

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Pentecost 15 series C. Hebrews 13:1-8
September 5, 2010



Hebrews 13:1-8 (New American Standard Bible)

The Changeless Christ

¹Let love of the brethren continue. ²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. ³Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body.

⁴Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. ⁵Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," ⁶so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"

⁷Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.

This is God's Word!

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

The article was entitled *The Most Isolated Man on the Planet!* This one little guy is all alone in the middle of the Brazilian rainforest. This little man spent last night inside a hut made by fastening huge palm leaves together – thick enough to keep out the rain. There are countless bugs making noise as they hover. Spider monkeys scream in the tree tops leaping from tree to tree. Wild pigs squeal and snort as they root through the undergrowth looking for roots to eat. This wiry little man was discovered about 15 years ago. It's assumed he is the last and sole survivor of a tribe of people never contacted by the outside world. Three years ago ranching and logging were closing in on him from all sides. The government of Brazil declared a 31 square mile area all around him to be off limits to trespassing and developing. It's supposed to be a safe zone – this 31 square miles – to guarantee he remains all alone! As alone as this man may seem – he hasn't escaped from sin. Sin is in his blood – in his DNA – inherited from his mom and dad – his grandparents and great-grandparents – all the relatives who have died – all the way back to Adam and Eve! Does this man know that Jesus lived and died – to take away all his sins? If not – he is in very real danger of perishing forever! That would be the ultimate isolation – to be cut off from God's forgiving love! It is the essence of the Christian faith – that Jesus is the Son of God – conceived and born of the Virgin Mary – crucified under Pontius Pilate – to pay for all our sins! It is in light of Jesus' blood bought forgiveness that God's Word encourages us to put our faith into practice. To bear sweet and juicy fruits of faith – because Jesus has redeemed us. Today again – based on part of the letter to the Hebrews we see:

Jesus Never Changes!

1. Jesus Changes our hearts,
2. Jesus changes our behavior!

Remember, just for a moment – the letter to the Hebrews is about all those comparisons – remember? Remember Jesus surpasses everyone and everything. Jesus is greater than angels – wondrous exceedingly powerful ministering spirits and messengers of the Heavenly Father. Ten thousand times ten thousand angels praise Jesus. Moses was wonderful – but Jesus is far far greater – the fulfillment of all of God’s Law! The Sabbath Rest was wonderful – the Tabernacle – the whole system of sin offerings and guilt offerings and fellowship offerings – whole burnt offerings. Jesus is the Great High Priest and at the same time the Lamb of God – who takes away the sin – the rebellious obstinate guilt of the whole wide world! It is in light of that forgiving sacrifice – that we bear fruits of faith – that give glory to God!

¹Let love of the brethren continue. We are brothers and sisters in Christ. How do brothers and sisters treat one another? *Sometimes* not the best! Sometimes when we are very little people – preschool and kindergarten age – do we fight with our brother and sister – pushing them, hitting them, scratching them, even *biting* them? Do we play with their favorite action figure from their Happy Meal? Do we grab – *swipe* the toy they are playing with – because we know it will irritate them? When you are all grown up – do you get along with your brothers and sisters? On the night he was betrayed Jesus said, **“A new commandment I give you; love one another. As I have love you – so you must love one another. Everyone will know that you are my disciples – my students and followers and imitators – if you love one another!”** Do you get along with your brothers and sisters? It is painful to hear people say I have brothers and sisters but we don’t communicate. Why I haven’t talked to my brother or sister for 5 or 10 or 20 years. We had a falling out – over what? Oh, I don’t even remember exactly. Or, we had a falling out over some money, some antique piece of furniture – something – that seemed very important at the moment – so that we said things we shouldn’t have. And we have drifted apart. I don’t even know where they are for sure! How painfully tragic is that? For love to continue we need to forgive and forget – no matter how horrible the hurt might have been. Forgive – the way Jesus has forgiven all my sins!

²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it. Hospitality! When I was a Vicar back in 1977 my Bishop – Pastor Mueller – would show me hospitality. I would come across the alley to his home – and he would offer me soda – a big glass with lots of ice cubes – lots of ice! He would say, “Have a seat at the kitchen table. Let’s talk about all the Gospel work we have to do!” He would say, “How about some snacks?” We would have crackers and chunks of Wisconsin cheese – slices of Venison summer sausage. If you didn’t make your little cracker sandwiches fast enough – he would make some for you and push them toward you! Do you like popcorn? I *love* popcorn! We would have some of that. You know what would go good – a *pizza*! Nothing fancy – a frozen pizza – got them on sale! Looks like you could use some more soda! All this hospitality – because Jesus’ love overflowed – *overflowed* his heart! When you show hospitality – it’s not free. It’s not cheap. It costs you something – when you bake cookies and give them away – you are out all the ingredients – all the time and effort and work to make them. But it’s worth it – if you think of baking those cookies for Jesus! When we wash feet for the poorest and the weakest – we are washing feet for Jesus!

³Remember the prisoners, as though in prison with them, and those who are ill-treated, since you yourselves also are in the body. Prison is not a nice place. Oh, I know that there are new prisons that have cable TV and three hot meals a day – plus snacks – and exercise equipment and classes in wood working and auto repair and painting. I know there are new prisons where you can do gardening and read and work out! But there is one aspect of prison that is always horrible – that makes it prison. You are not free! You are a prisoner! In the

slammer – the doors and the bars slam behind you. You are not free! You cannot go *where* you want – *when* you want. You can't touch the people you love. You have to talk to them on a phone. You can only feel the warmth of their hand through the bullet proof glass between you. Rather than turning your back on people in prison. Rather than feeling so morally superior over people in prison – remember them as though in prison with them! Understand what that means! It means sympathy – to feel their pain and loneliness! It means compassion. It means to understand their feelings of guilt and shame and isolation. It means care about the people you know in prison – because they are part of the body of Christ, too!

⁴Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. It is painfully obvious marriage is not held in honor among all in our country. Marriage – the promise – the commitment of one man and one woman – truly single – to leave father and mother and be husband and wife – until finally only death can separate them – is under attack! It was God's plan from the beginning – in the Garden of Eden – that marriage be one man and one woman. Remember what the LORD said? It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him. And the LORD caused Adam to fall into a deep sleep. The LORD took one of Adam's ribs – and from that rib he made Eve – and brought her to Adam. Adam understood. Adam said, **"This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of the man. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife and the two will become one flesh. Therefore they are no longer two but one. Therefore what God has joined together let man not separate!** Young people do not have to marry. There is nothing wrong with serving Jesus full time – dedicating yourself to serving him – without the responsibilities that come with a spouse and children. But most people want to be married. Who should you marry? The person who loves and lives a life dedicated to Jesus. Date a person who loves Jesus more than life itself – and you will spend time with a person who will show you respect for Jesus' sake. Many people look for someone who is symmetrical – a person where thick and beautiful hair is above eyes and nose are perfectly balanced – teeth that fairly twinkle when they smile – their body beautiful on the outside. The fact is – when there is the beauty of Jesus' forgiving love in your heart – the outside will reflect that beauty whether you are symmetrical or not! Outside beauty cannot cover up an ugly heart. And people with Jesus in their heart – remain beautiful no matter how much their skin might become wrinkled and scared! It is by the grace of God that husband and wife grow in faith – so that their house is a home – warmed and lighted by Jesus' presence.

⁵Make sure that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," **⁶so that we confidently say, "THE LORD IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT WILL MAN DO TO ME?"** Money, money, money, money! The Almighty Dollar? How old do you have to be – before you come to realize the point of this life is not how many things and how much stuff you have? Remember *Hetty Green* – the woman in the Guinness Book of World Records – for being the stingiest person in the world. Remember how her son broke his leg – and had to wait for treatment until she could find a free clinic. By then – it was too late – and he lost his leg! How can you have the equivalent of what today would be 1.9 and 3.5 billion dollars – and yet eat cold food because you don't want to pay to heat it – or wear the same clothes and wash only the edges because you don't want to pay for soap to wash them completely? Are we content with what we have? Or do we do what the Book of Stuff says? Do we go to work all day – then come home and watch TV and see all the commercials that tell us all the things we need to buy – so we can be happy? So we buy more and more

stuff – TVs that are more and more high definition with bigger flatter screens that have surround sound – only to find there is nothing worth watching? Do we buy more and more clothes – so we have to buy more and more hangers – to hang up clothes that don't fit – because we go out to eat so much? Do we have trouble finding what we want – mostly because we have so much and it just isn't organized enough? Do we see all the wonderful things our relatives have – the wonderful things our brothers and sisters have and resent them? Resent them because we work harder and we are smarter – and we deserve what they have? Do we rejoice when wonderful things happen to the people we love? Do we share their joy – or resent their happiness – and think to ourselves, "Must be nice!" Do we always want more and more – or do we dedicate time and energy to thank and praise God for all his blessings? I have said more than once – if the rest of my life were one of loss – I would still need to thank and praise God for the countless acts of kindness and mercy and grace and goodness that he has already shown me!

7Remember those who led you, who spoke the word of God to you; and considering the result of their conduct, imitate their faith. Pastors speak the word of God to us. I counted up at least 12 pastors that were my pastor – starting with Pastor Backer – the pastor who baptized me at Mt. Calvary Lutheran Church in LaCrosse. Our family moved a bunch of times – and each time we got a new pastor. Then some pastors took calls and we had vacancy pastors. I always liked that. When I was growing up in Northern Illinois we went to a LC-MS. There were no WELS congregations within miles and miles. For a while our congregation, Trinity was vacant – so we had guest preachers from Concordia, River Forest. I really liked that. Some Sundays we had Dr. Martin P. Simon. He wrote Little Visits With God. He knew how to preach so little children paid attention. He had Dr. Heinitz. He taught all sorts of literature classes. He would refer to all sorts of classic novels and short stories and poems. He had Dr. Wangerin. He was a very gifted speaker, too. It is a wonderful blessing to think the sermon is too short – when the pastor says, "Amen!" and you wish they would keep going. Remember the pastors you have been blessed to hear. Consider their conduct – their behavior as shepherds with hearts that love their sheep. Imitate their faith! It is a wonderful blessing to be called to read and study and apply and share God's Word! What a blessing to get up in the morning and spend the day in prayer and Bible study and devotions and worship and meetings that plan to spread God's Word! We do that because Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever! Amen

To God alone all glory!



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