

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz**

July 2, 2017

**4th Sunday after Pentecost
(WELS B.)**

Lamentations 3:22-33



²² Because of the LORD's great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. ²³ They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. ²⁴ I say to myself, "The LORD is my portion; therefore I will wait for him." ²⁵ The LORD is good to those whose hope is in him, to the one who seeks him; ²⁶ it is good to wait quietly for the salvation of the LORD. ²⁷ It is good for a man to bear the yoke while he is young. ²⁸ Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. ²⁹ Let him bury his face in the dust— there may yet be hope. ³⁰ Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. ³¹ For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. ³² Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. ³³ For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone.

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

Someone asked me the other day how many weddings have I done? I said, "I don't know!" There is certainly nothing wrong with knowing how many people I baptized or confirmed or married or buried. Nothing wrong with keeping meticulous records of such things but a long time ago I read the Scriptures where King David decided to take a census of God's people in order to know just how many people were fighting men— able to handle a sword—to fight *for King and country!* King David's commander Joab begged the King— *don't do it.* But David insisted and David's Heavenly Father was not pleased! **David said to God, "I have sinned greatly by doing this. Now, I beg you, take away the guilt of your servant. I have done a very foolish thing. The LORD said to Gad--David's seer, "Go and tell David, 'this is what the LORD says: I am giving you three options. Choose one of them for me to carry out against you.'" So Gad went to**

David and said to him, "This is what the LORD says: 'Take your choice: three years of famine, three months of being swept away before your enemies, with their swords overtaking you, or three days of the sword of the LORD – days of plague in the land, with the angel of the LORD ravaging every part of Israel.' Now then, decide how I should answer the one who sent me." David said to Gad, "I am in deep distress. Let me fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is very great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men." So the LORD sent a plague on Israel, and seventy thousand men of Israel fell dead. And God sent an angel to destroy Jerusalem. But as the angel was doing so, the LORD saw it and was grieved because of the calamity and said to the angel who was destroying the people, "Enough! Withdraw your hand." 1 Chronicles 21
So – I have never kept track of how many baptisms I have done – not kept track of how many confirmations or weddings or funerals.

I can tell you this – perhaps one of the very saddest funerals was some 32 years ago. It happened in October. A little girl – just 1 year, 9 months and 21 days old was playing in her front yard with her cousins. Her mommy was the front yard, too. All the little people started to run toward the country road. The mommy yelled for everyone to stop and everyone did – except one little girl who ran down into the ditch – up onto the gravel shoulder – and then just a step or two onto the blacktop. A little grandpa was driving by and never saw her. That little girl took her next step in Heaven – by Jesus her Savior! It is when the saddest and most painful things imaginable happen that God's Word today is essential truth:

The LORD's Compassion Never Fails!

- 1. Jesus' forgiving love is fresh every morning**
- 2. In the midst of trouble Jesus loves you!**

Prof. Gosdeck – who used to be our member here at St. Luke's wrote the People's Bible Jeremiah and Lamentations. Prof. Gosdeck points out the title for this book of the Old Testament was its first Hebrew word – **How**. During the Intertestamental years – the 400 years between Malachi and the coming of the Christ-child – the Old Testament Hebrew was translated into Greek – it was called The Tears of Jeremiah. When it was translated into Latin it was called The Lamentations of Jeremiah. Lamentations is Hebrew poetry. Chapters 1,2 and 4 are acrostics. That means each verse begins with the next verse of the Hebrew alphabet. It's one of those neat things to help

you memorize. There are 22 letters in the Hebrew alphabet – so chapters 1, 2 and 4 have 22 verses. Chapter 3 is a triple acrostic. Three verses for “A”, three verses for “B”, three verses for “C”. Chapter 3 has 66 verses.

Lamentations is written in the context of the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Between the terror attack on 9.11 and such I don't think it's too hard for us to imagine what it must have been like when the walls of Jerusalem were breached – Solomon's Temple crushed – and the people in Jerusalem either put to death or dragged off literally a thousand miles to Babylon. The Prophets called God's people to repentance. And when they stubbornly refused God's crushing judgment came down upon them. The Assyrians, then the Babylonians, then the Romans were a painful scourge. And still God's people continued to rebel. Still the Lord remained faithful to His people – even on the darkest days!

Have you read Lamentations – recently – *ever*? The poet speaks: Chapter 1 – verse 1f: **How deserted lies the city, once so full of people! How like a widow is she, who once was great among the nations! She who was queen among the provinces has now become a slave. Bitterly she weeps at night, tears are upon her cheeks. Among all her lovers (*nations like Egypt and her other political and military allies – places where she sought security and comfort – instead of from the LORD*) there is none to comfort her. All her friends have betrayed her; they have become her enemies.** Chapter 3 also paints a painful picture. **I am the man who has seen affliction by the rod of his wrath. He has driven me away and made me walk in darkness rather than light; indeed, he has turned his hand against me again and again, all day long. He has made my skin and my flesh grow old and has broken my bones. He has besieged me and surrounded me with bitterness and hardship. He has made me dwell in darkness like those long dead. He has walled me in so I cannot escape; he has weighed me down with chains. Even when I call out or cry for help, he shuts out my prayer. He has barred my way with blocks of stone; he has made my paths crooked. Like a bear lying in wait, like a lion in hiding, he dragged me from the path and mangled me and left me without help. He drew his bow and made me the target for his arrows. He pierced my ♥ with arrows from his quiver...** We are not used to hearing such harsh judgment are we? We are used to *a mighty fortress is our God, a trusty shield and weapon.* We are used to **God is our refuge and strength an ever present help in time of trouble.** We are used to, **“I will**

lift up my eyes to the hills – where does my help come from? My help comes from the name of the LORD!” We are used to the LORD – the cavalry that rides to our rescue! We are not used to the crushing judgment our sins deserve! We pray, **“God be merciful to me a sinner!”** And the Pastor announces mercy and forgiveness – safety and deliverance! Here are painful consequences because of our stubborn rebellion and wickedness!

And yet – come chapter 3 verse 22 some of the sweetest comfort in all of Lamentations. Back in the mid-1970 I sat in Prof. Jeske’s class – reading through the Old Testament. Chapter 3 verse 22 and following – the yellow magic marker highlighter colors these verses! **22 Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.** When a person is in great distress there are only a few places to look. You can look around – at doctors and surgeons – specialists at UW in Madison – specialists at the Mayo Clinic – specialists at Theda-Clark in Neenah/Menasha. I have visited people who had been treated at all these places and ultimately died. The older you get the more you realize Physicians and Surgeons are often very gifted people. And yet – ultimately they will lose every single patient. Ultimately doctors die too! You can look down in depression, worry, doubt and despair and that’s no good either! I had a friend who found out he had cancer and in the blink of an eye – he despaired. He counted cancer a death sentence – rather than an enemy to be fought against. Within a week he quit eating, quit drinking, quit sleeping, quit fighting. Within a week he was dead. When you are in great distress you can look within – and there you will find weaknesses, flaws, insecurities, doubts and all the painful mistakes of the past. When we are in great distress there is only place to look for help – our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ! Look to Jesus for sanctuary, rescue and deliverance. Like Daniel in the Lions’ Den – like the three men in the fiery furnace – like Paul and Silas in the dungeon in Philippi. When it looks hopeless – the LORD is our Hope and our Salvation! **22 Because of the LORD’s great love we are not consumed, for his compassions never fail. 23 They are new every morning; great is your faithfulness.** Every morning – we begin each new day with the LORD! His faithfulness never fails!

28 Let him sit alone in silence, for the LORD has laid it on him. 29 Let him bury his face in the dust – there may yet be hope. 30 Let him offer his cheek to one who would strike him, and let him be filled with disgrace. I

have told you about my Uncle Paul – Uncle Paul and Uncle George fought on the beaches of Normandy. Uncle Paul had what are called defensive wounds. You know all about that if you watch cops and robbers shows – murder mysteries. Uncle Paul had defensive wounds – all little bits of shrapnel – hot scraps of metal from artillery shells and grenades and explosions – bits of shrapnel that burned into his arms. Years after the war – we would sit in Uncle Paul’s basement – on stools – drinking root beers. Uncle Paul was forever scratching and picking at his arms. And from time to time – he would literally bleed – and a little bit of metal would come out. And he would say, “Another piece for my collection!” – and put another little piece in an ash tray on the bar! Jesus did not have defensive wounds. When the Temple Guard – the soldiers of Pilate and Herod met this Carpenter turned Rabbi who claimed to be the Son of God – they slapped Him, spit in His face, blind folded Him and said, “**Prophecy! Who hit you?**” They made a crown of thorns and pushed in down on His tender forehead with sticks. They so bruised Jesus’ face – it didn’t even look human anymore! And Jesus didn’t turn away. He didn’t duck their blows or try and protect Himself in any way! Jesus literally turned the other cheek! All this on account of my sins and your painful hurtful selfish mistakes. All this Jesus endured to pay for our sin – our cold and rebellious ♥!

³¹ For no one is cast off by the Lord forever. ³² Though he brings grief, he will show compassion, so great is his unfailing love. ³³ For he does not willingly bring affliction or grief to anyone. I will never forget the time I was visiting at UW in Madison. There was a bunch of construction going on – so I had to go through some detours – to get to where I was trying to go. I had to go through the brain trauma department. There was a very large room full of beds. Each person in each bed had one of those daisy wheels – a heavy metal wheel – fastened all around by screws that were threaded literally into a person’s skull! There was a harness that was fastened to the bed and to the person’s shoulders. Their head was utterly immobile! None of the patients seemed to have their eyes open. The middle of this daisy wheel was full of nurses hurrying back and forth. There were wires everywhere – monitors everywhere. It was very quiet. Past the brain trauma I stepped into a hall where a young man wearing jammie bottoms was walking with his girlfriend. The man had what looked like Vaseline – smeared all over his back and chest and arms.

He was saying frantically to her – “Back to my room! Back to my room! I need to put more salve on. The air is getting to my burns and I can’t stand it!” Turn away from the burn ward – into Pediatrics! Everywhere there were little children – lots of little people in their jammies and robes – their little heads all bald – no hair – no eye brows! Their eyes sunken – dark and hollow. And in their hand – their IV pole – big and small bags of clear chemicals going into a tube – a needle taped into their thin little arms. They walked with that IV pole like it was literally a part of them. I made my visit – listened to a recitation of symptoms, tests and results--plans for complicated treatments. Recalled God’s Word and prayed. And now I could make my way back to the parking ramp – remembering what letter – what number – push my little card into the parking gate and drive myself home literally 73 mph – listening to music without commercials – drinking cold and fizzy beverages. My light and momentary sufferings are not worthy to be compared to the joy that we will know when we step into Heaven! **In all these things we are more than conquerors through Jesus who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future nor any powers, neither height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God that is ours in Christ Jesus!** So we say again, “Thank you, Jesus!” Amen!

To God alone all glory!

