

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS**  
**Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz**  
**Pentecost 14 September 18, 2011**  
**Romans 11:33-36 ESV**



<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! <sup>34</sup>"For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?"<sup>35</sup>"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?" <sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen.

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

I was watching TV the other day – when they talked about smiling! What an odd thing – if you stop and think about it – smiling. It's really a very complicated thing – to smile. It involves as many as 15 muscles – depending on what you mean by smiling! When they first opened a McDonald's in the former Soviet Union – they told workers – before you say, "Welcome to McDonalds! May I take your order" – it would be appropriate to smile. To smile – that is – to make the corners of your mouth go up – preferably – both at the same time! They actually had to say that! The act of raising the corners of your mouth is done by three muscles, primarily the zygomaticus major and risorius muscles and aided by the buccinator muscle. Some of us – when we smile – we literally squint our eyes. I know this – having had my picture taken enough times to realize that in most pictures when I smile I use my orbicularis oculi. If you scrunch your nose with your smile then you may also use your procerus and nasalis muscle. If your forehead wrinkles and eyebrows rise then your occipitofrontalis helps as well. Today – you almost can't stop from smiling – as God's Word is a song of thanksgiving and praise. Today we want to think about:

**How Great Is Our God!**

- 1. We can't always figure Him out**
- 2. We can give Him glory.**

<sup>33</sup>Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! How great is our God? The first and essential greatness of God can be found in the fact that he sacrificed his one and only Son to save us! There was a terrible accident the other day – all you could see was a motor-cycle halfway under a car – with flames all shooting up from the motorcycle gas tank. A couple of people tried to look under the car. Then one lady got down on the road – she crawled almost under the car. Yes – there was in fact someone trapped under the car! She yelled for help and three or four people came and tried to pick up the car – but they couldn't. They yelled for more help and more people came – six or seven or more – it's hard to tell. They all lifted and pushed as hard as they could – and then one guy in a neon green shirt reached under the car and grabbed the leg of the guy trapped underneath – and pulled him out – all the way out – away from the car and the motorcycle! He didn't move at all! Was he dead? Was he crushed or burned to death? No – he moved his arm – lifted up his hand – he was still alive! They had saved him! What a pale – pale picture of how Jesus gave up his life – to save us from eternal destruction! I don't know the names of all the people who pushed and lifted that car. But the city council is trying to gather

their names to publish them—to thank them! If you were the person who was rescued—wouldn't you make it your life goal—to find out the names and addresses of every single person who saved you? And then what? Wouldn't you want to thank them? How could you? Send them a thank you note? Send them a birthday card every year? Take them all out to dinner every year—on Tuesday, September 13<sup>th</sup>—the anniversary of the day they saved you? What would you do? What could you do? It's hard to imagine what you could do—to adequately thank people who risked their life to save you! How do you thank Jesus for dying on the cross to save your immortal soul for eternity? How can you begin to thank him? I'm afraid sometimes we take Jesus' sacrifice for granted! We hear this every Sunday—yada, yada, yada! How wrong is that?!

<sup>33</sup>**Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!** All you have to do is look around—to see the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! This is the time of year that apples are in season. I love apples. There are so many different kinds of apples. We had salad at my grandson Noah's 12<sup>th</sup> birthday—it's apples and chunks of Snickers and whipped cream—Granny Smith apples—really tart! There are Arkansas Black apples. Did you ever hear of Arkansas Black? They are an ingredient in making sauerkraut! There are Cortland apples. I think of them—every time we drive to New Ulm. There are Braeburn apples—they are really crisp! There are Fuji apples—reddish-pink skin from Japan! They came to this country in the 1980s! There are Honeycrisp Apples. They are really crisp and really sweet. They were new in the 1990s! They are good for baking and salad and sauce—*pies – not so much!* Jonathans and MacIntosh and Red Delicious are good. Winesap is fun to say—*winesap*. They are not good to eat raw—and are mostly for making apple cider or for a seasoned wine. I didn't know that! There are some 7,000 different kinds of apples! If God went to all that trouble—making the lowly apple—won't he take wonderful care of us?

**Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God!** Those who count such things say there are about 1 million different creatures in the animal world from insects and worms to reptiles to mammals. Of all these creatures more than 800,000 are insects. Each year they say between 7,100 and 10,000 new insects are discovered. Scientists believe there are anywhere from 1 million to ten million still waiting to be discovered. There are more and more kinds of **bees, ants, flies, mosquitoes, grasshoppers, crickets, butterflies, cockroaches, termites, fleas and beetles.** When you think of bugs chances are you think of the ones that annoy us—by buzzing in our ears, spreading diseases, damaging crops and household items and biting people and pets. These represent only about 17% of all the 800,000 species. The “good” bugs are very valuable. They serve as food for birds, frogs, fish and other animals. They pollinate crops, destroy other harmful bugs, give us honey, bees wax, shellac, and silk and keep the land clean by feeding on dead animals and plants. I never thought of that—did you? It's all part of God's wondrous plan. Did you know that within one square mile—there are more bugs than the total number of people in the world? That would be more than 6.5 billion bugs! That's a lot of bugs! Jesus knows all the bugs—and Jesus knows all the people! Even in this sin spoiled and in infected world—most bugs accomplish good! It makes me ashamed for all the times I have grumbled and complained about the bugs in my life. There was one cricket by our house the other day. One little cricket rubbing his legs together! Oh, we said, “Time to release the Gecko!” If only we had one! What a miracle of mercy that Jesus doesn't squish me like a bug. But he doesn't!

<sup>34</sup>**For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?”** You can't figure out God—you can't! You can't figure out why on 9.11 ten years ago—some people went to work in the twin towers and why that very morning—some people woke up with a migraine

headache or the stomach flu or their child was sick and they had to stay home – or their car wouldn't start – or they got stuck in traffic or they had jury duty or their alarm didn't go off or a thousand little things went what they thought was frustrating and irritating and wrong – only to realize they were not in their office when the whole tower came crashing down! You can't figure out why some people have heart attacks and survive – while other people have heart attacks and are gone to Heaven. Why do some people like my friend Ervin Roehl live to 104 and some people like little Kellie Roehl only live to be 3? I think sometimes it's like when we were little children and couldn't figure out why we couldn't play with the butcher knives that we had that my father the meat cutter used to sharpen with that metal pole! Or why we couldn't shoot my father's rifle – or why we couldn't drive the car or play with matches or drink from the *Seagram 7* bottle that was in the cabinet under the sink. When we are little there are all kinds of things we don't understand. We don't understand why you can't just go to the bank and get more money when you run out of money in your wallet. We don't understand why we can't go out to eat all the time. We don't understand why we can't have ice cream for supper and cookies whenever you want. We don't understand why our parents say no to us so often because they love us. We don't understand why we get spankings and time out and go to your room and no you can't have the car keys and no you can't have \$20 dollars! We don't understand because we are little. And there are countless things that our Heavenly Father does. And there are countless things our Heavenly Father allows – *allows* – and makes work for our eternal good. God is never the author – the cause or source of evil. Rather he makes everything work together for our eternal good!

<sup>35</sup>**"Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?"** About 6 years after Christopher Columbus discovered America Michelangelo began work on a piece of sculpture – a statue of Mary holding Jesus' body after he was taken down from the cross. It is a massive triangle – Mary's face at the top. It is very striking – the fact that she looks so very young although she must have been going on 45 or 50 years old. Michelangelo said her face looked so young because she was so very pure on the inside! Jesus' body is very interesting. Jesus is dead – his body lifeless – and yet the marks of the crucifixion are small – small nail marks on his hands and feet and a small spear wound in his side! Mary is in fact large – to be able to hold the body of a man – on her lap – and yet the statue is so cleverly designed – with her robe in folds around her – that the appearance is almost an optical illusion – making it appear in the right proportions. Michelangelo spent the better part of two years on this sculpture – finally literally polishing the stone so carefully – you would think – if you touched Jesus' body it would still be warm! This statue is in fact one of the most remarkable pieces of sculpture in the whole world – like Michelangelo's *David* or Michelangelo's *Moses*! Besides all this Michelangelo painted the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. How about that? Michelangelo would climb up the scaffolding and lie on his back and paint until in exhaustion he would fall asleep – and then wake up – to paint some more! He spent his life – his health – his energy and creativity – to create these priceless Christian works of art. Now – does Jesus owe Michelangelo? Is our Heavenly Father indebted to him? Of course not! We are but dust and ashes. We owe everything to Jesus. He owes us nothing. And still he gives to us day after day – daily bread – the forgiveness of all our sins – an inheritance in Heaven that will mean joy and peace and rest forever!

<sup>36</sup>**For from him and through him and to him are all things.** Everything belongs to our Heavenly Father – everything! I think sometimes we think – if Jesus really loved me – he would make all the painful and difficult and uncomfortable things go away. That if Jesus really loved me – he would put me and all the people I love on *Easy Street*! And then when painful and difficult things happen – we wonder – where is Jesus? Why didn't he stop this? Why didn't he

prevent this? But think about it! When we woke up – and heard that Osama Bin Laden had been put to death we learned that the people who put him to death were Navy Seals! Now if you know anything about the training of Navy Seals – you know that they don't sit around in cushy chairs in a climate controlled room with bubble wrap all around them – quite the opposite! They get up in the wee hours of the morning and run – carrying all sorts of equipment – through obstacle courses – *obstacle* courses! They climb over obstacles – crawl under obstacles – swim across obstacles. They have the wisdom that comes from experience – that *what doesn't kill you – makes you stronger!* It is the people who have been through times of difficulty – times of testing-times of troubles – that are strong! It is the storms and struggles of life – that make us strong to endure – for the glory of the LORD!

**<sup>36</sup>For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever.**

Forever! That's a long time. There is a commercial – I don't remember what it's for – which has to be a problem. But there's a commercial where they take a picture of a person – the first morning they wake up retired! They look very happy – as the sun comes up – the first day of their retirement. And then the commercial says – the average person gets to see 6,000 sunrises as a retired person – that means the average person – retiring at 65 gets to live on average until about 81 ½ years old. Does that sound like a long time to you – 6,000 days? Forever! That's a long time – endless time – day after day after day! The things is – where are we going to spend forever? There are only two possibilities! It's hard to imagine hell. The Bible talks about Ben Hinnom – the city dump – the city garbage pit. When we lived in Dundee, WI we had a town dump. Saturday – we would load up the week's garbage in the trunk of our car – and drive up the hill and left on County F – about a quarter mile – turn left – into the dump. There we would throw all our garbage on this heap of trash bags – along with all our neighbors. On Monday they would take the waste oil from Dins' Gas Station and Mini-mart Auto Repair and set it on fire. That's the picture of Ben Hinnom – the Jerusalem Garbage Pit. It is the filth – the most disgusting garbage and filth – always burning – always smoldering – always on fire – with all the smoke and worse. Imagine being trapped forever in the midst of that fire. It would be horrible – and eternal destruction – cut off from God's love and goodness – is even worse! We will not spend eternity in the smoldering garbage – because Jesus endured that hurt for us – when he was on the cross. We will spend forever – glorifying God. It won't be dull! It won't be boring! It will be the forever wedding feast – where we will all celebrate. No one will ever have to say good-bye – because we will be home with Jesus for Jesus' sake. Amen!

**To God alone all glory!**

*Rev. Anthony L. Schultz*