

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran
Church
1st Sunday in Advent WELS
Series B.
Sermon by Pastor
Anthony E. Schultz
Isaiah 64:1-9**



64 Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! ² As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! ³ For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. ⁴ Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. ⁵ You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? ⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. ⁷ No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. ⁸ Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹ Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.

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

I heard about Bloomington, Indiana on the news the other day. I wish it was some of that fake and pretend and make-believe news, but I don't think so. Apparently there are some new regulations – in order to be politically correct – so as not to make anyone uncomfortable. From now on – city employees are no longer to refer to Columbus Day – as *Columbus Day* after the guy who crash landed his ships somewhere here in the new world. Nor are they to refer to Good Friday as *Good Friday* – the day Jesus died on the † to pay for the sins of all people. From now on in Bloomington, Indiana they are to be called Fall Holiday and Spring Holiday! It has been a little while – I guess – that people have been trying to paint Christopher Columbus as the bad guy – coming to North America – showing a callous disregard for the people who were already living here – in present day Dominican Republic and Haiti and Florida. I wasn't there – when the people funded by Ferdinand and Isabella rowed ashore – and planted the Spanish flag literally relieved they hadn't sailed over the edge of a flat earth into oblivion. It's a little bit water under the bridge to obsess with 1492 when we have a national debt approaching 20 Trillion Dollars. But calling Good Friday Spring Holiday is a mistake. Good Friday the Son of God died on the † on account of my sins and my mistakes. Jesus died and rose again. And that's 10,000 X 10,000 more than all the Easter bunnies and Peeps and malted milk Robbins' eggs and black jelly beans put together. Good Friday means the curtain in the Temple was torn in two from top to bottom – all our sins paid for with the innocent blood of the Lamb of God. This morning in light of the Word of God written down by Isaiah we say:

God Be Merciful To Me A Sinner!

- I. Your Law makes me tremble**
- II. Your Gospel gives me peace**

Today we are concentrating on part of the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah means the LORD is salvation. That's a good name for a Pastor and so – the LORD is salvation – rescue from sin, death and the power of the devil! The scroll begins, **“The vision – that is the revelation – the pulling back of the curtain – concerning Judah and Jerusalem – that is the Southern Kingdom that Isaiah son of Amoz saw during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah.** Do you remember these Kings – King Uzziah? You can look in Second Chronicles – to learn about Uzziah, King of Judah. Uzziah became King when he was only 16 years old! Can you even imagine that? You are a Sophomore in High School – about 16 years old – and all of a sudden you are the King! That's pretty heady stuff-and so? 16 years old and everyone is calling you, “Your Majesty!” And bowing down before you. We have talked before about the royal jammies, and the royal breakfast – the royal waffles and the royal OJ – with or without as much pulp as you want – and the royal syrup! Uzziah would be king for 52 years. That's a lot longer than a two term President today – and so? Uzziah went to war against the Philistines and broke down the walls of Gath. Who came from Gath – Goliath! God helped him against the Philistines and against the Arabs and against the Meunites. Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful. ...But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the LORD his God and entered the Temple of the LORD to burn incense on the altar of incense. Azariah the priest with 80 other courageous priests of the LORD followed him in. They confronted him...Uzziah who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in

the LORD's temple, **leprosy broke out on his forehead...** Wow! Imagine if the LORD's judgment was that swift and that obvious the next time we sinned?

Jotham, Uzziah's son became King and ruled for 16 years — that's 4 presidential terms. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done...Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God...**the people however continued their corrupt practices...**that's not good!

Ahaz became King. He too ruled for 16 years — 4 presidential terms. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king. Unlike David his father, **he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD. He walked in the ways of the kings of Israel and also made cast idols. He burned sacrifices in the Valley of Ben Hinnom** — that is like the town dump on the edge of Dundee — where the fires always smoldered — a place of flames and filth — not unlike eternal destruction itself. **“And he sacrificed his sons in the fire,** (This is nothing short of human sacrifice of his own flesh and blood! Again we might be tempted to think — how Godless and what gross wickedness is this? Until we remember here in these United States of America — how many babies are aborted? In the United States ballpark there have been somewhere near 58 million abortions — 58 million! The leading cause of death in the state of Minnesota — is not heart attacks or cancer or car crashes — the leading cause of death in Minnesota is abortion! In the United States of America more than one out of every 5 babies is aborted — one out of five! Before we throw stones at King Ahaz — we need to understand what is happening here in the United States — day after day after day — babies are dying! **King Ahaz followed the detestable ways of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices**

and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree. Worship in high places – hill-tops and under every spreading tree – is fertility cult worship – not sweet hugs and kisses at picnics – but the most unspeakable gross and perverted and violent and selfish hugs and kisses the human mind could conceive – in an effort to have children and flocks and herds and crops!

Then came Good King Hezekiah. They called him Good King Hezekiah – because when there finally was a good one – that’s what everyone called them! Hezekiah was a good king – but he wasn’t perfect, either! God’s Word says, **“In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the LORD who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. But Hezekiah’s heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him...Pride is a dangerous thing. God blessed Hezekiah with very great riches and honor and he made treasuries for his silver and gold and for his precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuables. He also made buildings to store the harvest of grain, new wine and oil; and he made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for the flocks. He built villages and acquired great numbers of flocks and herds, for God had given him very great riches.”** 2 Chronicles 32:27f. When envoys came from Babylon – Hezekiah showed them all the earthly splendor of his earthly Kingdom and that wasn’t right. It was pride – and it was wrong! And so all those riches would end up being carried off to Babylon. The LORD would discipline his people because of their pride! A lesson perhaps we could learn, too, as another Christmas approaches and we are tempted to gather to ourselves more and more things and stuff – instead of storing up treasures in Heaven where moth

and rust cannot corrupt – where thieves cannot break in and steal. Where our treasures are – there will our heart be also!

⁶ All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. ⁷ No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. ⁸ Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹ Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people. It is tempting to think – I’m one of the “good guys”! You walk into Wal-Mart and you see people abusing or neglecting their little children – the worst kind of abuse. They jerk them around by their little arms – it’s bitter cold or raining and they don’t have a jacket on – much less hats and mittens and boots! They smack their little people – literally upside the head – push them and threaten them and curse them! We are the good guys! We come to Church every Sunday – teach Sunday School – usher – make the food for Advent Suppers and stay to clean up! We speak words of encouragement at every turn. We bring thank-offerings – using all the special envelopes in our box. We read our *Meditations* and our *Forward in Christ* cover to cover! We always say, “Come Lord Jesus” and “O Give Thanks Unto The Lord” if we are having a snack! But truth be told – all our righteous acts – all the things we sometimes think are so good – **are like filthy rags** – rags with dead blood on them. We realize – when we have done everything and I mean *everything* the best we possibly can – **we are unprofitable servants. We have only done what we are supposed to do!** Only Jesus kept all of God’s commands perfectly. Then He sacrificed Himself – the innocent Lamb of God on the altar of the cross to wash away all my sins!

Jesus' blood takes away all our sins – and makes us right with God!

⁸ Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. ⁹ Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people. There are on the Internet from time to time – the video that claims to show the worst of this or the worst of that! There was one the other day that said the worst soccer miss ever – the worst ever! How bad could it be? This guy is kicking the soccer ball with his foot. A defender comes up to try and stop him – around that guy he goes. The defender falls down. The goalie comes up to try and defend. Again – a head fake – push the ball – push the ball – push the ball and the goalie does this figure eight with his legs and sits down – and we are around him, too. Our guy with the ball kicks it up to the goal – a little farther – we are in the middle of the goal – the goalie nowhere to be seen. The wind up and the kick – up and over the goal – an awesome miss! Friend and foe alike grab their heads. They cannot believe it! An as they say **epic fail**. It's like you couldn't miss like that if you tried – and yet he did! And again – you stop and think – there but for the grace of God – go I! Have you ever missed? Have you ever thought to yourself, "I can't miss!" And then you do! Physically – morally – spiritually we miss the mark! And still Jesus forgives us. He takes all our sins away. He pardons us – He forgives us! He brings us home to Heaven. This Thanksgiving Weekend – this 1st Sunday of a brand new Church Year we pause to say, "Thank you, Jesus – for every spiritual blessing!" Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony P. Schertz



