Uncle Terry was murdered – while Uncle Terry was with us here. He was murdered with a shot-gun. Nobody seems to know for sure – why or how. Chances are – it was a neighbor – paranoid – afraid – as so many people by the rain forest are afraid – afraid of everything and afraid of every one – lashing out in murderous fear and near panic – because they are so afraid. It is by the grace of God that we have been taught – that we have learned the fundamentals of our faith – that **if God is for us – who can be against us? He who spared not his own Son but gave him up for us all – how shall he not also along with him graciously give us all things?** Law and Gospel from God’s Word needs to be learned – first and foremost from our parents – our mom and our dad. And then God’s Word is learned in our precious priceless Sunday School, our Trinity St. Luke’s School, our Lakeside High School and Luther Prep – in Martin Luther College and Wisconsin Lutheran College and at our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. God’s Word is something we study in all our Teen and Adult Bible Classes. We pray for the power of the Holy Spirit – to bless all of our schools – all of our teachers and all of our students and all those who bring Thankofferings for our schools!

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things... Jesus had to suffer many things – on account of my sins – my mistakes – my painful failures! We stumble all the time! If you watched the Olympics the other day – there was a race – a 100 meter high hurdles race. It’s like a football field – just a little bit longer – with ten barriers you have to jump over. A young woman named Lolo was as sure a bet to win as you could ask for. To say she was quick would be an understatement! Before the race began Lolo said she could feel the gold wrapped around her. But once the race started she clipped one hurdle – the second to last – the 9th hurdle. She didn’t fall down completely. She just stumbled – a little. But it was enough to slow her down – just a little – enough – that those who didn’t stumble crossed the finish line ahead of her – 6 people ahead of her. Oh, she said – she doesn’t clip a hurdle – doesn’t stumble more than once or twice in a whole year. How unfortunate – to stumble – in the most important race of her life! How unfortunate! After the race was over – do you know where Lolo could be found? On her knees – on her knees. Not a place we find ourselves – too often. But a place where we need to be – again and again – when we think about our sins – on our knees! On our knees in sadness over our countless sins – painful failures and hurtful mistakes. We need to be on our knees in heartfelt sadness over all my countless sins.

Because of my sins Jesus would **suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law...** the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law – were the leaders of the organized Church. These were the people who knew God’s Word. The elders were often quite literally that – the elders – the older ones. The people who were the older ones should have been the more experienced ones – the people who had learned life’s lessons the hard way. Remember the day – **at dawn Jesus appeared in the temple courts and he sat down to teach them. The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in**

adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him. But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her." Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, *the older ones first...* John 8:1-11 *The older ones first!* The older ones should have been the first to understand that they were full of sin—a lifetime of sin! They were not the ones to throw the first stone! Are we the elders—the ones with gray hair and white hair and the wrinkles by our eyes from squinting into the sun—the ones with the laugh wrinkles beside our mouths—with the age spots and wrinkles on the backs of our hands? Are we who were so recently the children and the young people—are we the elders? There is a responsibility—as we grow older and older—to be a powerful example—to our spouse—to our family—to our relatives and in-laws and neighbors and co-workers and fellow believers of love for Jesus. An example of love for Jesus by concrete fruits of faith that give glory to God. That would mean being life-time students of God's Word—growing in faith all our life long!

Jesus said he would **suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law...** The teachers of the law were experts in the Old Testament Scriptures. In all of God's Word there is no more scorching condemnation—than the words Jesus spoke to the Teachers of the law—the Pharisees. Jesus could do that because Jesus and Jesus alone can see into people's hearts. It is never ever right for us to be so arrogant as to think we can judge anyone's heart. Each of us needs to judge our own heart—as we listen very carefully to what Jesus said. Make the application to our own heart. Jesus said, "**Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cummin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglected the former. You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean. Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean. In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness... You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?...O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing..." Matthew 23:23f It is not for us to find fault with others—but to understand our own failures—to repent of all our sins and to put all our trust in Jesus' forgiving love**

After great suffering Jesus would **be killed...** Jesus did not just risk his life. Jesus knew he would pay for our sins with his life. He would pay the ultimate price—his life—to buy us back! Again and again—when you least expect it—people lose their life. A veteran state police trooper the other day—stopped to help a man with a flat tire—a flat tire on an antique fire truck. The officer was working under the truck. The truck driver tried to extend the ladder—to balance the truck and hit a live power line and he and the officer were electrocuted. The commanding officer said this type of accident is incomprehensible! It doesn't make sense! You can't understand why this happened. On the surface Jesus' death didn't make sense, either.

Here was a carpenter – turned rabbi and preacher. Here was the most gentle man in the world – healing the sick and raising the dead. Here was a man who never ever hurt anyone! Jesus would be killed – because of my sins! The price of sin? How do you figure it out? What is the penalty for two overdue library books? Being handcuffed and arrested – fingerprinted – and mug shot – a fine of \$379 – court costs and paying to replace the books. What if you lost a \$4 book on snakes? The fine increased – to \$38? An almost \$300 fine – for theft of library materials? People might be confused – and argue and debate what is a proportionate response to this mistake or that? Jesus died – Jesus was bruised and battered – spit upon and flogged and nailed to a cross until he died – because Adam and Eve took a bite of a piece of forbidden fruit! It’s easy to think of sin but lightly – until you stand at the foot of the cross and see all that Jesus suffered and died to save us!

And on the third day be raised to life. There is a very interesting style of music called the blues. I don’t pretend to know too much about the blues – but more and more – lately – Matthew and Uncle Terry have encouraged me to listen to the blues. To listen to B.B. King – who sings a song that is only literally about one minute long. The lyrics are painfully simple. “Nobody loves me but my mother – and she could me jivin’ too!” How sad is that? Nobody loves me but my mother – and maybe she doesn’t either? The more you read God’s Word – the more you are assured again and again – Jesus loves me. He has washed away every single one of my sins. My Heavenly Father loves me with a forgiving love that will never ever fail. This Gospel – this good news – is both the reason and the strength – then – for us to love one another. When Jesus’ forgiving love warms your heart and colors your life – then husbands will love their wife like Christ loved the Church. Just think what that means – to love your wife like Christ loved the Church. When we even begin to love our spouse that much – we will be devoted to our children, too. We will send them to school each morning – on time – well rested – well dressed – with modesty – well prepared and well organized. We will pray for our children and their teachers – building up and encouraging each other. We will learn and we will grow in faith!

Jesus would suffer and die **and on the third day be raised to life.** Easter changes everything! Easter morning Jesus rose from the dead and that changed everything. We were walking down the sidewalk the other day in Denmark. We walked past a concrete driveway. And in that driveway – there were very little footprints – the smallest tracks of little feet – walking across the driveway. At the beginning of the tracks – daddy had scratched the date – his mark of approval – of what his child had done. Jesus lived and died to save us. Jesus’ rising from the dead was His Father’s mark of approval. Jesus’ sacrifice was entirely sufficient to take away all our sins. There remains nothing – absolutely nothing for us to do to take our sins away. Jesus did it all for us! Even our faith – our heartfelt trust in Jesus’ forgiveness is a gift from God – worked by the Holy Spirit – through the Means of Grace. Even our faith is not something we do. It’s something the Holy Spirit accomplishes in us! God bless us this new year – as we continue to learn about Jesus’ love. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz