

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
August 27, 2017
12th Sunday after Pentecost (WELS B.)
Hebrews 10:24-28 EHV.



Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works. Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. For if we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the full knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains any sacrifice for sins. Instead, there is a certain fearful expectation of judgment and a raging fire that is going to consume the enemies of God. Anyone who rejected the law of Moses was put to death without pity, on the basis of the testimony of two or three witnesses.

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

Humble people. I love humble people. They are often exceedingly gifted – and yet at the same time – don't act puffed up – don't act conceited. Take for example Garrison Keillor. If you listen to Public Radio on Saturday nights for years and years there was this program called A Prairie Home Companion. Part of A Prairie Home Companion would be the news from a make-believe place called Lake Wobegone – “*where all the women are strong, all the men are good looking and all the children are above average!*” Pastor Ingqvist is the pastor of Lake Wobegone Lutheran Church and Father Emil is the priest of Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility Catholic Church. Garrison Keillor always begins by saying, “It's been a quiet week in Lake Wobegone, my home town out on the edge of the Prairie.” We went and saw Garrison Keillor live the other day. A Pastor called on my cell phone while we were driving to Appleton Performing Arts Center and he said, “Seeing Garrison Keillor was on his bucket list.” Garrison Keillor is so humble he never says his own name – on the radio or live. He credits a writer named Sarah Bellum – get it? Cerebellum? Mr. Keillor presents for just short of 3 hours – resting only briefly – while a nice young lady sings – and he sits on a park bench. Intermission means the audience gets to stand up and stretch while Mr. Keillor comes down from the stage to the physical middle of the audience to lead us in singing Silent Night, Amazing Grace, How Great Thou Art and God bless America. Singing songs of thanksgiving and praise. How about that? It's not Christmas yet – but let's sing Silent Night and we did. And like Midwest Lutherans we sang in more than 4 parts. When you stop and think about it – our whole life is one of thanksgiving and praise. How wonderful – every time we come together to hear God's Word and to sing His praises! How wonderful today that together we can:

Come and Hear God's Word!

- I. Our sins deserve God's raging fire***
- II. God's grace encourages love!***

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today is from the letter to the Hebrews! If you are familiar with *The People's Bible Commentary* the volume on Hebrews was written by Pastor Richard Lauersdorf. Pastor Lauersdorf was pastor at St. John's, Jefferson for a hundred years, and so? Pastor Lauersdorf rightly reports we don't know who wrote the Letter to the

Hebrews. Again Prof. Jeske would say, “What God’s Word doesn’t tell you – be happy not to know!” If you had to guess – odds are it was not the Apostle Paul. How can you tell? The vocabulary – the words that the Apostle Paul used – not the words you find in the letter to the Hebrews – not the same vocabulary – certainly not the same style. The person who wrote Hebrews did not learn law and gospel directly from Jesus Himself, but from **“those who heard Him.”** The writer to the Hebrews moved in the circle of the Apostle Paul’s friends – he mentions **“brother Timothy”** – Hb. 13:23 which is why we can say that! Best guess? Martin Luther strongly suggested Apollos. What do you know about Apollos? Acts 18:24,25 EHV says, **A Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man and well versed in the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. He spoke with burning zeal and taught the facts about Jesus accurately, although he knew only the baptism of John.** By the grace of God – the writer to the Hebrews was eloquent. That gift from God – where a person can speak or write – and you are not aware of the passage of time! Sometimes – if you have been at a banquet or a dinner there will be a person I like to call the *after dinner mint!* A person who is supposed to talk and tell some stories – kind of like Garrison Keillor. The after dinner mint person – is maybe supposed to speak while people have their dessert – say speak for a ½ an hour – at the same time – it’s supposed to feel like just 10 minutes. If, after 10 minutes it feels like it has been ½ an hour that’s not so good. Eloquent – is a gift from Jesus – by the power of the Holy Spirit to touch ♥s! Martin Luther would say to preach the Law that strikes *terror* in the heart of the person painfully sad and sorry for their sins. To lift them up on eagles’ wings at the good news that their Savior has washed away all their sin. To fill them with an anticipation for Heaven that causes them to pray all the time, **“Even so come quickly Lord Jesus! Come quickly to take me to my heavenly home!”** Apollos was such a man – an eloquent and gifted speaker that used his profound knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures to preach Christ crucified!

Let us also consider carefully how to spur each other on to love and good works. Because Jesus loves us first and Jesus loves us best – we have power from Jesus to encourage each other bear fruit of faith. Fruit like **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control!** Spurs are something you can wear when you ride a horse. I know people who know all about riding horses. They will be the first to tell you you don’t jam spurs into the tender side of a horse in front of their back legs. A softest gentle touch – a tap with the spurs and a horse will run hard and fast. Tap them again with your spurs and they will run even faster. Jam your spurs into their side and they will surely rear up and kick and rear up until you surely fall off – or they will run under the nearest large bough of a tree and scrape you off. Jesus did not and we will not jam our spurs into the ♥s of family members or fellow believers to encourage love and good works. Often times the most powerful encouragement comes in the form of a quiet example. Encourage love by showing love! How can you do that? All you have to do is look through the eyes of faith! Encourage is not to criticize or find fault or point out failure! Encourage is not to complain and tear down and point out mistakes. Jesus spent a lot of time saying – don’t be so quick being a saw dust inspector – finding this little crumb of saw dust in our neighbor’s eye when there is this huge barn board in our own eye. We need to get the plank out of our own eye before we can see clearly to tweezer out the dust in our neighbor’s eye. Concerning the woman caught in the act – caught in the *act* of sinful “hugs and kisses” – **Jesus said: “Let the person who is without sin throw the first stone!”** When we are painfully aware of our own weaknesses and failures we won’t have time to point out other people’s flaws and failures! More and more we need the attitude of the Apostle Paul who wrote, **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners of whom I am the worse!”**

Let us not neglect meeting together, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other, and all the more as you see the Day approaching. Habits – things we do all the time – comfortable things – almost second nature – we feel funny if we don't! Know what I mean? Some people I am related to – are in the habit of getting ready for the morning – the night before! In the kitchen they set out their juice cup, their coffee cup, their instant oatmeal envelope and their soup spoon. Every morning they have ½ a glass of OJ – some pulp – half the calories! They pour the oatmeal into the bowl – an oatmeal package of water – 1 minute in the microwave. One cup of coffee – brewed the day before – 1 minute in the microwave. They are ready for the FOX news – while they eat their breakfast. There are countless examples – how you get washed up in the morning? How you brush your teeth – floss – mouth wash? Do you have a place where you put your car keys – same place always? Habits! There are good habits and bad habits! Do you know your bad habits? Are you even trying to change them – or is it hopeless? People don't change! I hear that all the time! People don't change! Christians *change!* They must! The definition of someone/anything that is alive is – it grows – it changes! When Jesus is in our ♥ through the Gospel – through the means of grace – we will grow – we will change! We must! *We will – by the power of the Gospel!!*

Don't neglect coming to church, as some have the habit of doing. Rather, let us encourage each other! I will meet you in Church! Then we can go out to Highway Harry's for brunch! I will meet you in Church – and then go to Bible Class! I have often heard people say – Pastor, I don't need to come to Church. I pray all the time! Praying all the time is wonderful. God's Word says, **"Pray without ceasing!"** Pray all the time. But that doesn't mean you don't need to come to church. Read your Bible! 40 years ago – my Bishop said, "I know people who do not go to church – who say they pray all the time! I have never met anyone who says, "I don't go to Church – but I read my Bible all the time!" Why not? Because you can't read your Bible all the time without being reminded again and again – to come to Church!" Read your Bible all the time and come to church all the time – and your prayer life will be so much richer! You will pray about more and more *spiritual* things – about your faith and forgiveness and thanksgiving for blessings – and opportunities to serve Jesus and share Jesus and to love and forgive one another! Don't neglect coming to Church – for worship! Worship is praise and thanksgiving! I will never forget someone who came to Church here for the 1st time to the Liturgy called Morning Praise. On the way out of Church he asked – where was the confession of sins and absolution? It's not part of Morning Praise. Where was the confession of faith – the Apostles' Creed or the Nicene Creed or the Athanasian Creed? That's not part of Morning Praise either? Why not??? Worship is singing for Jesus! Worship is literally down on your knees! In Nigeria they have kneelers – bare 2x4s that cut into your knees when you kneel to confess your sins – kneel to say your prayers – kneel in lowliness and humility because of your painful hurtful mistakes! Worship is bringing a thank-offering! Is that what you think of – when you put your gift into your thank-offering envelope? Worship is listening to God's Word! Worship is praying for others! Worship is not about what's in it for me! Worship is thanks and praise!

What's important to you? Is worship about praise and thanksgiving – gathering with fellow believers to give glory to our crucified and risen Lord Jesus? Tom Bodett wrote a book kind of like the news from Lake Wobegone. In one chapter he tells the story of his family life up in Alaska in a modest trailer home. The mom is making/frying bacon and it flares up and the next thing you know – the fan/vent above the stove is on fire. A splash of water only succeeds in spreading the flames – in only a few moments – the trailer house is on fire! Get the children out – get the children out – before it's too late. Like a mother hen pushing her chicks – the mom literally pushes her children down the long hall – toward the door at the other end of the trailer.

As they are mushing down the hall the mommy looks and there is the check book, the credit cards, the coffee cup with cash and coin in it – grab that? Then she sees the pictures – the photographs – the school art projects – quite literally irreplaceable – grab them – then wait! There are the guns – the rifles and pistols – antiques, keepsakes – and remember they live in Alaska – polar bears? Grab them – but wait – once their home quite literally goes up in flames – the children will have to sleep over some place! They need their jammies and their tooth brushes. That’s what she grabs – and the door bangs shut behind them and the flames are everywhere! And she has succeeded in saving what? The mommy realizes of all the things she might have saved – as far as *things and stuff* go – she had saved what is the cheapest – the most easily replaced – the least important thing she could have possibly saved! Can you see how that could happen! What is precious? What is valuable? What matters more than anything? Quite literally the † of Christ and His empty tomb! What matters more than anything? God’s Word – the Gospel of sin forgiven and heaven won. What matters more than anything? To come and hear God’s Word and receive Lord’s Supper – to grow in faith and remain in that saving faith until we see Jesus face to face. To say, “Thank you, Jesus”, forever!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schwetz

