

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Last Judgment November 9, 2008
Matthew 25:31f



When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left.

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

In 1960 a lady named Harper Lee published a book called *To Kill a Mockingbird!* The story is not a happy one. It takes place during three years of the Great Depression in a make believe place called Maycomb, Alabama. A six year old child named Scout tells the story of her older brother Jem and their widowed father Atticus Finch – a middle-aged lawyer. The story is about racial tension and prejudice in the Deep South. A young lady named Mayella is attacked and she accuses a man named Tom Robinson. Atticus Finch defends Tom. First by facing down a mob of angry men who want to lynch Tom. Then Atticus defends Tom in a trial that goes very badly. In spite of his innocence the jury convicts Tom. A desperate and hopeless Tom tries to escape from prison and is shot and killed. It gets worse! Mayella’s father Bob feels humiliated by the trial and vows revenge. He spits in Atticus’ face. He breaks into the house of the presiding judge. He menaces Tom’s widow and finally attacks 6 year old scout and her brother Jem as they walk home from school. A recluse neighbor – comes out into the night – to rescue Scout and Jem – and in the struggle Mayella’s father is killed! The Sheriff and Atticus decide – instead of another trial – they will agree to say Mayella’s father Bob fell on his own knife! What a painfully unhappy story with a painfully unhappy ending! That’s not how this world will end. This world will end when Jesus returns – like a thief in the night! When Jesus comes back – the sky will tear open – and there he will be – with all his holy angels around him. Suddenly Jesus will be back. And when he is back – God’s Word promises:

Jesus Will Judge Everyone!

- 1. Unbelievers will be condemned to eternal destruction**
- 2. Believers will be welcomed into Heaven**

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on today – is from the Gospel of the tax collector Matthew. We are reading from chapter 25. The end is very near. Chapter 26 begins with Jesus saying, “As you know, the Passover is two days away – and the Son of Man will be handed over to be crucified.” Then the chief priests and the elders of the people assembled in the palace of the high priest, whose name was Caiaphas, and they plotted to arrest Jesus in some sly way and kill him. “But not during the Feast,” they said, “or there may be a riot among the people.” Matthew 26:2-5 Jesus is in the home of Simon the Leper – having supper in Bethany – when he is anointed with a very expensive perfume from an alabaster jar. Soon Judas Iscariot agrees to betray Jesus. Jesus celebrates Passover one last time with his disciples – and establishes Holy Communion. Jesus tells his disciples they will all fall away on account of him. Peter says he will die with Jesus first. Jesus tells Simon Peter – before the rooster crows twice you will deny me three times! Jesus prays in Gethsemane where he is betrayed – denied and abandoned. There is a sham trial – before the Sanhedrin – where Jesus is condemned for

blaspheme—for saying he is the Son of God. Simon Peter denies even knowing who Jesus is. Judas despairs of Jesus' forgiving love. Pontius Pilate tries to wash his hands of Jesus' blood but he can't. The Roman soldiers torture Jesus then crucify him. Jesus dies on the cross—to pay for the sins of the world. His dead body is placed into the grave. The last chapter of the Gospel of Matthew begins with the Easter account. **"After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went to look at the tomb. There was a violent earthquake for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men. The angel said to the women, "Do not be afraid. For I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here. He is risen, just as he said. Come and see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples he is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him. Now I have told you."**

So it was just a little bit before his wondrous sacrifice to save us that Jesus explained about Judgment Day. **When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.** What do we know of glory? Can you think of the names of those two ladies who won all those outdoor volleyball games at the Olympics at Beijing? Can you remember the name of the guy who won all the swimming gold medals? He's really famous now—selling Frosted Flakes! The Phillies won the World Series—and who paid attention to that? Not many! Not many! I don't think there is too much glory any more in elected politics—to the point that people are so relieved that the ads on radio and TV are finally over! Is there glory in great earthly wealth? Perhaps to some. But most of the times I have seen Donald Trump he doesn't seem very happy. And Warren Buffet still lives in a pretty small home and I don't think he drives a Lamborghini. And Bill Gates will not be ahead—if when he dies he still thinks time spent in Church is wasted time! Jesus' glory will be wondrous indeed—a bright and shining glory that time cannot diminish. A glory that we will share—we will reflect—as we are gathered to be with him and all his glorious angels—singing his praises forever!

When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him. It's almost impossible to imagine how that will be. All the nations mean places around the world. Places like Comoros. Are you familiar with the Union of the Comoros? It's an island nation in the Indian Ocean—by Mozambique and Tanzania and Madagascar. Do you know those countries, too? Comoros comes from the Arabic word Qamar which means moon. The Comoros flag has a green triangle with a sliver of a moon and 4 stars—stripes of orange and white and red and blue. For the longest time the only export was coconuts! Now about 1/3 of the islands are used to produce ylang-ylang, vanilla, coffee, cocoa and sisal. Do you know what ylang-ylang is? It's essential food for Zoe's Imperial pigeons. It's an oil that comes from a delicate flower shaped like a star fish. This oil smells kind of like custard and jasmine. It is wondrous oil indeed—making your blood pressure go down—make your skin soft and it's very nice for hugs and kisses! There are about 2,000 people living in the Union of the Comoros. Jesus could tell you exactly how many people. The greatest problem would have to be this. Children on the Islands are taught to read and memorize the Koran. They don't know that Jesus died and rose again to take away their sins. You are talking about 2,000 people—all unbelievers! And that's just one place—off the coast of south eastern Africa. Of the six billion people alive on our planet today—they are but a sliver. But there are a hand full of people Jesus suffered to save. You don't need to

go literally thousands of miles away – to find people who don't know Jesus is their Savior. Now is the time to tell the people we know and love – that Jesus loves them too. We need to tell them now – before it's too late!

All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. Jesus is not simply going to point to hearts and minds – and say – because you have saving faith in your hearts and minds you are saved. He could – but he won't. Instead Jesus will point to fruits of faith – the evidence of faith obvious in how we live. Jesus will say, **“Come, you who are blessed by my Father – take your inheritance – the kingdom prepared for you from the creation of the world.** This reminds us that we are saved by grace alone! Heaven is an inheritance. You don't earn it. You don't deserve it. It's a gift God gives you because he loves you. Jesus will say, **For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat; I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink; I was a stranger and you invited me in; I was sick and you looked after me; I was in prison and you came to visit me.”** Do we do that? When you are watching TV and your spouse or your little brother or sister asks you to bring them a snack do you? Do you preheat the oven and bake some Pizza Rolls? When you go to get a soda – do you bring them one? My dad likes Classic Coke – lots of ice – lots of ice. My mom likes 7up with one lonely little ice cube – half a glass please! Do you ever bring your spouse breakfast in bed? Do you make your husband pancakes with sugar free syrup on Saturday morning with OJ with lots of pulp and coffee – with hazelnut, butter scotch and caramel? When you have pizza – do you have your half and their half – hey, hey, hey ! This is my half – maybe you could have some more salad? Invite a stranger in? Probably not into your house – but how about talking to a stranger? Do we do that? It's not the easiest thing in the world – but it can be done! With practice it becomes easier and easier. To look at people and smile at them and say something to them. Something about Jesus' forgiving love! And sick people. That happens all the time – that people are sick. They don't feel well. What do we do when that happens in our home? Do we become frustrated – that your not feeling well is going to spoil my plans? Or do we take concrete action to take care of them – to make them feel better? Do we bring them a blanket to cover up with? Do we bring them something warm or something cold to drink? Do we sometimes literally wipe their forehead with a cloth? Do we sometimes have to clean up which isn't easy – but we do it because we love them? And if we were ever in prison – falsely accused or guilty – what would be more wonderful – that someone to come and visit us and pray with us. When we do any of these things to our family or our relatives, our in-laws or our neighbors – we are really doing them for Jesus. Acts of kindness are not random. They are done with the purpose of glorifying Jesus! What we do to others we really do to him!

Two years after I was born a man named Reginald Rose wrote a play – a script for TV called *Twelve Angry Men*. The story begins – right after the prosecutor and then the defense attorney present their final arguments. The judge is giving his final instructions to the jury. The defendant is charged with murdering his own father. As in any American criminal case – there must be a unanimous verdict – either guilty beyond a reasonable doubt – or innocent. Back then – if the defendant were found guilty – there would be a mandatory death penalty. From the get-go everyone is convinced of the defendant's guilt – except one. One juror is certain the defendant is innocent. So one by one – he persuades and convinces each and every one of the other eleven jurors – to change their vote – from guilty to innocent – until the defendant is declared not guilty! It's all very powerful – very dramatic. There is passion in the arguments that are made – one after the other. There is the irresistible power of the truth – that persuades one mind after another. How much more powerful – the Gospel – made effective in the hearts and lives of God's people. And so – come Judgment Day – we will be taken home to heaven by grace alone – for Jesus' sake. Amen!