

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Advent Vesper III. December 16, 2009
Genesis 38:24b thru 26a



Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!" As she was being brought out, she sent a messenger to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are." Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I..."

This is God's Word!

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

Howard passed away just a few weeks ago. Howard was 88 years old. Howard was in WW II—a good soldier. He won two bronze stars and a good conduct medal. He fought with armored field artillery in Italy, Austria, Belgium, France and finally Germany. Howard didn't smoke. He didn't drink. He didn't chase ladies and he took orders well. After the war they said Howard was quiet – stuck pretty much to himself. Howard was a good Lutheran. He went to Church every Sunday and to Bible Class on Monday night. Howard had a very good opinion of himself. He had issues with his mom. And Howard was remorseless after Tuesday, September 6th – when Howard took a pistol and a whole bunch of bullets – and walked down River Street – in what came to be called the walk of death. Howard shot some 13 people that day – including 3 children. When Howard died the other day – no one – *no one* stepped forward – claiming to be his survivor. Would you? If you were related to Howard – would you want anyone to know? I don't think so! The fact is – all of us have relatives – people who are part of our family tree – who have done things that we are ashamed of. The fact might be – when it comes to our relation – we might well be the black sheep – the one that the rest of the family isn't proud of. Maybe we are the one that we feel in our heart of hearts – haven't lived up to our potential – haven't lived up to the family name – our parents and grand-parents are not proud of us! How sad is that?! There is again – comfort in God's Word – as we see Judah was a wretched sinner, too. There is comfort in this:

Jesus Is The Lion of Judah!

- 1. We deserve fire**
- 2. But Jesus gives us forgiveness!**

We are all pretty familiar with the fact that Jesus was descended from Adam. We know that first promise the LORD made to that serpent from the pit of hell – and to Eve and Adam. **I will put enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. He will crush your head and you will strike his heel.** Genesis 3:15 We might not use the word enmity a lot – but we know it's something bad. And we might not know who exactly who all the offspring are. But when it comes to crushing your head – we know that's Jesus smashing the devil. And that's the most important part. Last Wednesday Prof. Clark Schultz had that big screen in front of Church – on that very cold and snowy night. Remember? If they made a movie about your life – who would they cast in the part of you? Remember – the unlikely hero God chose? He chose Abram – not a grandpa at first – because he didn't have any children – much less

grandchildren! But Abram – and Sarai – well past the time of having children – were the ones the LORD chose – to be the father of many nations. Before you know it – Abraham and Sarah had relatives more numerous than the stars in the sky – more people than grains of sand on the sea shore. That’s how God keeps his promises! And now today – we are going to look at one more person – part of Jesus’ family tree. That person would be Judah.

If I were to ask you to tell me all you know about Judah – how long would that take? Do you remember a couple of years ago – Mrs. Linda Moeller wrote a song – composed a song for Christmas Eve – where the first four words were, “**Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah**”? Did you remember that? Think about Judah! What do you know? Maybe you are thinking – *I know, I know!* The southern Kingdom – when there was civil war and Israel was split in two – ten tribes to the north were called Israel – and the southern Kingdom was called Judah! There, I know that! OK... What else? That might be about it. Oh, and that part about Jesus being called the *Lion of Judah*. But that’s about it? Jesus is from Judah’s family tree – the Lion who does battle with death and the grave and wins the victory for us!

It is always – *always* important to understand the context – what’s going on around the part of God’s Word we are concentrating on. Chapter 37 is pretty familiar. Jacob – whose name the LORD changed to Israel – had lots of sons – a dozen sons – a dozen boys to grow up to help take care of their father’s sheep and lambs and goats and camels and cows and more! One of the lessons that Jacob had not learned from painful experience was the grief that came with having favorites. You would think – with Mom loving Jacob most – and Isaac loving Esau most – and all the trouble that came from that – Jacob would have been meticulous about loving his sons the same and treating them all the same. But you know he didn’t. The favorite – by far – and everybody knew it – the very favorite was Joseph. Joseph and his coat of many colors – or the coat with really big sleeves – the kind that took lots of extra fabric – but that’s ok – because dad loved him best! In chapter 37 Joseph went to check up on his brothers – when they threw him into a cistern – a pit – and were going to kill him – actually take his life – when according to God’s plan – the Midianites slave traders came by – and bought Joseph – to sell for a profit as a slave in Egypt. That’s what they did. They sold Joseph. Then they took his fancy ornamented coat – and tore it to shreds – shreds dipped in goat’s blood. So – Jacob is grieving – and his sons are on edge – careful not to say anything – in an unguarded moment – that might give away to their father what really happened – to Joseph – on his way to being a slave in the home of Potiphar! It is right here – that our Heavenly Father – puts a little interlude – an account of what happened to Joseph’s brother Judah.

Chapter 38 is not a happy chapter in God’s Word. It’s actually pretty uncomfortable. But the fact is – we don’t go to the doctor or the dentist because it’s comfortable. We go to the doctor because we know something is wrong..... As chapter 38 begins – Judah goes off – away from his family. He goes off by himself – and gets married to a woman – not from the children of Israel – not from people who know the LORD – the Great I AM – the God of the promise – of a Savior from sin and guilt. Instead Judah married a woman named Tamar. God’s Word says she was a Canaanite. Here was spiritual danger. Instead of being a spiritual encouragement to Judah to grow in faith in the one true God – she would be a temptation to the Canaanite worship. Canaanite worship was a soul destructive combination of idolatry and adultery. The Canaanite worship was fertility cult worship – sinful indulgence in “hugs and kisses”. These “hugs and kisses” were not just some beautiful romantic love in the forest by wild flowers. This was perversion and molestation and assault – the misuse and abuse of God’s gift of hugs and kisses – all in the name of gaining earthly wealth – more cattle – more crops – and more children to work the family farm. It was a horrible wickedness – that again and again –

corrupted God's people! When husband and wife love the One True God – they can encourage each other in faith. They can encourage each other to come to Church faithfully – hearing God's Word and coming to Lord's Supper. They can encourage their children – raising them up in the instruction and discipline of the LORD! I heard someone on the radio the other day say – their Mom was a Christian and their Father was Jewish – so they celebrated everything! I would imagine that involved all different kinds of cookies and feasting and beverages and traditions. But what about the way to Heaven? What do you do with Jesus on Maundy Thursday saying, **"No one comes to the Father except through me!"**?

Judah and Tamar were blessed with sons – Er and Onan and Shelah. God's Word says very simply and plainly – **Er, Judah's firstborn, (who was married to Tamar) was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death... Onan** was supposed to have children – for his brother – to preserve his family name. That was God's will. **Onan** refused! **What Onan did was wicked in the LORD's sight; so he put him to death also.** Judah had one son left – who was supposed to marry Tamar. But Judah was afraid he was as wicked – as god-less as his brothers. And Judah didn't want him to die, too, so he didn't let him marry Tamar – even though he knew that was God's will! What a tangled mess – when people resist the simple Word and will of God. ...**After a long time Judah's wife, the daughter of Shua, died. When Judah had recovered from his grief, he went up to Timnah, to the men who were shearing his sheep, and his friend Hirah the Adullamite went with him.** When it was sheep shearing time – it was like the harvest time. Shearing sheep and harvesting crops was pay day. It was often a time of celebrating – feasting – eating too much and especially drinking too much! Sound familiar? It is only one of the devil's time worn traps. To make celebrations an excuse for too much eating and way too much drinking. And when people have had too much to drink – they are very likely to indulge in other sins, too. They are very likely to think less than Godly thoughts – and say things that are less than Godly – and to do things that are not right. While Judah was spending time with his friends – shearing sheep and celebrating – his daughter-in-law Tamar – denied a husband – from her brothers-in-law set a trap for her father-in-law. She dressed up like a person who sells hugs and kisses. Judah was going to buy hugs and kisses for the price of a goat. He didn't have a goat – so he gave her his seal – a very tiny little rolling pin – with a design special for him – that hung on a cord around his neck. He gave her that little cylinder and his talking staff. That was pretty good assurance that the payment of one goat was on the way. Judah went home – and sent a friend with the goat. Tamar went home, too. She traded her lady of the evening outfit for her widow clothes again. It wasn't too long – before people realized – Tamar had a baby in her tummy!

When Judah found out – God's Word says, **Judah said, "Bring her out and have her burned to death!"** No mercy! Do you ever feel that way? People do bad stuff – and we want to see them punished severely! Drunk drivers crash into cars full of mommies with babies in their tummy and they die – while the drunk person is so limp – they are just fine! Somebody comes on TV – and they are sniffing – their wife or their children are missing – and they ask for help finding them. And then a few days later – when people are walking side by side arms length between them---they stumble upon their lifeless bodies – and come to find out – the person that was on the news crying – *asking for help to find them* – is responsible for taking their lives and trying to hide their bodies! And you would like them punished. And sometimes it's the people who you wait for and wait for and wait for – to go past you on the highway – and then – they turn right beside you – no turn signal – busy talking on their cell phone! And you wish someone was there to give them at least – an inattentive driving ticket! People in Washington – in charge of the IRS – and they don't pay their taxes – more taxes than you earn in years! And they say

oops! And they pay *no penalty – no interest* – because – they *just forgot*? It was an *innocent* mistake? It's so easy – when you see the mistakes – the failures and short-comings and unfaithfulness of professional golfers – to say – I hope they throw the book at them! I hope they have to pay! They should lock them up – and throw the key away! There is terrible hypocrisy when we want *everybody else* who makes mistakes punished very severely! And when we make mistakes – where is the compassion – the mercy – the forgiveness – the understanding???

That's what Judah thought when he said out loud, **"Bring her out and have her burned to death!"** No mercy! **As she was being brought out, she sent a messenger to her father-in-law. "I am pregnant by the man who owns these," she said. And she added, "See if you recognize whose seal and cord and staff these are." Judah recognized them and said, "She is more righteous than I..."** It was one of those moments like when the prophet Nathan told King David that little story about the rich man who stole the lamb that belonged to his poor neighbor – and roasted it – for his visiting company. **David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the LORD lives, the man who did this deserves to die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity." Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man!" ... Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD!"** 2 Samuel 12:5f Stop and think! Take a good hard look at our own thoughts and our own behavior. Stop and think about how we treat each other. Stop and think where I have failed – and I will be far slower to call for the death penalty for the mistakes of the people around me! I will be more merciful – even as Jesus is merciful to me!

I read on the Internet the other day – that there was a time when Albert Einstein was riding on the train. With his grey/white hair all poofed – and so – he would be hard to miss. As the story goes – the conductor came by to punch Einstein's ticket – and he couldn't find it. That's not hard to imagine either. They say often times people who are so smart when it comes to stuff like theoretical astrophysics and the theory of relativity – sometimes aren't so good with every day stuff – like where's my keys, where's my wallet and where's my ticket?! Well, Einstein couldn't find his ticket. No problem – as they say. The conductor says – that's ok, Mr. Einstein – I know who you are. Never mind. Well, a little while later the conductor came back through the railroad car – and there was Einstein literally on his hands and knees – looking all around under his seat. The conductor said again, "It's ok, Mr. Einstein! I know who you are!" To which Einstein is supposed to have said, "I know who I am too. I just don't know where I'm going!" That could be true, too! Do you know where you are going? We are going to heaven by grace alone – for Jesus' sake. The Lion of Judah – who is not ashamed to be called our Brother – our Savior! Amen!

To God alone all glory!

