

ST. LUKE EV. LUTHERAN CHURCH-WELS

**SERMON BY PASTOR ANTHONY E. SCHULTZ
PENTECOST 3 JUNE 24, 2012 2 KINGS 13:14-21**



¹⁴ Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. “My father! My father!” he cried. “The chariots and horsemen of Israel!”¹⁵ Elisha said, “Get a bow and some arrows,” and he did so. ¹⁶ “Take the bow in your hands,” he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands.¹⁷ “Open the east window,” he said, and he opened it. “Shoot!” Elisha said, and he shot. “The LORD’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!” Elisha declared. “You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.”¹⁸ Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and the king took them. Elisha told him, “Strike the ground.” He struck it three times and stopped. ¹⁹ The man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.”²⁰ Elisha died and was buried. Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. ²¹ Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb. When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet.

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

If you ask people who know lots about movies—what’s the greatest movie of all time? Chances are they will say, “Citizen Kane”. Did you know that? Citizen Kane! Have you ever seen it...the greatest movie of all time? Do you know the plot? It’s the story of Charles Foster Kane—played by Orson Welles. Charles Foster Kane is enormously wealthy media proprietor—a newspaper publisher. He has lived alone in Florida in his mansion called Xanadu! Xanadu! Remember the Olivia Newton John song—Xanadu? The movie begins with Kane on his death bed—holding a snow globe. He whispers “Rosebud...” The snow globe slips from his dying hand and smashes! Thus begins the greatest movie of all time? Did you know that? You don’t need to see the greatest movie or read the greatest American novel or see the greatest painting or taste the best wine. Before we do all that—wouldn’t it be best—to read our Bible—the whole Bible? Today again we are concentrating on another chapter from Second Kings—the last chapter in the life of the prophet Elisha. Today God’s Word would remind us:

Understand the Chariots and Horsemen of Israel

- 1. The LORD defeats our enemies**
- 2. The LORD defeats death!**

¹⁴ Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died. Pastor Arno Wolfgramm—my friend Pastor Wolfgramm wrote the People’s Bible book of Kings. He says Elisha was probably in his 80s by now. For some 50 years he has been teaching young Seminarians at the School of the Prophets. He has done about a dozen miracles that are recorded—very likely even more. Now Elisha is suffering from the illness from which he would die!

Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. “My father! My father!” he cried. “The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” Here is a title of great respect from the King for Elisha. Here was the phrase—the name Elisha used to show great respect for his teacher Elijah. What a blessing when we talk with respect about those who taught us God’s Word. I am looking forward to coming home to heaven to meet **Pastor Backer** who married my mom and dad and baptized me. I have heard his voice—on records—vinyl disks—33 1/3 records that you play with a record player with a needle. My mom and dad always talked about Pastor Backer. When I was young—we had a vacancy—a long vacancy—and so we had guest preachers month after month. **Dr. Martin P. Simon** preached by us. He’s the pastor who wrote Little Visits With God! He would tell stories. His whole sermon was like a children’s devotion. When I was in college—we had **Pastor Terry Deters**. He would tell stories, too. We had church in a public school—in the entry way. Every week we would drive 45 minutes one way—and get to church early—to set up the folding chairs—and to set out the hymnals—and build the altar—and put on all the altar clothes and the cross and the candles and get out the offering baskets from our trunk. After Church we would take it all down—and pack it up—and haul it home. How excited were we—when Jesus gave us so many sheep—that we moved from the entry way—into the gymnasium?! I remember being in Watertown in August of 1970—hearing Pastor Henry Paustian with his little white hair—straight up—preach law and gospel! I remember going to Trinity in Waukesha—**Pastor Wayne Mueller**—his sermon two sides of a page—top to bottom—edge to edge—and he wouldn’t vary a single sentence from one service to the next. **Pastor Martin Stern** from Mt. Calvary in Waukesha—in the hospital dying from cancer. I would visit him and he would say—tell me God’s Word. And I would say, “Pastor Stern—what do I know of God’s Word—that you don’t already know?” And he would say—*tell me!* And then when I was finished—he would encourage me. I am certain I went home the one who was encouraged! These are the chariots and horsemen of Israel—the clay jars that contain the priceless precious blood bought forgiveness and amazing grace of God!

¹⁵ Elisha said, “Get a bow and some arrows,” and he did so. ¹⁶ “Take the bow in your hands,” he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands. ¹⁷ “Open the east window,” he said, and he opened it. “Shoot!” Elisha said, and he shot. “The LORD’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!” Elisha declared. “You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.” This first part was pretty easy. Safe here in the royal palace—the King’s castle—with Elisha’s hands on the King’s hands—shoot that arrow! Swoosh! That was pretty cool—pretty easy! Shoot that arrow—and the Great I AM promises you will completely destroy the Syrians east of the Jordan! Great! **¹⁸ Then he said, “Take the arrows,” and the king took them. Elisha told him, “Strike the ground.” He struck it three times and stopped.** What? There’s more? **I** have to do something? How long is going to go on and while we’re at it—how complicated is this going to be? I thought we were done!

¹⁹ The man of God was angry with him and said, “You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.” Now you tell me? If someone would have explained—explained to me—made it clear that the utter defeat of Syria hung in the balance—depending on how many times I hit the ground with the arrows—then I would have beat those arrows to splinters. If only I would have understood—what’s in it for me! Is that how we think? We need to remember—to be reminded—God doesn’t owe us an explanation! If the LORD

himself—through his prophet—asks us to do something—you know what? Do it and keep on doing it with all your heart—until you can't! Do it with all your heart—as long as the LORD enables you—and whether you see results—see and understand the blessings or not—we can say ***we are unprofitable servants. We have only done our duty.*** We have only done what the LORD called us to do! I cannot help but think of the little Jewish girl—who was going to be loaded on a train—to be taken to a ***Concentration Camp***. In the little time before she was taken away—her father told her—put on your boots! Boots—winter boots on a day like today? That didn't make any sense! It didn't have to! The little girl put on her winter boots. It wasn't long before the summer turned to autumn and then winter. Little children around her had on sneakers—play shoes—even ballet slippers. One little girl had winter boots—and when there was rain and sleet and snow and ice—one little girl had warm dry feet—because she did what her father told her to do! When we have the mustard seed of faith—we trust our Heavenly Father's wisdom and love!

²⁰ Elisha died and was buried. We went to a funeral Tuesday at 5 o'clock at my last Church, Trinity, Dundee—6 miles NE of Campbellsport. My friend Ricky Schmidt—the Auctioneer—just 52 years old—had passed away after being very sick for a long time! After the service we went to the Trinity Cemetery—4 miles from Church—in the middle of the Kettle Moraine Forest. I walked by the grave stones—of **Eleanor Ramthun**—a little grandma I visited once and found her .22 rifle on the kitchen table—she shot gophers out her kitchen window—right of the telephone pole—left—by the LP tank was out of bounds. Could I try? Sure. I missed—try again—I shot one. Now what? Bury it—feed it to the crows—what? She didn't know. In all those years she had never hit one! Eleanor died and was buried. You will meet her in Heaven. **Harold Klein** died. Harold had epilepsy—terrible seizures—so he couldn't drive a car or a truck. They took his license away. So how was Harold to get to Church? He drove his tractor. There on Harold's very small grave stone—his name—and the carving of a tractor. Harold died and was buried. We will see him in Heaven. **Matthew Koepke** died. His family got the Extreme Makeover—Home Edition. His gravestone says, "Many things to think about...nothing to worry about!" Matthew died and was buried. You will meet him in Heaven, too.

Now Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. ²¹ Once while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man's body into Elisha's tomb. When the body touched Elisha's bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet. Our Heavenly Father—the God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah—is not the God of the dead—but of the living! We worship the Lord Jesus—the Risen Christ! Already in Old Testament times God's people understood that death and the grave are not the end! **The sting of death is sin and the power of sin is the law—but thanks be to God—he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Romans 8.**

The man came to life and stood up on his feet. From death to life—this is the message of the Gospel—from unbelief to faith—from physical death to eternal life in Heaven. Citizen Kane is about 2 hours long. At the end—at Xanadu—his lonely estate—his personal prison—Citizen Kane's belongings are being catalogued—everything from priceless works of art to junk furniture. What is this Rosebud? No one knows! Will this mystery go on forever unsolved? Citizen Kane was a man who got everything he wanted—then lost it all. Maybe Rosebud was the one thing he couldn't get—couldn't buy! In the end you realize Rosebud was the childhood sled of Citizen Kane—a reminder of the only time in his life when he was really happy. The sled—thought to be junk—is burned—reduced to ashes in a basement furnace by Xanadu's departing

workers! How sad—tragic and sad. Sometimes it seems—even this world understands that a person’s life does not consist in the abundance of his *things and stuff*. What really matters—all that really matters is faith in the Gospel promises of God. We are saved by grace through faith—for Jesus’ sake. The Chariots and Horsemen of God—those who shared this soul saving Gospel with us. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony C. Schultz