

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by
Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Lenten Vesper #4.
March 22, 2017
Luke 23:32-34



³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. ³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And they divided up his clothes by casting lots.

Children of our Heavenly Father, precious in His sight for Jesus’ sake:

If you listen to the News – or watch the news on TV or look at the news on the Internet or read *The Watertown Daily Times* – you read about criminals. This is nothing new! Back in 1888 in Whitechapel – the east end slums of London there was a murderer – a slasher – a killer! He killed the *Canonical 5* – Mary, Annie, Elizabeth, Catherine and another Mary. He did such horrible violence to his victims they called him Jack the Ripper. No one was ever convicted of these terrible crimes or 5 more very similar murders. There are no less than 100 theories as to who the actual killer was – but only Jesus knows for sure. Does it frustrate you – that somebody committed such unspeakable crimes and got away with it? Or did they? Shouldn’t somebody pay for these unspeakable crimes? Somebody did. Jesus Christ – the Son of God and the Son of man – Jesus of Nazareth – my Savior and yours. Jesus died between two common criminals – executed for my

crimes and your sins. Jesus died for all of us! Today – the 4th Mid-week Lenten Vesper God’s Word says:

Repent! Turn to Jesus! He longs to forgive you!

At my house – we watch situation comedies – a hand full of families with neighbors and co-workers and relatives that deal with every-day troubles and frustrations with all sorts of clever conversation. The other thing we watch are situation dramas – mostly police officers and detectives and very clever criminals and lawyers. The good thing about these programs is – usually 60 minutes minus fast forward commercials and the bad guys are caught and very often pounded and put in prison. Case solved! Seldom if ever do I feel much pity for the criminal! Do you? More and more often the bad guys are terrorists – blowing up a bridge and innocent women and children are killed – or a drug addict breaks into a pharmacy and steals medication and shoots the elderly druggist for not giving him hundreds of pills fast enough – or bank robbers kill the tellers for not getting the money fast enough – and hostages are taken and abused – or all sorts of people are the victims of unspeakable hurtful evil and we are left saying, “Oh my!” “Oh no!” Often times when we watch these programs – they show something painfully terrible. And then – in a moment – the entire scene changes – and you see in big print – hours or days or weeks or even months earlier. It is of course called a “flash back”! If you were in Church last Wednesday – you heard Pastor Timothy Dolan preach on Luke chapter 23 – just like today is Luke chapter 23. Pastor Timothy Dolan preached on Luke 23: 35 through 43 – verses 35 through 43. Today we are doing Luke chapter 23 – flash back³² through 34 – the 3 verses just before last week. I don’t think I ever saw that before – Passion History – flash back! Before the sign that says, “Jesus of Nazareth – the King of the Jews!” Before the Chief

Priests and Elders sneering-**“He saved others – He can’t save Himself!”** Before you hear both criminals mocking Jesus – then the Holy Spirit working a powerful change in the ♥ of one! Before you hear again and again – **“I didn’t expect that!”** Before that we read:

³² Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. ³³ When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals – one on his right, the other on his left. It’s called guilt by association. You want to make Jesus look bad? You put Him to death like a common criminal – between two common criminals. People take one look – and as quick as people are to judge – they will assume Jesus is just like them in more ways than one! Execution – put to death by the government – is death reserved for the worst of the worst! Execution is not for jaywalkers or someone who throws a half-smoked cigarette out their car window or someone who turns north out of the 4th Street Kwik Trip out of the north most driveway ignoring the little 8 ½ by 11 sign that says no left turn here! Capital punishment is reserved for murderers and people who do unspeakable evil! And there was Jesus – being tortured to death between two criminals.

When they came to the place called the Skull, they crucified him there, along with the criminals--*The People’s Bible* says, “Jesus is crucified at the place called “the Skull.” The Aramaic word for skull is *gulgulata* (Golgotha); the Greek is our word *cranium*, which was translated into Latin as *calvaria* (Calvary). This spot was given this name, no doubt, because of its particular shape.

³⁴ Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” People taken toward their own execution are seldom quiet. What do you suppose they say? I would imagine most often there are three main schools of thought. First

there would be bargaining. Let's make a deal! Let me go – spare my life – and I will give you whatever you want! Money? How much money do you want? I have family – I have friends – I can sell my car – sell my home – sell all my “things and stuff” and you can have it all – just don't hurt me! If that fails – there is always the threat – you hurt me – and I have friends who will hurt you! I have friends – relatives – family – who are deer hunters. I have family and friends who have shot black bear – even grizzly bears. They will hunt you down if you don't let me go! I'm not kidding. And if that fails – there is always cursing and swearing – calling down on you eternal destruction and worse – all the filthy and gross and horrible words I know – all on you – on your head – on the heads of you and everyone you love! Eternal destruction on you forever! But that's not what Jesus said!

³⁴ **Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Forgive them?!** That's not the first thing that comes to the human ♥! Revenge! Get even! Make them pay! Are you familiar with the DC Comics – the Green Arrow? The Green Arrow shoots hunting arrows with green painted tips made of razor sharp edges – dipped in green paint. The Green Arrow has a small creamy brown note book full of the names of bad guys – horrible hurtful murderous guys. And one by one the Green Arrow takes them out – permanently! This is not a new concept! How old do you have to be to remember Bernard Goetz – a kind of nerdy looking little man who was on a New York Subway – 3 days before Christmas – when 4 men attempted to rob him. Bernard pulled a pistol – a .38 and shot and wounded all 4 of them. Bernard turned himself in 9 days later and was tried for attempted murder, assault, reckless endangerment, and several firearms offenses and was found innocent on all counts by a jury of his peers – except for one unlicensed firearm charge! He

served 8 months of a 1 year sentence. And many – not all but many people would say it was self-defense! This is not what Jesus did. Jesus prayed for the people who were crucifying him. Jesus prayed, **“Father forgive them!”**

“Father, forgive them for they do not know what they are doing!” Forgive *them!* That would be Adam and Eve—who were literally living in Paradise – Heaven on earth – with only one rule – one simple rule – “Don’t eat the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil! That’s it! The only rule – and they think – boy that looks pretty delicious. And it makes you smart, too! And I’m not going to die – but I’ll be more like God?! Adam and Eve had no clue – the pain and grief and bloodshed and plague and pestilence and death they were unleashing on the world! **Father, forgive them!** Forgive the disciples that were so emotionally exhausted they couldn’t keep watch and pray for one hour – while Jesus was in such agony of soul his sweat was dark with blood! Forgive Judas who sold his Lord for the price of a slave. Forgive Simon Peter who lashed out with a sword – then cursed and swore again and again, “I don’t know the man!” And the rooster crowed! **Father forgive them! Them** is Annas and Caiaphas – in their high priestly robes – with pride and arrogance in their ♥s as they accused the innocent Lord Jesus! The man who slapped Jesus – the people who spit on Jesus – blind-folded Him and said, ““Prophesy! Who hit you?” **Them** is the Roman soldiers who scourged Jesus until his back was bruised and bleeding. The soldiers who made a crown of thorns and then used stick to hit it – so it made Jesus’ forehead bleed. King Herod who hoped to see Jesus perform some miracle and asked Him a whole bunch of questions. The soldiers who dressed Jesus in an elegant robe. The soldiers who actually hammered the nails through Jesus’ hands and feet – then dropped his † into the hole in the ground. The

people who stood at the foot of Jesus' \dagger and said, "He saved others – but he can't save himself!" **Father forgive them!** The people you see on the news – doing the perp walk – the police pushing their heads down as they load them into the back of the squad car. The people who have their mug shot on the Internet – the caption says they were executed last night for serial murders and unspeakable assaults! **Father forgive them.** Them is we who come to Church every Sunday and every Wednesday during Advent and Lent. People who come to Lord's Supper twice a month and more during Ash Wednesday and Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and more! We who always read Meditations and always read Forward In Christ and always read our Bible! Forgive me – the countless times my thoughts have wandered to terrible horrible wicked and gross thoughts! Father forgive me the countless times I have sinned against better knowledge! Forgive me for I am utterly without excuse! Forgive me my ten thousand sins!

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing!" Don't know – don't understand – don't realize what they are doing is so very wrong! I'm sure the Roman soldiers – the whole Praetorium that showed up that Friday morning to pound on some carpenter from Nazareth – turned traveling Rabbi and Preacher – had no idea they were punching the Son of God. It bothers me – more and more as I get older and older – to think of all the times I make mistakes – sins – out of ignorance! If you go to the Kwik Trip on my end of town – after you get gas and maybe a cup of caramel coffee – Karuba – if you want to turn north on 4th Street – you are supposed to turn left – out of the far south driveway – not – I repeat not out of the driveway closest to the car wash. There is a little sign-behind a post – that says no left turn! You see – it's too close to Hwy 16 – people

turning right/turning south onto 4th street. It's a small sign. I have watched – and people turn north from the north drive way all the time! That's wrong! It's wrong – and yet hardly on a par with what happened 4 years ago. A nurse in a NICU in Seattle-- accidentally gave 10x too much of a medication to a little preemie with a terrible ♥ condition! The little baby died. And then just a few months later – the nurse who made that fatal mistake despaired! A tragedy upon another tragedy! The truth is – everybody sins all the time. It is no small thing! We are making mistakes – all the time! For every sin – the ones we don't know and the ones we do know – Jesus died! He washed away every sin!

³⁴ Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing." Once upon a time – I used to think I would like to be an attorney! Once upon a time-I used to think I would like to make an impassioned plea to a jury – to argue before a Judge – to pound the guilty – to declare the falsely accused – not guilty! Everything would be black and white – so simple! Then comes cases like the other day. A little grandma – hypothetically – 84 years old – my Mom's age. She is driving – her husband of 61 years beside her – two little grandmas – sisters in the back seat. The little grandma driving – blows a stop sign – going 59 mph through an intersection – striking a Ford Frontier – hypothetically – broadside! People in the SUV injured. Her husband in the passenger seat – killed – the little grandmas in the back seat both killed! The question is – do you charge the little grandma with vehicular manslaughter by means of wreck less driving and more – or do you say, "She's already suffered enough!"? What do you say? What do you do? Already suffered enough? The fact is – only the death of the innocent Lamb of God can cover a single sin! Jesus died on the altar of the ✠, once for all!

Jesus died to wash away all my sins and all your sins. Jesus died for us all. This is the essence of the Gospel – Jesus prayed, “**Father forgive them!**” And in fact Jesus did! Thank you, Jesus! Amen!
To God alone all glory!

