

ST. LUKE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH-WELS

SERMON BY PASTOR ANTHONY E. SCHULTZ
PENTECOST 2 **JUNE 17, 2012** 2 KINGS 6:13-17



¹³ “Go, find out where he is,” the king ordered, “so I can send men and capture him.” The report came back: “He is in Dothan.” ¹⁴ Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked. ¹⁶ “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.” ¹⁷ And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.” Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.

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

Back in 1999 two guys named Joshua and David wrote a book called the Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook. It gives simple step by step instructions how to survive the worst possible situations. The cover claims this small paperback book will teach you how to escape from quicksand – wrestle an alligator, break down a door or land a plane! Yikes! \$14.95 seems a small price to pay – to know what to do in such life or death situations. Once you buy the book you realize page 1 is a **WARNING** – in bright red all capital letters – the proverbial disclaimer! “When a life is imperiled or a dire situation is at hand, safe alternatives may not exist. To deal with the worst-case scenarios presented in this book, we highly recommend – *insist, actually* – that the best course of actions is to consult a professionally trained expert. (Again the all capital letters warning and disclaimer. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO UNDERTAKE ANY OF THE ACTIVITIES DESCRIBED IN THIS BOOK YOURSELF**. This does not inspire lots of confidence to me anyway! If I am in terrible – life or death danger – I want to know exactly what to do and when to do it. I don’t want to be like Hawkeye and Trapper on **M*A*S*H** where they are following instructions how to disarm a bomb – clip the red wire – and then read, “*But first...*” As we gather here in Jesus’ Father’s House of Prayer today – God’s Word tells us without doubt:

What Should We Do When We’re In Danger?

1. Don’t be afraid...
2. Look through the eyes of faith

This week again we are reading from Second Kings – today chapter 6. Chapter 6 begins with a building project. **The company of the prophets said to Elisha, “Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. ² Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet.” And he said, “Go.” ³ Then one of them said, “Won’t you please come with your servants?” “I will,” Elisha replied. ⁴ And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. ⁵ As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. “Oh no, my lord!” he cried out. “It was borrowed!” ⁶ The man of God asked, “Where did it fall?” When he showed him the**

place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. ⁷“Lift it out,” he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it. A borrowed axe head – not the most important thing in the world – and yet – if you borrowed an axe or a hammer or a lawnmower or weed-wacker – and ruined it – wouldn’t you feel badly? The fact is – nothing is too minor – nothing too insignificant for your Heavenly Father! Remember Jesus’ sermon on the grassy hillside? Jesus is watching over the sparrows – the smallest most humble little birds – sold two for a penny. And yet not one of them falls to the ground – apart from your Heavenly Father knowing about it. And the hairs on your head – number somewhere around 100,000! Again your Heavenly Father can tell you if you have 94,387 – with two hairs coming out – when you brushed your hair before coming to Church! Jesus knows how many sands there are on the sea shore! He knows and he cares! He knows our sins – every one – and forgives them all!

2 Kings chapter 6 is not chronological – it’s a collection of events in the life and ministry of Elisha. That’s why it says: **Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, “I will set up my camp in such and such a place.”** ⁹ The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: “Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.” ¹⁰ So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. ¹¹ This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, “Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?” ¹² “None of us, my lord the king,” said one of his officers, “but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.” The King of the Syrians – planned to attack the children of Israel. By grace alone – the LORD kept his people safe. The LORD told Elisha where the enemy army would be hiding – in ambush – so that God’s people were safe. Time and again – the children of Israel heeded the LORD’s warning – and He kept them safe! Where were the security leaks coming from the Syrian King demanded? The fact is – none of the King’s men were betraying their country. It was Elisha the prophet – the teacher and preacher of law and gospel – who was warning the king of Israel!

¹³ “Go, find out where he/Elisha is,” the king ordered, “so I can send men and capture him.” The report came back: “He is in Dothan.” Dothan—is 20 miles west of the Jordan River. Controlling a pass through the mountain of the Carmel Ridge, Dothan lay on the road from Syria to Egypt—the same road that the Ishmaelites took Joseph to the land of Egypt—to serve Potiphar! ¹⁴ Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city. ¹⁵ When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. “Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?” the servant asked. ¹⁶ “Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. *Don’t be afraid!* Psalm 121 is both the encouragement and the God-given ability to not be scared! ¹ *I lift up my eyes to the mountains—where does my help come from?* ² *My help comes from the LORD, the Maker of heaven and earth.* ³ *He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber;* ⁴ *indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.* ⁵ *The LORD watches over you—the LORD is your shade at your right hand;* ⁶ *the sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.* ⁷ *The LORD will keep you from all harm —he will watch over your life;* ⁸ *the LORD will watch over your coming and going both now and forevermore.* The picture is that of the Cavalry—John Wayne—if you are old enough to remember. The wagon train—the covered wagons are headed west when they are attacked. Circle the wagons. The flaming arrows are flying—hope is lost? No it is not! Look up—look to the hills—here comes the cavalry! Here comes the LORD—coming to the rescue. There is no

need to fear! The LORD—the Great I Am—the Holy One of Israel will keep his people safe! Day or night—round the clock—the LORD watches over his people! If God is for us—who can be against us? The One who sacrificed his one and only Son—will keep us safe from all harm and danger!

¹⁶ **“Don’t be afraid,” the prophet answered. “Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”** Stop and realize who is on your side! Permit a sports metaphor. When you are watching a Packers game – and I don’t care – the Bears, the Vikings, the anybody has the ball on our 20 yard line – are you worried? You don’t need to be! Clay Matthews sacks the quarterback – so far back they are out of field goal range. Or Charles Woodson picks off a pass and runs it down the sideline – and we make a touch down! The Apostle Paul told the Romans chapter 8: ³¹ **What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?** ³² **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?** ³³ **Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies.** ³⁴ **Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died – more than that, who was raised to life – is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us.** ³⁵ **Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?** ³⁶ **As it is written: “For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”** ³⁷ **No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.** ³⁸ **For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,** ³⁹ **neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.**

And Elisha prayed, **“Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.”** Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. This again is God’s amazing grace! Elisha and his servant didn’t earn the LORD’s protection. Elisha and his servant didn’t deserve the LORD’s protection. It was protection by grace alone! I saw a license plate – a vanity plate the other day that said, **“Guilty”**. It made me think. Who would drive around proclaiming for all to see the label *guilty*? Was this someone with a guilty conscience – guilty of maybe drunk driving – that caused a fatal car accident? Was this someone who had done something unspeakable – physical, mental and emotional harm to a helpless victim? Is this the license plate of someone with the heart and attitude of the Apostle Paul who said, **“Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – guilty people – of whom I am the worst!”** I am guilty – and I am forgiven for Jesus’ sake!

Three years after Joshua and David wrote the Worst-case Scenario Survival Handbook – they published the Worst-Case Scenario Survival Handbook: Holidays! The cover promises instruction in how to fend off a charging reindeer, evade a stampede of shoppers; to survive a runaway sled and how to repurpose a fruitcake! There are only 191 days until Christmas. Have you thought about that? Less than 200 days before you are going to need to have the tree put in its stand and decorated and watered – so it doesn’t get dry and all the needles fall off. Less than 200 days to buy presents for all the people you love. Less than 200 days to bake all the cookies and send the Christmas newsletter and clean your house and make all the food so well that even your mother-in-law won’t be able to find fault? Did you hear this week that your family net worth has been reduced by some 40% over the last 10 years? There are people out there – trying to scare you – trying to make you afraid – trying their best to make you discouraged and depressed that life is terrible and only going to get worse! It is powerful and practical encouragement from God’s Word. Don’t look down in fear and depression. Don’t look inside –

where you find only weakness and doubt. Don't look all around – where you find even your best friends and relatives can fail you. But look up – to your Lord and Savior – the Risen Christ – who promises – surely I will be with you always! Then look around at the work Jesus has blessed you to do – always mindful – those who are with us – are more than those who are with them! *Amen!*



To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz