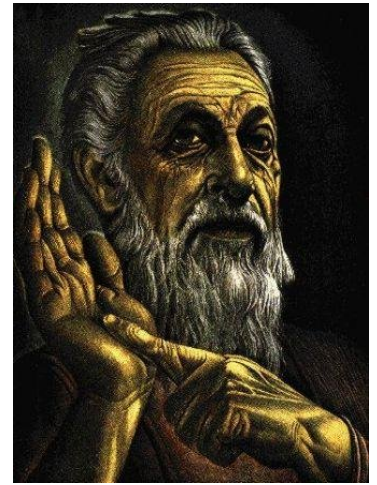


**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz**  
**Pentecost 19 September 21, 2008 Ezekiel 18:30-32**



**“Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!”**

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

John Luther Jones grew up in Cayce, Kentucky. When he was only 15 years old he went to work for the railroad. John Luther was a flagman – standing beside the tracks – signaling to the engineer. Then he was a brakeman – and finally an engineer. One day John Luther was driving a train near Michigan City, Mississippi. As they were hauling down the track – John Luther climbed out onto the running board to quickly oil the relief valves. Then he moved from the running board to the steam chest and then to the pilot beam to adjust the spark screen. As he was finishing this work – he looked down the track and saw a group of small children running across the tracks in front of the train. They all jumped across the track except a little girl – who suddenly was so afraid she just froze in fear on the tracks. John Luther yelled to the other engineer to reverse the train – and yelled to the little girl to get off the track. But she just stood there. So John Luther climbed down onto the cow catcher – that pointy part of the front of the train – and bracing himself there – he reached out – and scooped up the little girl – and saved her life! Can you imagine how tightly she held on to him? Can you imagine how tightly he held her? What a pale, pale picture of how Jesus rescued you and me – holding us tight – and keeping us safe in his nail marked hands! Today God’s Word again reminds us of the deadly ugliness of all our sins – and the power of Jesus unconditional forgiving love. Today God’s Word encourages us by the power of the Gospel to:

***Repent and Live!***

**1. Sin would be our downfall**

**2. But the LORD gives us a new heart!**

One of the advantages of going to our Lutheran Schools – our Trinity St. Luke’s Grade School – Lakeside, Luther Prep – Martin Luther College – is the study of Bible History. Bible History is the story of God’s grace – the story of God’s powerful determined love – down through the ages. Do we know Bible History? Do we know about Good King Josiah? We should! We say good morning – to a little man each Sunday – who is the namesake of Good King Josiah! God’s Word says, **Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem...Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the LORD as he did – with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength.”** 2 Kings 23:24f And yet – Josiah wasn’t perfect. Josiah didn’t listen to the Word of the LORD – when it was spoken to him through Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt. Pharaoh Neco told Josiah my quarrel isn’t with you. **God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God who is with me; or he will destroy you.”** Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He

would not listen to what Neco had said at God's command but went to fight him on the plain of Megiddo. Archers shot King Josiah and he died. Josiah made a fatal mistake. Refuse to listen to the LORD—and you will pay. **The wages of sin is death.** The Egyptians were the meanest dog on the block until just 605 years before baby Jesus was born. In 605 B.C. a battle was fought at a place called Carchemish. This was one of those battles that changed the world. In the battle of Carchemish the Egyptians were crushed by the Babylonians. A king named Nebuchadnezzar ascended the throne of Babylon. Just 8 years later Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem and 10,000 Jews—the brightest and the best—the most gifted and talented—including Ezekiel—were carried off literally a thousand miles—to live in Babylon. Everything would have been ok—if God's people would have endured this discipline—as the act of love from their Heavenly Father—as he intended it to be. But they didn't. The children of Israel rebelled against their Heavenly father and suffered the consequences. In 588 the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem. In July of 586—two years later—after unspeakable starvation and suffering—the walls of Jerusalem were breached and the city plundered. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, 586 B.C. the city and even Solomon's Temple itself were burned. It's perhaps hard for us to appreciate what this means. Jerusalem was in ruins. No one sat on the throne of David—no one! The Temple was a pile of rubble! No priests—to offer sacrifices and prayers. God's people carried off into exile or dead! Humanly speaking—it looked like the promise of a Savior—was never going to happen! It looked like God's promise to Adam and Eve would never be fulfilled! Imagine how Ezekiel must have felt in Babylon!

Ezekiel was preaching and teaching God's Word a thousand miles from home—to people who didn't want to hear it. No spanking—no discipline—at the time seems pleasant but painful. And God's people were complaining—it wasn't fair. It wasn't fair that their parents—their ancestors had sinned and they were suffering the consequences. Do you know how they felt! It happens all the time. Someone at school—says something disrespectful—and all of a sudden everybody loses part of their recess! Someone at boot camp complains that they don't want to run 3 miles in the rain—and suddenly everybody gets to run 4 miles in the rain. Some company makes bad financial decisions to the tune of not just millions but billions and even trillions of dollars—and we get to pay taxes to bail them out! It's not fair we cry. People were complaining that their Heavenly Father wasn't being fair either. It's not my fault—that the whole nation of Israel was being so wicked and sinful! But the God's Word says--**"Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign LORD.**

**Repent!** To repent is to be sad and sorry—to accept responsibility for your sins—and then trust in God's forgiveness for Jesus' sake. Yesterday was the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the very first airplane accident that cost a life. Did you know that? Yesterday—100 years ago—Orville Wright was taking his friend Thomas for an air plane ride. Then had only been in the air about 5 minutes—100 feet up—like three times as high as the Church ceiling—when suddenly the plane went nose first—down to the ground. Orville was injured—his friend Thomas—mortally wounded. Still in the hospital—Orville picked through the broken pieces—until he said—the cause of the crash was the blade of the propeller coming in contact with one of the wires! I don't know. I'm afraid—if I had been one of the Wright brothers—I might have thought it was my fault! My fault—for not checking everything more carefully. For not designing or building or maintaining the plane in such a way that the propeller couldn't hit one of the wires. I'm afraid I would have thought—my friend is dead—and it's my fault. If I had done something better—this would not have happened! Then—what I would have needed is not someone from the FAA

to tell me – “Oh, it isn’t your fault. Accidents happen! Nobody could have seen this coming!” No – I would have needed someone to say – Jesus died for every sin – every mistake – so that I am forgiven! My Heavenly Father has forgiven me! I know that forgiveness and believe in it!

**Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit. Why will you die, O house of Israel? For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!”** Jesus died on the cross to pay for all our mistakes. We are forgiven. Jeremiah repeats the proverb Ezekiel referred to too. In those days people will no longer say, **“The fathers have eaten sour grapes and the children’s teeth are set on edge. Instead, everyone will die for his own sin; whoever eats sour grapes – his own teeth will be set on edge... and then there is this powerful comfort. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, “Know the LORD,” because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,” declares the LORD “For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.”** Jeremiah 31:29f Our Heavenly Father has forgiven all our sins! I was warming coffee in the microwave the other day – when a talk show was on the TV. A very nice lady was talking about how school was starting and how that wasn’t always easy. She said she still remembers her first day of school – in 1<sup>st</sup> grade. And the teacher said to her, “I have taught 6 of your brothers and sisters – and you are the dumbest one yet!” And I thought – what a terrible thing to say! I thought – see – you say something hurtful and insensitive and people still remember that – 30 or 40 years later! And then I thought – you know what is just as bad? To remember that hurtful remark – and to tell everyone in America – that your teacher said that. The right thing to do – would be to forgive that sin. And then – like our heavenly Father – to remember that sin no more. To forgive and to forget – is to forgive like Jesus has forgiven me!

**“For I take no pleasure in the death of anyone, declares the Sovereign LORD. Repent and live!”** Repent and live! Sin is self and soul destructive. We cannot save ourselves! Only Jesus can save us. It is as simple as that! There is a TV program called Survivorman. The concept is painfully simple. They drop this man off again and again – in the middle of nowhere – armed with this little video camera and not much else. The object of the game is simply – to survive – not to die! They plunked him off the other day – in the middle of the Amazon Rainforest! After 4 days he had had practically nothing to eat. He got stung in the back where he couldn’t reach by some bug or wasp or hornet. He said – instinct is to smack a bug – but what that usually does is succeed in pushing their stinger into you. You are supposed to flick it! I didn’t know that! He made a blow dart tube to try and shoot a bird or monkey. He said the danger there – was to shoot the poison dipped dart into the tree branches above – and for the dart to miss – and fall back down – and poke you right in the eye! There are not a few natives blind in one or both eyes. You couldn’t think you would make that same mistake twice! But people do! And when you stop and think about it – don’t we do that – all the time? Don’t we make the same mistake over and over again and again? Don’t we break the same 10 commandments again and again? Doesn’t it all boil down to failing to love the LORD our God – with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our strength and with all our mind? Don’t we fail again and again – to love our neighbor – our closest neighbors – our own flesh and blood – like we love our self? Don’t we fail to repent – fail to admit our sins and mistakes – fail to ask for forgiveness? Survivor man in the Amazon – I only caught the last few minutes. But the survivor guy looked genuinely afraid! A jaguar was after him – in the dark – in the night. He paused for a moment – and you could hear this indescribable rumble from one very big cat. Faster and faster the survivor guy hurried down the path – toward the sanctuary of the village – where there was a fire – where there were people – I assumed with guns and machetes. When the survivor man

got to the village there was sanctuary – inside a shelter made of palm leaves! Here you could hear the jaguar again – with that deep throaty threat. But he didn't come in. The people were safe! We are safe – safe because Jesus promises to love us – promises to forgive us – promises to keep his lambs and sheep safe!

**Repent and live!** On April 29, 1900, John Luther (from Cayce, Kentucky) Jones was engineer on a train hauling just 6 cars – 188 miles – leaving 50 minutes after midnight – some 95 minutes late – determined in the fog and drizzle – to get the train there at the advertised time! The train was going some 75 mph – around a left hand curve – when the guy shoveling coal saw the red lights of the caboose – stopped on the tracks ahead. When he called out the warning – John Luther told him to jump to safety to save himself – and he did. John Luther pulled on the whistle – reversed the throttle – slammed on the air brakes – and hung on to the controls – as the train plowed through the caboose, a car full of hay, another full of corn and half way through a car of timber before the train jumping the rail! John Luther died staying at his post – to steady the train. A hand full of passengers were bruised. A man named William – slightly bruised his back and side. Insurance paid him \$25! Two postal workers were shaken up. They each received a dollar for their bruises. That's it. One man died – sacrificed his life – to save the people on his train. Jesus died – to save the people of the world – from all their guilty stains! Jesus died and rose again – that we might have **a new heart and a new spirit** – that we might live by grace through faith for Jesus' sake. Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

*Rev. Anthony E. Schultz*