

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran
Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony
E. Schultz
Sunday, October 23, 2016
Pentecost 23. Eisenach Series
Hebrews 13:1-9**



13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. **2** Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. **3** Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. **4** Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. **5** Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." **6** So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" **7** Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. **8** Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever. **9** Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be strengthened by grace, not by eating ceremonial foods, which is of no benefit to those who do so.

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

Did you fly your American Flag at half-staff last Saturday?
Did you put your flag all the way to the top – then back down

half way – and tie it down – until the sun began to set? Then run it to the top and all the way down – to be neatly folded until the next day? Saturday, October 15th was Fire fighters’ memorial day. Did you know that? Do you know where Saxon Harbor, WI is? It’s up north – way up north by Hurley. Smack in the middle of the summer – July 15th there was a flash flood in Saxon Harbor. Assistant Fire Chief Mitch Koski of the Montreal Fire Department came racing to the scene – because it was reported there were people in distress in Saxon Harbor. The Assistant Chief’s car was swept into the water and he drowned. He gave up his life – in an attempt to save people in distress. That’s what firefighters and police officers and first responders do. They run toward the danger – when everyone else runs away. He hurried toward the danger. He gave up his life – to try to save people he most likely didn’t even know. What is far more remarkable – Jesus gave up His life – for wretched sinners like us! Jesus died to save us from the unquenchable fires of eternal destruction. Jesus died and rose again so we might be rescued forever. Today God’s Word reminds us:

Don’t Forget Law And Gospel!

- 1. It colors our attitude**
- 2. It colors our actions...**

It would be a blessing – if whatever book of the Bible we mentioned – we would know in a nutshell – in basic terms – what that book was about. Context! Take for example today’s reading from the letter to the Hebrews. Who wrote the letter to the Hebrews? Some people 200 years after baby Jesus was born – think it was written by the Apostle Paul. This is *possible* – although Romans, 1 & 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians – all say from Paul at the very beginning. The Apostle Paul has a distinctive style – different from Peter,

James and John. The writer to the Hebrews indicates he did not receive the word of salvation firsthand from the Lord, but from **“those who heard him.”** The Apostle Paul made a point of saying he was taught by the Lord Jesus Himself! Some people think maybe Paul’s co-worker Barnabas wrote it. Martin Luther liked to think Apollos wrote the Letter to the Hebrews. In Acts chapter 18 Apollos is described as **“a Jew...a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures...instructed in the way of the Lord...spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately.”** That sounds pretty good, and so? Again, as Prof. Jeske liked to say – “if we were supposed to know – the LORD would have told us. So what the LORD has not told us – we should be happy NOT to know!” I like that too!

So...in a nutshell what’s the Letter to the Hebrews about? Hebrews is about comparisons. Angels are incredible – spirit beings – without sin – messengers who always see the face of their Heavenly Father. Angels are amazing – but Jesus is so very much more. Jesus is the eternal Son of God – who with the Father and the Holy Spirit created the angels! Who in all of God’s Word is as amazing as Moses – who knew God face to face? Jesus is God! What is as wonderful as the Sabbath-rest for the people of God? Jesus is the reason we will have eternal rest in Heaven because he died and rose again to forgive us. Jesus is the Great High Priest and at the same time also the Sacrifice – the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. What an incredible character Melchizedek is – Prophet, Priest and King. Again Jesus is far greater still. Jesus is the ultimate sacrifice – once upon the altar of the cross – to shed innocent blood for the sins of the 107 billion people who have lived on the face of the earth in the history of the world! Consider the heroes of faith throughout the Old Testament. They lived and died – before Jesus came to

redeem us. How blessed are we to have seen all that Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah longed to see! And wouldn't it be more wondrous still – if we were still alive – when Jesus returns in all his glory with all his holy angels to take us home to heaven! We pray – **even so come quickly Lord Jesus!**

Today we are focused on the last chapter of the letter to the Hebrews – concluding exhortations – concluding encouragement to put our faith into practice! Because Jesus died and rose again to forgive you--**13 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.** The Greek language is incredibly precise. Sometimes when you talk about God's Word with friends or relatives or co-workers they will say, "That's the way *you* interpret the Bible." The fact is – the Greek language is so incredibly precise – if you are faithful to the text there isn't all this *confusion and wiggle room* to understand God's Word in all sorts of ways. Remain faithful to Scripture and you will remain faithful to the truth. Take this verse for example. **Keep on loving one another.** The English language is very sloppy with its use of the word LOVE! We say, "I love pizza – cheese in the crust – pepperoni and black olives and mushrooms and onions!" We say, "I love the Packers or the Bears or even the Vikings!" We say, "I love my new i~phone!" We love our spouse and our children and Kirby! We love all kinds of stuff. The Greeks have a special word for "hugs and kisses" love. They have a word – the one used here – from which we get our English word – *Philadelphia* – the city of "*brotherly love*". This is the love of a friend! I had 3 best friends in grade school – my best friend – Gary Kiiskilia – adopted into being Finnish – like from Finland! Friends! We have friends that you can decide to go out for fish with only a ½ hour warning. Friends – you can go on vacation for two weeks – and come home still friends! Friends – is a wonderful relationship. But it isn't the ultimate word for love in

the Bible. That's the word *agape*! *Agape* is God's love for you and for me. It's a love that gives! It's a love that gives when the person receiving that love doesn't begin to deserve it. It's the love that gives – with no thought of what's in it for me! It's the most wonderful love in the world. It's God's love for wretched sinners like you and like me!

² Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. Philoxonia! This is love of strangers. It's easy to love people who love you – to help your neighbor – your co-worker – a fellow member of Church that you meet by the donuts and coffee each week. It's different – when you are talking about someone you meet in the check-out line at the Piggly Wiggly or at Kwik Trip! Strangers! The opportunity to show hospitality to strangers – goes way up – if there is a natural disaster! It's like letting someone plug in to your generator when the power goes out. It's helping someone who has hit black ice on the road and slipped into the ditch. It's help like in Milton – when there was the underground railroad. It's like people in Germany who helped hide and shelter Jews who were fleeing the Holocaust . The day could very well come – that there is such persecution of Christians that we need to literally run for our lives! Who will make the sacrifices to help strangers?

³ Continue to remember those in prison as if you were together with them in prison, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering. When I grew up in northern Illinois – it was common for people to say to young men, “If you don't straighten out – you are going to end up in Joliet!” Joliet – on the south side of Chicago – is a terrible place – for the worst of the worst. Just south of Joliet is another prison called Statesville! People like John Wayne Gacy – the original creepy clown was in

Statesville where he was executed for 12 of the 33 murders he committed! Statesville is what's called a **panopticon** prison – named for a mythological creature with 100 eyeballs! The idea being it only takes a few guards – to keep an eye on the prisoners – because you can from the center of the prison see into all the cells – and this is the critical aspect – *the prisoners can't tell if they are specifically watched*. It's a mind game---that says, "I had better behave – because I might be being watched!" We dasn't be like the Pharisees and think for a moment – "I thank you Lord, that I am not like some people – even like this tax collector – even like people in Joliet and Statesville!" It is only by the grace of God – that we are not in the forever prison of Hell!

⁴ Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. I heard the other day that husbands and wives who listen to music from when they were young and dating are closer than people who don't. I can see that. I love to listen to the Lovin' Spoonful singing, "You didn't have to be so nice. I would have loved you anyway..." Or the Association singing, "Cherish is the word I use to describe all the feeling I have hiding here for you inside..." Or the Beach Boys – that we saw live in Chicago on my 60th birthday – or the Righteous Brothers! But what is far far better is to hear God's Word together--to come to Church together. To read God's Word and to pray together – and to encourage each other through the Gospel! To come to Lord's Supper together. This is what makes marriage strong for Jesus' sake!

⁵ Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." ⁶ So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere

mortals do to me?" Child-like faith – have you thought about that this past week? Child-like faith! We were watching TV the other night – and one of the Dads was talking about the miracle of a child – even – maybe *especially* a child with special needs! The Dad quoted Picasso – the famous painter. Picasso said, “It took him 4 years to learn to paint like Raphael. It took him a lifetime to learn to paint like a child. Children – hear colors and taste shapes and feel what grownups can’t see!” Through the eyes of faith we will see with our ♥! We will see Jesus’ forgiving love on every page of Scripture. We will see what is truly precious – not the “things and stuff” that overflow our desk tops – overflow our garages and our trash bins and our closets and our kitchens. We will see how priceless our inheritance is in Heaven – ours by grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone. ♥s of faith that say every hour of every day, “Thank you, Jesus! Amen!”

To God alone all glory!



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