

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran
Watertown, WI
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz
2nd Sunday in End Times
Last Judgment WELS Pericope
Nov. 12, 2017
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 EHV.**



We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you do not grieve in the same way as the others, who have no hope. Indeed, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then in the same way we also believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. In fact, we tell you this by the word of the Lord. We who are alive and left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not go on ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up in the clouds together with them, to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words.

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

Back in the day we used to watch M*A*S*H—what you would call a dark comedy about Mobile Army Surgical Hospitals during the Korean War. The idea that if you had an operating room less than 12 city blocks from the battle front—and a whole bunch of helicopters—you could air lift wounded soldiers to the tent with a huge red $\frac{11}{11}$ on top of it. You could operate—and remove bullets and shrapnel and save lives. It was said more than once—if the soldier was still alive when they reached the M*A*S*H—there was a 96% survival rate? Is that *by the grace of God*—possible? There were some 256 episodes of M*A*S*H. One I remember in particular Major Houlihan is standing at the foot of an operating table—when a soldier

dies – and they respectfully pull the sheet over his face and she says, “No matter how many times I see it I cannot get over the fact one minute they are alive. Their ♥ is beating and they are breathing – and then very quietly – in a moment that all stops and they are gone!” It’s true! One minute we are alive – and the next we are not! I was a little child in church – when a little grandpa – sitting in the front slumped over. His head – his thick white hair – rested on a little grandma’s lap. Someone had to run and find a phone – fastened to the wall and dial the hospital for help that would be *woefully* too late. The Pastor prayed a prayer – and we all left very quietly. And that little grandpa went from a pew in Church – to being in front of the very Lamb of God – who took away the sin of the world! What a glorious Sunday morning that was for him – to receive the goal of his faith – the salvation of his soul! Today as we celebrate Last Judgment – God’s Word admonishes and comforts us:

We Will Always Be With The Lord!

- I. Jesus will wake up all the dead**
- II. Together we will meet Jesus!**

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on today – is the first of two letters written to the believers in the city of Thessalonica. Prof. Scharf used to always say, “Men, work with me at the map!” So...work with me at the map!



Prof. Kuske – who wrote the “Kuske” Catechism – says Thessalonica was a large and important city of the Roman Empire. It had going on 10

times as many people as Watertown. It was the leading city of the Roman province of Macedonia – so many Roman officials lived there. It was like Chicago or St. Louis – strategically located – a Roman highway passed through her. Rome knew the value of a quick response – Roman soldiers their massive shields and sharp swords – *literally* crushed their enemies! Thessalonica was also a wonderful harbor – the home of part of the Roman Navy – a place for trade and commerce – connected to Corinth and Ephesus! Mt. Olympus was literally near Thessalonica – so believers in Greek Mythology were everywhere! One is reminded of a place like New York City – *a city that never sleeps!* People everywhere – buying and selling and making money – hauling *things and stuff* everywhere – military people everywhere – in their uniforms – weapons everywhere – people as the prayer calls them – “*in positions of great public trust*”! Prof. Kuske wrote “and no doubt there was an undesirable or two attracted by the excitement and temptations of a large city.” In other words – pretty much like Chicago today!

More context: Some 20 years after Good Friday and Easter sunrise and Thursday Ascension back into Heaven and Pentecost – the Apostle Paul and co-workers Silas, Timothy and the Physician our congregation is named after – set out on Paul’s second missionary journey. It was about the year of our Lord – 51. Remember Paul’s Vision – a man from Macedonia saying, “**Come over and help us!**” Remember the fierce persecution in Macedonia – in the city of Philippi – where Paul threw out the demon that possessed a young girl fortune teller – the riot – Paul and Silas thrown into prison – the earthquake – the chains and stocks let go. Paul telling the jailer at Philippi – “**Don’t hurt yourself – we are all here!**” “**What must I do to be saved?**” “**Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved!**” In the middle of the night – the jailer and his whole family baptized! How wonderful was that?! Paul preached God’s Word three weeks in Thessalonica – and the Jews there became so jealous there was literally a riot!

Paul and Silas left for Berea! What do you know about Bereans? *You know!* They were the people who read their Bibles! They read and studied God’s Word – searched the Scriptures! Do we do that? Do you read your *Meditations!* We read two of them every Tuesday and every Thursday in 8th

grade confirmation class! We bring you a *Meditations* if you are in the hospital! There are prayers for morning and evening for each day of a week and there are seasonal prayers, too! Do we read our Bible? It doesn't matter which Bible! You can read the King James! There's nothing wrong with that! **The LORD is my shepherd I shall not want!...Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death – sounds better to me than the darkest place!** I still like the shepherds **were sore afraid!** There is much that is familiar and comforting in the King James. Read the NIV. **Don't be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your requests to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will keep your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus!** And again – **Be joyful always. Pray continually. Give thanks under all circumstances for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus!** What to buy people you love for Christmas? Get them a copy of the Evangelical Heritage Version – and they will grow in faith by the power of the Holy Spirit!

We hear much these days – again and again about mission prospects among Millennials! Do you know what Millennial means? It's important to know. But maybe the first thing to remember is it isn't right to put people in the proverbial **pigeon holes** – baby boomers aren't all angry old white guys with guns – intolerant and judgmental and bias and bigoted. **Generation X** were what's called latch-key kids – with a house key literally around their neck – they came home from school to an empty house. They are strong as individuals – want what they want *now* – but maybe can't afford it – so they have plenty of credit card debt. They want to change the *neighborhood – not the world*. Some people say **millennials** – were raised by omnipresent – that's *helicopter* parents – who always hovered. They are optimistic and focused – everything needs to be *scheduled!* They don't live to work – but like relaxed work – lots of holding hands and awards – *participation* trophies! The latest group – **Generation Z or Boomlets!** Lots and lots of Hispanic babies – everybody has a TV in their own bedroom, and video games – and cell phones. They are said to be tired of hearing how we have to save the environment. 3 and 4 and 5 year olds – are targeted consumers. They know what they want and they learn early on – what they need to do to get it! What do all these different pigeon holes

prove? Jesus does not make people with a cookie cutter. People are very different in countless different ways. And yet we have in common the fact we were **born dead and trespasses and sin**. We are all in danger from death. And we are all rescued the same way – by the blood of the Lamb of God who died on the \dagger to redeem us. We need to share God's Word with everyone!

We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who have fallen asleep, so that you do not grieve in the same way as the others, who have no hope. Indeed, if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, then in the same way we also believe that God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep through Jesus. The Thessalonians really wanted to understand God's plan of salvation. And so they were quick to ask questions – to try and understand the **one thing needful!** We do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep – so you do not grieve like the rest of men who have no hope! All you need to do is turn on TV and you will see people grieving! There are basically two types of mourning! When there is an earth quake or a terrorist attack – an improvised explosive device that goes off in a crowded market place – a terrible fire that goes through floor after floor of a high rise apartment building – or a hurricane – that washes whole communities away. When the people who are the victims grieve – they don't just cry – they wail – they scream – they throw their hands up – literally. They throw themselves on the ground – they have lost all hope. They cannot be comforted. That's the grief of hopeless loss. Most often when you see Christians grieve – they too are sad – to the very bottom of their ♥. And yet there is hope. As the tears run down our cheeks – you hear people say again, "They are safe by Jesus in Heaven! We will see them again!" Concerning people who have been in hospice care for months and months you will hear people say, "They aren't sick any more! They don't have to suffer any more! They are safe by Jesus! We will see them when we are in Heaven, too!" How wonderful will that be?

In fact, we tell you this by the word of the Lord. We who are alive and left until the coming of the Lord will certainly not go on ahead of those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. When

Judgment Day happens – we who are still alive when the skies tear open and Jesus is there with all his holy angels – we won't leave behind people who are in the cemeteries! Jesus will wake them all up! Then and only then – will we all be caught up to meet Jesus in the sky. We will meet Jesus part way down! How glorious will that be!?

And so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore, encourage one another with these words. When I was at Northwestern College we translated Goethe's play and extended poem named Faustus. It's about a man who craves all worldly knowledge and the illusion of power and pleasure that it promises. Faustus believes he can exchange his immortal soul for this worldly wisdom and power – and sometimes/any time before he has to pay with his soul – he will be smart enough to figure a way out – frustrate the devil and save his own soul! For a while it seems to work. Insight and understanding into the most difficult and complicated of things is made clear – through his servant spirit named *Mephistopheles*! If you were to see the play Faustus you cannot imagine the anguish of ♥ soul and mind when Faustus realizes alas too late he is eternally lost. See this play at the Riverside Theatre in Milwaukee – and trap doors open all over the stage. Flames leap out everywhere – Faustus is lost! The curtain comes down! It is only by the grace of God – that we will never know such unspeakable fear! When Judgment Day comes – the last judgment – we **will always be with the Lord!** Thank you, Jesus! Amen!
To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schmitt

