

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Pentecost 10 August 1, 2010
Genesis 18:20f**



Then the LORD said, "The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know." The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him and said: "Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?"...

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

One of the really neat aspects of being the President of the United States – is – you can give a *Presidential Pardon*. The President does it every year around Thanksgiving. He gives one or two turkeys a *Presidential Pardon*. That means they don't get butchered and stuffed and cooked. They get to go and live on a farm until they get as old as turkeys get and pass away from natural causes. The President of the United States can also give a *Presidential Pardon* to people. I looked it up and President George W. Bush gave out 189 *Presidential Pardons*. You have to apply. Since you were convicted – found guilty in a court of law – you have to have served your sentence and paid your fines and penalties and interest. President Bush pardoned – forgave all kinds of crimes. He pardoned a man named Stephen for altering the odometer of a motor vehicle. He pardoned a man from Brookfield – for failing to show up to serve in the Army when he was drafted. He pardoned a man from Indianapolis for stealing \$10.90. And he pardoned a man named Paul for stealing \$38,000 worth of copper wire. That's a lot of wire! Some 2,673 people who asked President Bush to pardon them were denied! Just 7 were pardoned. And – the White House said – all these people served their sentence. And all these people went on to live exemplary lives. They were really good people ever since their crime! How about that? Today we are going to hear Abraham pray that the LORD would have mercy on the people of Sodom and Gomorrah and we will see what the LORD did. We will learn all sorts of very practical lessons about law and gospel – about sin and grace as we consider the theme:

May God Have Mercy!

- 1. Confess your grievous sins**
- 2. Pray for everyone!**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on – comes from the book of beginnings – the book of Genesis! Genesis chapter 1 is the account of creation. Forever and ever – without beginning and without end – God existed. When he decided – God made the heavens and the earth – and the earth was without form and void – and darkness was upon the face of the deep. The earth was this huge muddy soggy egg – and the Holy Spirit – hovered – brooded over that egg. And God said – "Let there be light" and there was light. No big bang – billions and billions of years ago. No gradual evolving from slime and scum into creatures that became more and more complex – until they stood taller and straighter and more upright – until they became

people! In 6 days of 24 hours each—God made and God organized the universe—filling it up with all kinds of creatures. Genesis chapter 2 takes parts of chapter 1 and expands on them—explaining them. It's not chapter 1 happens—then chapter 2. It's a very common Hebrew way of writing—set down the outline—then go back and expand on parts! Genesis chapter 3 is at the same time the most tragic and most hopeful. Chapter 3 is the account of the Serpent tempting Eve and Adam—the tasting of forbidden fruit—plunging creation into sin. Chapter 3 is also the first promise of a Savior—to rescue us from all our sin and guilt and blame. Chapter 4 is Cain and Abel. How bitter and tragic and murderous is the spread of sin—when Cain murders his brother Abel. What painful guilt Adam and Eve must have felt—when they realized what had happened! By chapter 6 God's Word says, **"When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose. Then the LORD said, 'My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh; his days shall be 120 years...The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. So the LORD said, 'I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them.'"** Genesis 6:1-7 ESV Just a few verses later God's Word says, **"Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight. (The word for corrupt is the same word used to describe idolatry—*perverted* worship.) And the earth was filled with violence! Genesis 6:11 ESV. When people don't show respect for their Heavenly Father—then they treat their neighbor worse and worse—to the point that they lash out with physical violence against their neighbor. Is there violence in our world today? Where to begin?! There is violence in Milwaukee day after day. Listen to the news on the radio and they will tell you over the weekend teenagers 15 and 16 and 17 year olds are gunned down Friday and Saturday and Sunday in the wee hours. They don't even bother to say their names—just their age—and the corner where they were gunned down. In Afghanistan soldiers and sailors are gunned down—in clumps of 6 and 8—people in Pakistan are killed by suicide bombers in clumps of 50. People die in air plane crashes in clumps of 150! Small children—preschoolers and kindergartners are missing—their mom or their step-mom is suspected—called a person of interest. Their little broken bodies are usually found about a week later—and soon forgotten because it's another child that is missing—and there is hope against hope that they will be found before it's too late! Wise King Solomon was right when he wrote, **"There is nothing new under the sun!"****

If you were in Church last Sunday you heard God's Word—it was under the sun that Abraham sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them and bowed himself to the earth and said, "O Lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. Let a little water be brought and wash your feet, and rest yourself under the tree, while I bring a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourself, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant." Genesis 18:1b-5 Little did Abraham know that the three strangers who had stopped by his tent that day were in fact two angels and the Son of God—in human form—come to visit him. Abraham brought these three visitors cool water to wash their feet and refresh themselves. He brought them fresh baked bread from the finest flour. He took a tender and good calf and roasted it. He brought cheese curds and milk. Then he stood nearby—while they ate—in case they needed anything—some *A1 Steak Sauce*—a cloth napkin—if he could warm up their cup of coffee—as it

were. Anything they needed – he wanted to bring it. This is hospitality – a fruit of faith – that Abraham was showing. A way to show God’s love – overflowing his heart!

Then the men set out from there, and they looked down toward Sodom. And Abraham went with them to set them on their way. The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do, seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him? For I have chosen him, that he may command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing righteousness and justice, so that the LORD may bring to Abraham what he has promised him. Genesis 18:16-19 ESV. Then the LORD said, “The outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.” This is technically called anthropomorphism – it’s giving human qualities to God – to help his creatures understand. The LORD didn’t have to take a road trip to Sodom to see if it was really as bad as rumor had it. The LORD knew. He knows everything. He knows if a sparrow falls out of the Maple tree in your back yard. He knows how many hairs there are on your head – and how many came out when you took your last shower. How many are tangled in your hairbrush on the counter in your bathroom. He knows literally how many grains of sand there are on the shore. He knows how much oil was spilled in the Gulf – where it came from – and where it all is right now – every drop! He knows my sins and yours. He knows our most secret thoughts. He knows all our worries and doubts and fears. He really does! The LORD knew in Sodom there was so much wickedness – the name of the city has become synonymous with sin – much the same way Las Vegas is called sin city – the way San Francisco has become synonymous with sin – the way Chicago is synonymous with corrupt politics and New York is famous for organized crime! Watertown is famous for having so many bars – so many taverns. Wouldn’t it be better if we were known for Christian love – for giving and sharing – for loving one another? What we are famous for – will only change one heart at a time and one life at a time – for the glory of Jesus – and Him alone!

The men turned away and went toward Sodom, but Abraham remained standing before the LORD. Then Abraham approached him and said: “Will you sweep away the righteous with the wicked? What if there are fifty righteous people in the city? Will you really sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous people in it?... Abraham prayed for everyone! Abraham prayed for the wicked people who were guilty of gross and hurtful sin. Abraham prayed for people who had taken God’s gift of being male or female – God’s gift of marriage and children and turned it upside down and inside out! Abraham prayed for people who had taken their natural knowledge of what God wanted for men and women – for husbands and wives and perverted it – to their own shame and harm. Abraham prayed for sinners just like me and just like you! We are no better than the people of Sodom – if we are teenagers – wearing clothes that are immodest – too small, too tight, too low – too anything. If we are teenagers – and use our cell phone to send sinful pictures of our self. If we are teenagers and *make out* on dates. We are no better than the people of Sodom – if we live in sin – live like we are married – sharing a house and sharing a bed as if we were married – when we are not! It was God’s plan from the beginning – that people make their marriage promises – before God and before their family and friends – and then have *hugs and kisses* – and then have babies – and have families – and fill houses with so much forgiving love that they become homes. Waiting to have hugs and kisses until you are married and only within marriage isn’t being old fashioned – it’s being faithful to God’s Word! The idea that marriage is only between one man

and one woman isn't something conservative or liberal or red state or blue state—it's God's Word and it's God's will.

Abraham prayed again and again. Would God have mercy for the sake of 50 believers? Yes he would! Would God have mercy for the sake of 45 believers or 40 or 30 or 20? Yes, he would! Would God have mercy for the sake of 10 believers? Yes he would. If there were in the whole city of Sodom—just 10 people who loved the LORD—the whole city would be spared! It is sadly tragic and true—that there were not even 10 people who loved the LORD in Sodom. How many believers are there in Watertown? Only Jesus knows! We need to pray like Abraham did. Pray for our nation! Pray for Wisconsin. Pray for Watertown and Ixonia and Johnson Creek and Clyman. Pray for the members of St. Luke's! Pray for your family and pray for your neighbors. Pray without ceasing that God would have mercy on us all for Jesus' sake!

May God have mercy! I looked up President Obama's *Presidential Pardons*. Besides Thanksgiving turkeys they say he pardoned a ten year old girl from Green Bay. It seems this young lady named Kennedy missed the last day of school to go to a town hall meeting to hear the President. Her father asked the President to pardon his daughter and the President said he would. He tore off a piece of paper from his notes and wrote very simply, "To Kennedy's teacher – Please excuse Kennedy's absence...She's with me. Barak Obama." She's with me. We have in God's Word a pardon signed with Jesus' blood. We have a pardon from our Heavenly Father because Jesus wrote – we are with Him! Amen!

To God alone all glory!



Rev. Matthew E. Schmitt