

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Pentecost 19 October 11, 2009
James 4:7-12



Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?

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

It happened just the other day by Anchorage, Alaska – a whole bunch of walruses died – 131 mostly young walruses died. What happened? They were *trampled!* I wondered to my self – what kind of people would take pleasure in stomping on walruses – especially little ones? I read the article – it wasn't people who trampled them – it was other walruses! How could that be? Nobody was there to see it. But if you look at the broken little walruses – there are terrible signs of bruising. They think what happened was – the walrus herd was panicked. They think a polar bear or a hunter came near – or maybe a small airplane came near the herd and they panicked! Some have said – it was a case of trampling – a technical difference from a stampede! I don't know. What could make them so afraid – they would squash their own little ones? Walruses need to watch out for each other. We, too – as redeemed blood bought children of God – need to watch out for each other! That's what a Synod is – God's people – quite literally and figuratively and spiritually *walking together*. Today we are celebrating walking together Sunday. Today we are going to consider law and gospel in light of the fact:

Christ's Love Is Our Calling!

By the power of the Gospel

- 1. We glorify God, and**
- 2. We share the Gospel!**

Last Sunday and today we are thinking about God's Word from the letter of James. Remember James? Not – Peter and Andrew – James and John. Not James the Less – whose Mom saw Jesus die on the cross and risen from the dead Easter morning. But James – as in Matthew chapter 13--**"Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked. "Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't his mother's name Mary, and aren't his brothers James, Joseph, Simon and Judas? Aren't all his sisters with us?"** The James – the first Synod President in Jerusalem--Jesus protected through the Governor Festus – James stoned to death by Annus II and the Sanhedrin – James who is forever safe by Jesus in Heaven. James wrote about fruits of faith – **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.**

Submit yourselves, then, to God. In Adult Bible Class last Sunday – President Schroeder reminded us – the essence of our life as adopted Children of our Heavenly Father –

the essence of the purpose of our Synod – is to *glorify God*. As adopted children of our Heavenly Father – we are only able to glorify God because we are saved by grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone. This is the essence of the Lutheran faith. We believe in the power of the means of grace – the Gospel in Scripture and the Sacraments – baptism and Lord’s Supper.

Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you. Uncle Terry has written a book called *“No More Fear! Jesus, Evil Spirits and You”*. *No More Fear* is the story of Pablo – just 8 years old and his 12 year old sister Paloma. They are paddling their dugout canoe down the quiet river. It took longer than they thought – to catch the fish for supper – and as the wind blows harder and harder – it gets darker and darker around them. There is a mysterious shape above them – for a moment the clouds block out the moon. “I think I see something!” he exclaims softly. “Was it an evil spirit?” he asks, his voice now trembling! Children in the Amazon are afraid of almost everything. Imagine growing up in an extended family – with all your grandparents – all your aunts and uncles and cousins – all afraid of spirits. Imagine growing up thinking there are evil spirits everywhere – in the wild animals that want to have you for lunch – the jaguars, the pythons, the anacondas, the shushupees – the tarantulas and the other poisonous insects. Imagine being taught that there are evil spirits in the muddy river – in the canopy of trees far overhead – spirits in the winds and the spirits of dead relatives haunting the dark forest. Imagine shaman – witchdoctors – agents of the devil with their spells, their threats and their curses! The devil seeks to spread fear. The Gospel – Christ crucified and risen – is power, protection, safety and peace. **Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Come near to God and he will come near to you!** Remember the fundamentals of our saving faith. Remember – Jesus is always with you. You are never alone! Remember God’s Word. **“Can a mother forget her nursing baby and have no compassion on the child she has born? Though she may forget, I will never forget you!”** Isaiah 49:15 Remember God’s Word? **“As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who respect Him.”** Psalm 103:13 Since Jesus is always with you – you never need to be afraid. Again, remember God’s Word! **“Don’t be anxious about anything; but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God. And the peace of God – which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus!”** Remember the powerful words God uses to extinguish all our fears. **“God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though the waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.”** Psalm 46:1-3 And again God’s Word promises, **“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me.”** Psalm 23:4

Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up. It is a never ending quest – to keep your hands clean. When you visit people in the hospital – if they have something very contagious – or if they are immune suppressed – you have to put on a gown – and a mask and gloves – and you aren’t supposed to touch anything. And when you leave – you throw your stuff in bags – bio-hazard! And they have these really neat foam things mounted on the wall – juice to kill germs and bacteria! You can scrub your hands raw – and you can’t wash off the guilt that drove Lady Macbeth over the edge! Sin isn’t a joke! It’s not supposed to be the subject of late night talk show monologs. It’s nothing to laugh at. It’s a reason for mourning and sadness! Our sins caused all that Jesus suffered! We walk together – confessing our sins together in Church. And

soon we will kneel together to receive Jesus' true body and blood – the assurance that all our sins are forgiven! That is a priceless closeness – that we dare never take for granted!

Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother or judges him speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. We are the Synod. The Synod is not just people who work very hard in an office building across the road from the Mayfair Mall. The Synod is not just people who sit in cubicles – writing articles for the *Forward In Christ* – and cranking out new hymnals and supplements and bulk mailings. *We* are the Synod. The people who *walk together* glorifying Jesus by what we say. It is very tempting to slander people – to say bad things about bad people. It's very easy to see the sawdust in the eyes of other people. There are weeds in the cemetery where I take my walk. They are huge! There are three of them – as big as garbage can lids – right beside the road! And there's a guy on the far corner – that has this weed – that hangs over the edge of the sidewalk – that crawls out into the sidewalk – this spider web weed! It's easy to see these weeds – these flaws. What to do? I can help my neighbors in the cemetery – dig those big weeds out! I can stop for a moment – and pull that weed out – off the sidewalk. I can take a moment to look at my own yard. I have weeds growing in that little crack – at the bottom of my driveway. Before I worry about the weeds in anybody else's yard – I need to get the weeds out of my yard! It's the same with our life. It is not for us to judge our brothers and sisters. Human judging goes so badly – again and again. Take for example the marathon along the lakefront in Milwaukee this weekend. The person who won the marathon – who ran twenty six miles – then three football fields – and still wasn't across the finish line – the person who ran through that little ribbon thing first – was not the winner – not for long! They were disqualified! Their crime? During the race – some small person ran up beside them – and gave them a bottle of water! You see that all the time! Apparently – you can do that – except for people who actually have a chance of winning the race! If you get a cup of water – along the way – not from the official water places – you are disqualified. You can't win – even if you finish first! So the second place finisher wins. Right? No – they were disqualified, too! Their crime? Having an I-pod! You can't do that either? Why? I don't know. Maybe it's because listening to the right music – gives you the strength to keep on running. Maybe it's because listening to the right music can help you pace yourself – to keep running 5 minute miles – by pounding your feet to the beat. Nobody seems to know. But the rules are the rules. And if you break the rules – you lose! Apparently everybody knows it's against the rules – so why would you have an I-pod if it gets you disqualified? Sin is always a mistake. It never makes sense. It always causes spiritual hurt and harm!

There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor? There is only One to whom we are answerable. There is only One we are all accountable to! It is not for us to judge our brother – our neighbor. It is certainly not for us to judge our neighbor's motives – why they do what they do! We cannot see into our neighbor's heart. We cannot read their minds. We don't know what they are thinking – we can't! It is not for mothers-in-law to judge their daughter-in-law how she cooks or how she dresses or how she is raising *her* children! It is not for children in school to judge their classmates – depending on how well they play volleyball or basketball – how smart they are in math or spelling. We are answerable to the one Lawgiver and Judge! That means “hugs and kisses” are for people who are married – not people who kind of like each other. It means not living like husband and wife – unless you are husband and wife. It means we don't think we are oh, so superior – when other people are caught in sin – and we are so clever in our own

minds – we haven't been caught. We are answerable to Jesus – who knows all our sins – and was literally crucified to wash them all away.

Come near to God and he will come near to you. There was a lady – by the Adirondacks in New York – who left a bar at about 2 in the morning! She went off the road – in the dark – in the night. It was almost 40 hours later – before she was found! Can you imagine – how helpless you would feel – alone – far off the road? After 40 hours – would you despair of ever being rescued? A relative – someone who loved her – looked and looked until they found her! We were far more helpless than that – dead in trespasses – dead in going far off the road – far beyond what was right and good. Jesus not only searched for us. Jesus died to rescue us from our sins. We are the Synod. We are God's people – walking together. When you know Jesus' forgiving love – you can't keep it to yourself. When Jesus' forgiving love fills our heart – we will do everything we possibly can – to spread that love. We will come to Church and Sunday School and Bible Class to learn God's Word. We will read our Bible and ponder Scripture and pray about what we read. We will bring Jesus into everyday conversation. We will live our faith when we are driving and when we are working hard and when we are resting. We will be faithful stewards of this planet – because we know it belongs to God. We will not waste or squander anything – because we love Jesus. We will bring Thank-offerings – first fruits – to open home missions and send world missionaries unto the jungle to preach Christ Crucified. We will send our children to worker training schools and area Lutheran High Schools – to grow in faith. We will dedicate our lives to *walking together* beside Jesus – *glorifying him together. Amen!*

To God alone all glory!



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