

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church**  
**Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz**  
**Matthew 16:1-4**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Christmas.**  
**Eisenach Series**

16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven. <sup>2</sup> He replied, "When evening comes, you say, 'It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,' <sup>3</sup> and in the morning, 'Today it will be stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.' You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times. <sup>4</sup> A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah." Jesus then left them and went away.



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

Long ago – and far away – I went to visit someone in county jail. I went up to the bullet proof glass and said to the deputy there – "I'm Pastor Schultz. I'm here to visit one of my sheep." They said, "Pastor Schultz? You are a Pastor? Prove it!" "What? Prove you are a Pastor?" Nobody ever said that to me – prove you are a Pastor! I thought for a moment and I said, "Oh, yeah? I can say the books of the Bible backwards – really fast!" They said, "Oh, yeah? I can do that too." And while they were saying that I thought – *backwards* – I don't know them backwards! They said, "Next time – you had better bring proof – some sort of ID or holy badge or something to prove you are who you say you are! I could bring a business card – but anyone can make a fake business card. I could bring my ordination certificate – signed by Prof. Scharf and Carl Mischke – but that could be faked, too. I could bring my Seminary diploma but that's huge and framed! Name all the kings of the divided kingdom – memorize Paul's letter to the Romans like Martin Luther recommended. I don't know. A pictorial directory of St. Luke's – and know the names of all the sheep

without looking. Would that work? I don't know. I know! Bring someone I baptized or confirmed or married – or someone – where I did the funeral for their loved one. Would that work? The fact is:

**Faith Simply Believes!**

1. Unbelief can be very stubborn, but
2. Faith believes the Gospel promises of God!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on is from the Gospel of the tax collector Matthew – chapter 16. Matthew was at the same time – the best dressed and the least liked of all the disciples. Matthew was a tax collector for the accursed Romans. People talked about "Tax collectors and sinners" – women who were not ladies – if you know what I mean. People went around saying, "I'm not perfect! No one is! But at least I'm not a tax collector!" There would have been instant bitterness and anger between Simon the Zealot – the early New Testament "Tea Party" disciple – and the tax collector Matthew! Matthew's Gospel is different from the others in that it assumes a deep familiarity with the Old Testament Scriptures. Matthew's Gospel begins with that long genealogy of Jesus that begins with Abraham, Isaac, Jacob – then? **Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar.** The family tree – do you keep track of yours? It wasn't long after Henry Elwood was born – that Joan Clauer – keeper of the Clauer Family Tree *Facebooked* to get all the information – Mom's first name, middle name, maiden name – father's first name middle name, last name – Henry's birth day, birth place, baptism date. If you were keeper of the family tree for Jesus – would you include Judah and Tamar? Judah on the way to celebrate sheep shearing up in Timnah with his old friend – Hirah the Adullamite! On the way to the doings Judah sees a shrine lady selling "hugs and kisses". Judah offers to pay her with a young goat – although he doesn't have a young goat with him. He gives this lady beside the road his seal and cord and staff as a deposit – guaranteeing the young goat payment. Time passes – Judah sends the goat – but no one selling "hugs and kisses" can be found. The next thing you know Tamar – Judah's twice widowed daughter-in-law is found to have a baby in her tummy. Judah is the first to call for her to be burned to death. The father of her baby? Judah himself – the owner of the seal and cord and staff! God's Word says she

had twins – first a little baby’s hand came out – so the midwife tied a scarlet thread around his wrist – then the hand went back inside – then the other baby boy came out first – named Perez – then his baby brother Zerah. Remember what we read? **Judah the father of Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar!** Jesus was not ashamed to be born of a family tree of sinners. Jesus was not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters – as He came to take away all our sins.

As we catch up in spirit with the Lord Jesus – much of His brief 3 year public ministry was almost over. At first everybody loved Jesus. What was not to love! He preached with authority – not like the Rabbis who ended their devotions with, “Then again, what do I know?” Jesus told the people this is the Word of the LORD! Jesus could teach all day with the authority that comes from the power of the truth! Jesus is in fact the Word made flesh. Jesus is the Way and the Truth and the Life! There is no doubt! And after teaching all day – Jesus didn’t send you on your way saying, “I hope you find something to eat on the way home!” Jesus took a little boy’s brown bag lunch – 5 barley loaves and 2 small fish – and fed 5,000 men plus women and children – easily 10 to 15,000 people! That’s a miracle. Jesus cleanses lepers. People dressed in rags that were dying slowly but surely – cut off and alone. Jesus touched them. Jesus healed them. People like Mary Magdalene possessed by not just 1 but 7 demons – and Jesus set her free! Jesus took people that were crippled and made them not just crawl or walk with a walker – he made them leap for joy. Jesus gave sight to people born blind. Jesus opened the ears of the deaf so they could hear music. Imagine how quiet your life would feel if you never heard the Hallelujah Chorus. I came into my office and it had just started on the radio – and I just stood there – like the King – I stood there in awe – not just awe of the music – but in awe of the LORD God Omnipotent reigneth! Everybody loved Jesus! Well – almost everybody loved Him. Some people *not so much* – when slowly but surely they realized this new like King David was not going to run out the Romans. Jesus said what I said to the Watertown lady at City Hall – “It’s time to **render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s!** It got so bad Jesus actually said, <sup>23</sup> **And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed**

in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this day. <sup>24</sup> But I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on the day of judgment than for you." Matthew 11

**16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus...** Pharisees and Sadducees – strange bed-fellows. As is often said, “The enemy of my enemy is my friend...” The Pharisees and the Sadducees had nothing in common except their common hatred of Jesus. Pharisees were experts in the Law of Moses. They knew all the commandments and all the *what does this mean* parts, too. They knew all the things that made you unclean – touching blood, touching dead people, eating a bacon – cheese burger? Never. No eating shrimp or crab or lobster. No eating camel or crows or owls. No eating prime-rib still rare. No eating “tiger meat” – raw ground sirloin on a piece of rye bread – with lots of pepper and salt! They knew the Law of Moses and were proud of their great faithful earnestness – doing everything the law required – avoiding everything the law forbade. And not only that! They had an additional 365 man-made traditions – that were just as binding on their consciences. Things like – you can’t eat anything – without first a ceremonial hand washing. I’m not talking about roll up your sleeves – run hot water – two squirts of soap with the little grits in it – and rubbing your hands together as long as it takes to sing “Happy Birthday to me...2 times!” Just a little dip of the fingers – a quick splash – hands and water – a dunk, a dip – it’s the thought that counts! That’s the Pharisees. Thank you that I am not like some people – tax collectors and sinners! The Sadducees...believe we have free will to choose good or evil – whereas God’s Word says we are **born dead in trespasses and sin**. Sadducees do not believe in spirits – neither angels nor demons. Sadducees do not believe in Judgement Day – don’t believe in Heaven nor Hell. Do not believe in life after death! The Sadducees and Pharisees were forever fighting about what was clean and unclean – spilled water – an egg laid by a chicken on the Sabbath – whether the chicken had heard the reading of the Torah or not!

**16 The Pharisees and Sadducees came to Jesus and tested him by asking him to show them a sign from heaven.** A sign from *Heaven*? Irony! Irony! The Pharisees thought you got to Heaven by being good. The Sadducees didn’t even believe Heaven existed! A sign from Heaven? Seriously? Jesus told them: “**When evening comes, you say, ‘It will be fair weather, for the sky is red,’<sup>3</sup> and in the morning, ‘Today it will be**

**stormy, for the sky is red and overcast.’ You know how to interpret the appearance of the sky, but you cannot interpret the signs of the times.** “Red sky at night – sailors’ delight. Red sky at morning – sailors take warning!” Reality check! We can predict the weather. Look out the window. Look up. What about the signs of the times? Wake up and smell the Highlander Grogg! There is spiritual danger all around. Danger that threatens marriage and family. Danger from heroin and cocaine and Meth and pot in Watertown. Danger from too many beers – too many boiler makers – too many old fashioned and too many Manhattans and too many martinis. Danger from being spiritually luke warm – neither hot nor cold – but *luke warm!* Spiritual danger is the worst – because it can have eternal consequences!

**<sup>4</sup> A wicked and adulterous generation looks for a sign, but none will be given it except the sign of Jonah.” Jesus then left them and went away.** Proof? They would have their proof. Not the kind they wanted – but the kind they would get! Before they ever realized – this Rabbi from Nazareth that they accused of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebul – the “lord of the flies” – would say with a strong voice: **“It is finished!”** Would bow His head and give up His life. Like Jonah in the belly of the great fish – Jesus would be in the grave 3 days – and then be alive again! The sign of Jonah! Prove it? You have the eye witness testimony of the women, the disciples, the disciples on the road to Emmaus, the Roman soldiers who went and reported Jesus rising from the dead. Read 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians chapter 15 – the great resurrection chapter. Consider the disciples that died – confessing the truth of the Easter Gospel! Faith knows! Faith accepts. Faith believes the Gospel promises of God. And come Judgement Day – when Jesus returns with all His holy angels with him – then faith will be replaced with sight! Then everyone – the billions of people who have lived on the earth in the history of the world – from Adam and Eve and Cain and Abel and Seth to today – will see Jesus. And we will say, “Thank you, Jesus!” – forever. Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

