

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Ash Wednesday, February 13, 2013

Luke 22:39-46



22.39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.” ⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. ⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.”

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

If you listen to Public Radio Saturday around the supper hour chances are good you will hear [A Prairie Home Companion](#). You will hear the [News From Lake Wobegone](#). It usually begins like this. Garrison Keillor says, “Well, it’s been a quiet week in Lake Wobegone, Minnesota – my home town – out on the edge of the Prairie.” Lake Wobegone would be a wonderful place to grow up. It’s kind of like Mayberry. Lake Wobegone is so vivid – if you look it up on [Microsoft Virtual Earth](#) – it will show up a little north and somewhat east of St. Cloud. The Lutheran Pastor of Lake Wobegone is Pastor Ingvist and the Priest is Father Emil – the Priest of Our Lady of Perpetual Responsibility! Lake Wobegone is the home of the Whippets baseball team, the tuna hot dish – the Lutheran potluck dinners, Norwegian bachelor famers, ice fishing, tongues frozen to cold metal objects – and lutefisk – fish that look like Twinkies and taste like lye. Garrison Keillor is what’s called a keen observer of people. He said once, “If you are from the Midwest and Lutheran – it’s always Lent! It’s always Lent!” I think that’s profoundly true. At Christmas time – when everyone is talking about the birth of the Christ-child – already we are talking about Good Friday and Easter! That’s what we talk about – Good Friday and Easter. Today is Ash Wednesday – the beginning of the 40 days

of Lent. Before you know it – it will be Holy Week – Palm Sunday – little children will wave Palm branches and singing “**Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the Highest!**” Before you know it – it will be Maundy Thursday and Good Friday. Before you know it – it will be Easter Sunday. The front of Church will be full of Easter Lilies – the Choir will sing and trumpets will be played. Before you know it – it will be Easter – then Ascension and Pentecost. It will be Confirmation. A whole bunch of new 8th graders will come to Lord’s Supper and help ushering! All the Sundays of Pentecost – putting into practice the Good Friday and Easter Gospel – and then it will be Advent and we will do it all over again. If you are from the Mid-west and Lutheran it is always Lent. This is the best! This year we will talk about the name of Wondrous Love! The practice – the example sermons you get from the Publishing House were written by Pastor Richard Lauersdorf! Pastor Lauersdorf was pastor of St. John’s in Jefferson for a long time! Names of wondrous Love – like Immanuel – God with us; the Truth, the King, Christ Crucified, the Way, the Lamb – the Alpha and the Omega – and on Easter the Light! Today we consider:

Name of Wondrous Love – Jesus

2. Jesus’ love for His Father’s will.

Jerusalem is up! President John Brahn’s book of Lenten Devotions is called “Up to Jerusalem! Jerusalem is up! As we catch up with the Lord Jesus today – Jesus has just celebrated Passover. Have you ever been to a Passover supper? At Mount Calvary in Waukesha, Pastor Martin Stern used to have a kind of Passover supper with his confirmation classes every year. The 7th grade parents would prepare the food and the 8th grade students would celebrate Passover. It was a Bible study called A Night To Remember! It has been said the most powerful memory trigger is the sense of smell. I don’t think it’s difficult to imagine the stale smell of the lamb’s blood smeared on the door frame. The smell of wood fire – and the lamb roasting. The smell of unleavened bread baking – the smell of the wine and the fresh bitter herbs. It was the smell of the Passover meal. It was after eating this meal – that Jesus took bread – broke it and gave it to his students, followers and imitators saying, “**Take and eat. This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me. Then he took the cup – after supper – gave thanks and gave it to them saying, ‘Drink from it – all of you. This cup is the new covenant in my blood which is shed**

for you. Do this as often as you drink it in remembrance of me.” After Passover and after establishing Holy Communion – they sang a Psalm – a hymn – and then went out into the dark – into the night – through the city wall and down across the Brook Kidron – over into an olive grove at the bottom of the Mount of Olives – an olive grove called Gethsemane – where the Rabbi had taken his students different times before to pray.

Tonight God’s Word says, **22.39 Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives, and his disciples followed him. ⁴⁰ On reaching the place, he said to them, “Pray that you will not fall into temptation.”**

Temptation. The Greek word translated temptation here is a complicated word. It has many facets. It has a little bit the flavor of an experiment – an attempt – a trial – a proving. The devil is trying to get us to sin. It can be something we think. Very often it is something we could say – that we know we shouldn’t say. It might be something we might do. It’s a test of our faith. Is our faith just a lot of talk – or is there Godly behavior to back it up. Is our faith something we do for an hour or two on Sunday morning – and an hour on Wednesdays during Advent and Lent – or is our faith something that colors how we spend our Monday mornings and our Friday and Saturday nights? Temptation. The word has the flavor of adversity or affliction or trouble. Our faith may be put to the test – when someone we love is sick. We have spent many hours in hospitals – in the Emergency Room – in surgical waiting – in the transplant clinic – in the brain trauma wing – in the burn ward – in the pediatric oncology ward – in hospice. Sometimes you see people hugging and praying and encouraging and helping. And sometimes you see people tired and frustrated and impatient and even angry. You see people that the devil has succeeded in wearing down. And when people get worn down by adversity or affliction or trouble – sometimes people lash out. They lash out at God. They say when Hurricane Sandy smashed into New York – and then came the snow storm with the bitter cold winds – the headline of one paper was *God hates us!* God hates us! That’s very sad – to think people were afflicted and troubled to the point that they despaired of God’s amazing grace? Jesus love never fails – even in the midst of the most difficult times of our life. Temptation can have the flavor of the little dab of peanut butter – the little slice of Swiss cheese on the mouse trap. To ponder if I am quick enough and sneaky enough – I can do what I know in my heart of hearts is wrong – and avoid any painful consequence? Can I rebel against my

Heavenly Father – and at the same time – not get caught? Can I drive 4 miles over the speed limit – can I go 59 when the limit is 55? Can I go 69 when the limit is 65? Can I go 74 when the limit is 70? Can I be very careful coming down the hill on Main Street – and very careful on County A – until I get out of town – and very careful to pump the brakes when I see a State Police car parked sideways on the free-way but the rest of the time go pretty much as fast as I want? After all – if you go the speed limit everybody – and I mean even little old ladies – not to mention semis go flying past you. Why – you could convince yourself – it’s the slow drivers – not the speeders – that are the real hazard – and so? Jesus said, **“Pray with me – so you don’t fall into temptation!”**

⁴¹ He withdrew about a stone’s throw beyond them, knelt down and prayed, ⁴² “Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.” ⁴³ An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. On your knees! I dare say most of us are not too big on kneeling. Sometimes it’s because our knees – our little shock absorbers aren’t so good – and it is literally physically difficult – even impossible to kneel. I most certainly understand that. By the grace of God – my knees are remarkably good for someone 60 years old. I remember the first time I went to church at St. Paul’s in Franklin – when it was time for the confession of sins on a communion Sunday – everyone turned around and knelt on the floor – their hands folded on the pews – their heads deeply bowed. I was caught completely off guard. I had never seen that before. In the winter – on the cold hard wood floors – sometimes there was a little puddle from the melted snow. Sometimes there was some sidewalk salt – some sharp little gravel from the parking lot – a little black grit from the black top. Would you want to stop and get out your handkerchief and wipe and clean and dust? On your knees! When you stop and think about the terrible debt of sin we owe our Heavenly Father – down on our knees is where we belong. It doesn’t have to be our physical knees – but certainly there is no room left for us to be proud or arrogant or self-righteous – and so?

⁴⁴ And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground. ⁴⁵ When he rose from prayer and went back to the disciples, he found them asleep, exhausted from sorrow. ⁴⁶ “Why are you sleeping?” he asked them. “Get up and pray so that you will not fall into temptation.” Again and again Jesus

prayed. He prayed about the suffering that was just ahead. Jesus' anguish and passion were so intense and heartfelt – his sweat was dark as if blood was coming through his pores. They say sometimes – in the midst of battle – unspeakable hand to hand combat – the anguish of mind and body is such you can quite literally sweat blood. So great was Jesus' love for his disciples – for you and for me. We were visiting the other day in the car – talking about different cultures and different sins that are common. In the Amazon Rain Forest – where people live with their extended families – sons and daughters – aunts and uncles – brothers and sisters and cousins – living their whole life very close together – it is common for people to hold grudges! People remember a slight or a hurt – even from the distant past. I shot my poison dart and the monkey fell from the tree – and you ran and picked it up and said it was yours. My neighbor had a very pretty daughter – and I married her – and yet it was you I saw – deep in the rain forest kissing her! I grew some vegetables – and when I told you I was going to pick them tomorrow – you snuck into my garden and picked them in the night – and the next morning – they were gone! Can you imagine? For all our sins – for our bitterness and pettiness and the grudges we nurture – the scabs we keep picking off – refusing to forgive. For all our sins – Jesus sweat blood – and finally was crucified to save us. That's how much Jesus loves you. That's why he says, "Wake up! Watch and pray so you don't fall into temptations and a trap and into terrible sin and grief!"

Last Saturday our family was in Columbus, OH – to celebrate my mom's 80th birthday. We had some very fancy snacks at my little sister's house. I had some Ouzo – liquor from Athens that tastes like licorice that I had not tasted in almost 45 years! We had champagne with a slice of strawberry for toasts. We went out for supper to a place called the Spaghetti Warehouse! It was a huge old warehouse – with old wooden floors and old wooden stairs. There were literally hundreds of people eating in this old warehouse. And the funny thing was – lots and lots of them were people who were bikers – people 60 and 70 – men with great grey and white beards and women with great grey and white braided ponytails – and lots of leather vests and lots and lots of Harley Davidson T-shirts and jeans and boots. Other than once in Sturgis – I have never been by so many biker dudes! And it was very nice! I learned a very long time ago – you dasn't judge people! Period! You dasn't judge people. That is not our job! You dasn't judge people. And you certainly dasn't judge people by

looking at the outside! You cannot judge rich people from poor people. One of the richest little grandmas I ever knew wore three sweaters at a time – with her little bony elbow poking through them all. They say the lid popped off her safety deposit box when they finally opened it. The hardest handshake I ever got – was from a little grandma who was only 4 feet tall. Some of the most brilliant people I have ever met – didn't look so smart on the outside. Like the musical Wicked – some of the people who look the nicest on the outside – aren't so pretty on the inside – once you get to know them. Jesus drank the cup of suffering to the dregs – the bitter little crudlies on the bottom. Jesus did that – and in so doing – lived up to his name Savior – Rescuer – come to save us from all our sins. Jesus – my Savior – what a name of Wondrous Love. Amen!

Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

To God alone all glory!