

## St. Luke Lutheran Church

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz  
Pentecost 15. September 1, 2013  
Hebrews 13:1-8



**13.1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. <sup>2</sup> Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. <sup>5</sup> 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." <sup>6</sup> So we say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?" <sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith. <sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.**

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

I stepped out our front door the other day – and I thought I saw something out of the corner of my eye. There in the corner of the porch was a little wisp of a spider web – the softest gauze – made more visible by the little drops of dew. In the littlest seam of the siding – was the spider. Come near – and he hides in the crack. Get caught – get tangled in the deadly web and he comes out on his nimble spider legs – to bite you with his little spider fangs! What a nasty little creature – this little insect! Not a bad picture of the devil – the father of lies – the tempter – the first murderer – the lord of the flies – the ruler of the kingdom of the air – loosed for a little while in this world – before he will be chained forever in the fiery abyss that is eternal dying – yet never dead. Jesus was born – the little baby in Bethlehem – born in a stable – sleeping in a feed box. Jesus lived a life free from any sin or mistake. Then he died on the cross – to pay for all my thoughtless, heartless and mindless mistakes. He rose from the dead – just the way he promised. And because Jesus lives – I have the gift of

forgiveness by grace through faith. This 15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Old Testament Thanksgiving/Pentecost – God’s Word encourages us to put our saving faith into practice. Today God’s Word reminds us:

I. Jesus always loves you...

Today is the 4<sup>th</sup> and last Sunday this year when we will read from the letter to the Hebrews. Then we will read from Philemon – the slave owner – the owner of the runaway slave named...Onesimus. Then 3 Sundays from 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy – 4 Sundays from 2<sup>nd</sup> Timothy 2<sup>nd</sup> Thessalonians – then Romans for Reformation – Romans – about righteousness that comes by grace through faith. Two more weeks from 2 Thessalonians – then Colossians – renewed like an old worn coin – renewed in the image of Christ--Christ the King. By then Thursday will be Thanksgiving – Deer Season will end – we will be making venison hot sticks – Advent will be coming – the Festival half of the Church Year – Christmas will be coming!

Chapter 13 is the last chapter of the letter to the Hebrews. It is filled with final words of encouragement to put your faith in the Risen Christ into action! **13.1 Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters.** Very literally God’s Word says – “brotherly love – let it remain.” Brotherly love in Greek **Ἡ φιλαδελφία -*philadelphia* – brotherly love.** The 2011 NIV translates this as brothers and sisters – siblings! Brothers and sisters – psychologists say “birth order” makes all the difference in the world – if you are the first born – the child that parents have these unrealistic impossibly high expectations for their first born. Then there is the baby of the family – the last child – sometimes indulged – sometimes some would say spoiled. And then there’s the impossible place to be – the *invisible* middle child. Sometimes brothers and sisters have quarrels and arguments to the point they have nothing to do with each other. This becomes painfully obvious when a parent dies – and you go to the funeral home – to make arrangements. How many brothers and sisters? Several. Names – and where do they live? I’m not sure – somewhere – I think in Denver – or last we heard – somewhere out in California. I think they are still alive. Someone would have called – and so? We had a disagreement – a misunderstanding – a falling out a long time ago. I don’t even remember what it was about. Or they remember *exactly* what it was about – some antique dresser that I know for a fact Grandma wanted me to have – but

while she was dying – they went and took it – and people pushed each other down and somebody called the cops – and that’s why as far as I am concerned – *they are dead to me!* That’s just plain wrong! That’s a sin – to stop loving someone because of a piece of furniture or a piece of jewelry – to stop loving because of some thing or some stuff. All that really matters is people that Jesus died to forgive. When Simon Peter asked Jesus how often you are supposed to forgive your brother – remember what Jesus said? Again and again and again and again! Not just 7 times but 77 times and then even more – if need be!

**<sup>4</sup>Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.** Before there was sin – there was marriage. God said, **“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a suitable helper for him** – his flawless complement – the one to complete him!” Eve was made from Adam’s rib – from beside him – not above him – not beneath him but beside him and close to his heart. From the very beginning men and women have different roles and responsibilities. God’s Word says, **“Husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the Church!”** The bar is exceedingly high – to love your wife like Jesus loves you – enough to die for her!

I used to be quick to say – the odds of your having to choose whether to save your wife or save your self – are pretty remote. That’s wrong. It happens all the time. People going down the highway and suddenly there is a terrible accident – you swerve – impact is unavoidable! Will you be able to wrench just enough control – so that you take the brunt of the crash or not? You are in a terrible accident in a snow storm and go over the edge of an embankment. Will you go out into the blinding snow to get help for her? You go off the road into water – only time for one to get out. Do you push her out to safety? The robber or thief points a gun at your wife. Do you put yourself between her and danger – taking the bullet yourself? If we are so bold as to say we would give up our life to save theirs – we need to demonstrate it – by how we treat them on incredibly ordinary and painfully average days. When I was at O’Hare International Airport – I saw a family hurrying down the corridor – pulling their luggage on their little wheels. Everyone was yelling at each other. Father – mom – teenage son – all yelling at each other at the same time. Everyone was yelling – no one was listening. Fifteen minutes later there they were again – going in the opposite direction – still yelling – now waving their free arm – poking their

finger at each other. How sad?! **“Husbands, love your wives like Christ loved the Church.”** Treat your wife with love and respect. Protect them and defend them. Help them and encourage them. Love them like Jesus loves the Church – and you will be the kind of husband Jesus intended. That means never ever yelling at them – threatening them – pushing shoving or hurting them in any way. Love them like Jesus loves you – and our houses will be homes – homes – warmed and lit by the light of Jesus’ love!

**<sup>5</sup> 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.”** Every month I get a copy of The Readers’ Digest from my Mom. This month there is a story about a lady named Vivienne. 10 years ago – just before Thanksgiving her house burned – burned to the ground – and all her “things and stuff” were reduced to ashes. At first she felt really bad about that. But then she began to realize it was kind of like starting over – a fresh start – a new beginning! And then as time went on – she again accumulated more and more things – more and more stuff. And now – this year – she has determined to simplify and reduce – to the tune of selling, giving away or throwing away 10 things every day so that by the end of this year she will have 3,650 less things! Could you do that? Beginning with that drawer in the kitchen with the keys to stuff you don’t even own any more – could you throw them away? The junk drawer in the kitchen that has little light bulbs for Christmas tree lights that you don’t have any more. Do you have clothes that you haven’t worn in literally years – books that you haven’t looked at in years – things and stuff in the garage that are broken and truth be told you will never repair – because you couldn’t use them if you did!? Money and the illusion of control that it promises – is exactly that – an illusion.

If you had more money what would you do? Would you go out to eat? We went out to eat with relatives the other day. Three of us had a little piece of sirloin steak with little shrimps and parmesan cheese. The waitress very carefully wrote down how we wanted our steak – medium, medium rare and rare. All three steaks came – literally burned crispy! They would have come out much better and much cheaper if I had bought them at Glenn’s and grilled them myself! Think about your life! There have been plenty of times when you didn’t have money – and there were many blessings to be thankful for. There have been times when you had some

extra money – and because of circumstances – it was difficult. It is true – the most precious things in life – are not *things* – and they are not for sale at any price. What is truly precious is *priceless!* When you have Jesus' forgiving love in your heart – you don't need to buy stuff to be happy!

**<sup>8</sup> Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.** People change! We grow older and older. When my dad was 65 years old – he could still do a 1 arm pushup. You have to be pretty strong to do that. When my dad was 80 he used to go walking – three miles in the morning and two miles later in the afternoon. Not far from home – he would walk into McDonald's and get a cup of coffee. He would tell the person who waited on him that he wanted his senior citizen discount. The worker looked at him and said – I knew that! Really, my dad said – what gave me away – my white hair. And the worker said – no, the brown spots on the back of your hands! Nice! My dad is 87 now. He doesn't walk very far. And sometimes he falls down. People change! Sometimes people come into lots of money. They literally win the Lottery. And the question comes – does all that money change them? At first you might say – it has to! And then some will say – it doesn't really change you – it exposes and emphasizes – even magnifies who you are and what you are! I think that might very well be true. All that sudden wealth and people see no need to pretend anymore to be what they are not. **Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever!** Jesus loves you right now – just as much as he did when he said from the cross, **"It is finished!"** Jesus loves you right now as much as when he said, **"Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."** John 14:27 Jesus loves you very much. He always did and he always will. There is nothing you need to worry about for Jesus' sake. Amen! To God alone all glory!