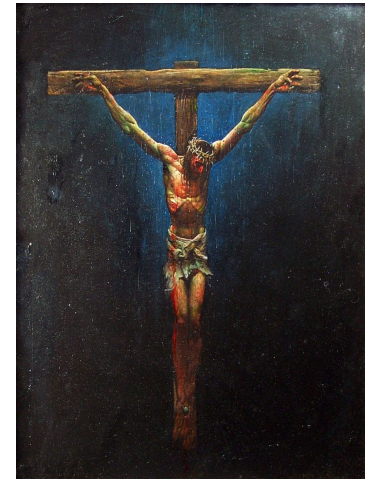


St. Luke Evangelical Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Pentecost 17. September 19, 2010 1 Timothy 1:15-17



¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. ¹⁷Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.

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

It's called *the FBI Ten Most Wanted Fugitives List*. It started with J. Edgar Hoover playing a game of hearts with William – the United Press International Editor-in-Chief – discussing ways to promote capture of the FBI's "toughest guys". By March – two years before I was born – the FBI published a list of the worst of the worst! Once you are on the list – you don't get off the list unless you are captured, killed or if the charges against you are dropped. In just 5 cases names were dropped because it was decided you were no longer particularly dangerous to the rest of people. Billie Austin Bryant spent the shortest amount of time on the list – being listed for just 2 hours – 2 hours! On rare occasions there have been 11 people on the list – when a new one is added because he's so nasty – and yet – there isn't anyone of the top ten who can be left off the list! The number one man on the list right now – Victor Manuel Gerena. He was added to the list in 1984 and has been on the list ever since – some 26 years. That's longer than anyone has ever been on the list. Victor stole \$7 million. He took 2 security guards hostage at gunpoint. He handcuffed them, bound them – then injected them with something – non-lethal – to disable them. There is a \$1 million dollar reward – if you can give the FBI information that would help them capture Victor. They think he's somewhere in Cuba! So – do you think Victor is the most terrible criminal in the whole United States? Or do you think there is a serial killer who's worse? Or do you think a rapist is worse? Or do you think a child molester is worse? Or do you think someone who does all of the above is the worst of all? Today we hear the Apostle Paul say, **"Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst!"** Is this false modesty? Or is it the literal truth? Today we will see the grace and mercy and goodness of God as we see:

Jesus Came To Save The Worst Sinners!

- 1. Jesus shows us mercy and patience**
- 2. We show Him honor and glory**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on is part of Paul's first letter to this co-worker Timothy. Three Sundays we are reading from 1st Timothy – then three weeks we are going to read from 2nd Timothy – then a whole bunch of other letters from the Apostle Paul – in the last Sundays of the Church Year. Before you know it – it's going to be Reformation and Thanksgiving and Advent – Merry Christmas – Happy New Year – I can't believe it's Ash Wednesday and Easter! 1st Timothy is not very long. It's only 6 chapters – only 111 verses. You could very easily read the whole thing – in maybe 15 minutes before you go to sleep tonight.

That would be a wonderful habit to get into – to read God’s Word before you go to sleep at night. 1st Timothy warns against false teachers. Paul wrote, **“Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, understanding this, that the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who strike their fathers and mothers, for murderers, the sexually immoral, men who practice homosexuality, enslavers, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound doctrine, in accordance with the gospel of the glory of the blessed God with which I have been entrusted.”** 1 Timothy 1:8-11 ESV. Paul goes on then – to proclaim *Christ Jesus Came to Save Sinners!*

¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners – of whom I am the worst. The anointed one – Prophet, Priest and King – Jesus of Nazareth – Son of Man and Son of God – came into this world to rescue sinners! There are all kinds of words in the Bible for sin. It begins in our heart and in our mind. It begins with attitude – a rebellious attitude. Very little children show it in their high chairs. Put into their tiny mouth a nice scoop of very delicious and nutritious food – and they refuse to swallow it. They moosh it out of their mouth. Little people that don’t want you to dress them. They can put their own pants on backwards – all by themselves! They can put their shoes on the wrong feet without any help from you! Little people who sneak cookies and brownies and deny, deny, deny – in spite of the chocolate ring around their mouth. Little people who break something they think is precious and hide the pieces. Teenagers that sneak beers one at a time – until they have enough to take out in the country to drink with their friends. Teenagers who take the prescription medications they find and again – take just one or two at a time – so as not to be noticed – and again go out in the country and take them to see what happens. Young people that go into the grocery store in the evening when the checkout girls are visiting in a little clump. Take small bottles of brandy and whiskey and stick them into the pockets of their big bulky coats and walk back outside laughing out loud because they can’t believe the people in charge are so easy to rip off! The Apostle Paul said his sin – his rebellion was especially terrible – because he persecuted the Church of God. It was the Saul – a younger Paul – filled with a misguided and misplaced zeal for the LORD who persecuted the early Christians. It was Saul who held the coats – the cloaks of those who stoned Stephen to death in a blind and murderous rage. It must have haunted the apostle Paul – to realize he had persecuted – pursued and harassed those who believed in Jesus as their only Savior from sin!

¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited/perfect-complete patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life. Jesus’ mercy is a powerful and wondrous example of his grace and patience! What wondrous love is this – that Jesus is so patient with us. Once in a while – not often – but once in a while – you hear about a powerful love that sacrifices itself – to save another. It happened just the other day. A couple – the Woods – Brian and Erin Wood were going down the highway. Suddenly the car in the opposite lane started to come right at them! The lady driving the other car – was trying to take off her sweater – so the person sitting beside her in the front seat – was trying to steer for her. In this car that was way off track were found heroin and cocaine and marijuana and a gun. Brian had only a moment to react – and what he did was to sacrifice himself. He wrenched his car just far enough – that he took the full force of the crash. He saved his wife – and the baby in his tummy – by giving up his own life! This is a pale picture of Jesus’ patient forgiving love. In spite of all our sins and failures – our weaknesses and mistakes – still Jesus forgives us. His forgiving love never fails!

¹⁷Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible... Last week—a couple of days and nights—I was with my friend Tommy Thompson, not the Governor and his friend Claude—who does *Rendezvous*—gatherings of men with curled moustaches and French hats and flintlock rifles—who camp like Louis and Clarke—and another friend—an elfish little man almost blind in his left eye—so it's hard to see tent strings from that side—and his hearing isn't so good either—but he is very cheerful! We were in the Willow Flowage—like the boundary waters north of Rhineland and Tomahawk. God is *invisible*—but you can see his fingerprints all over the water and the forest! You can see God in a bald eagle—they scream and they soar. You can't help but think about *On Eagle's Wings*! There are loons. You hear them before you see them. You can't mistake their call. At night there are no city lights. You can see the stars—like golden glitter—being thrown on black velvet. During the day there are chipmunks and squirrels and in the night raccoons and deer and maybe black bears. There are huge pine trees and little seedlings everywhere. There are ferns and even poison ivy and thistles. You think about the Garden of Eden and you remember the fall into sin. There is pollution in the lake water. You need to filter it—put little iodine tablets in it—and let it sit for ½ hour or boil it for 20 minutes in the little metal coffee pot—and then you can drink it. You can taste lake water coffee—you can taste lake water Crystal Light. We have first aid kits in case someone gets cut or burned. We talk about what we would do—if—*heaven forbid*—someone had a heart attack out in the middle of nowhere! We had with us only as much stuff as you could safely carry in the middle of two canoes. We had tents and were reminded of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—who lived in tents—who did not have homes here with foundations—but looked forward to our ultimate and lasting home in heaven. We were safe and warm—even though the very first night it was only 34° and yet we were just fine! We listened to the Vikings on a little radio with a crank battery that had to be cranked every 10 minutes. There we were in the smoke of the campfire—seeing in our mind's eye the football game—which is only that—a children's game—played by really big men. It's not a reason to curse or swear or throw stuff or be angry for days—because our team didn't win. God is invisible—but the evidence of his power and wisdom—his goodness and love are everywhere. When you don't catch fish—you are reminded of the time Simon Peter fished all night long and didn't catch anything—yet when Jesus told him—he threw his net over the other side of his boat—and caught a great catch of fish. Even the fish obey the Lord Jesus!

¹⁷Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. We give glory to Jesus by *walking together*! Walking together—being the Wisconsin Synod—means of course—doing together what we would have trouble doing by our self. That's stuff like—training Pastors, Teachers and Staff Ministers. You could, I suppose, have a sort of apprentice operation—pastors training someone for years—to replace them when they get older or when they get sick or have an accident and can't do all their pastor—their shepherd jobs. Teachers could have apprentices, too, watching them teach, studying their lesson plans, reading lots and lots and lots of books. Staff Ministers could do that too, going along on visits to people in the hospital—bringing Lord's Supper to people who are shut-in or in the hospital—teaching confirmation lessons and adult instruction lessons and small group Bible Classes in different homes. We could really work at bringing thank-offerings to send world missionaries like Missionary Brad Krause in Mexico or Uncle Terry in the Rain Forest, sending the Schawes to the Czech Republic, nurses to the medical mission in Zambia and Malawi—sending Friends of China to teach people how to read and speak English in China. But it would be really difficult. This works much better—over 450,000 people putting their thank offerings together to do the work that would be pretty much impossible for us to do alone. We walk together with believers from around the world. It's easy, I think, to forget there are people all around the world who

are in fellowship with us. There are people in the Andes Mountains who recently had a *Congresso* – a gathering of people from all sorts of mountain congregations who came together to hear God’s Word and to receive Lord’s Supper and then to celebrate with huge piles of stones – with all kinds of potatoes – white ones and red ones and golden ones and orange ones and almost purple ones – with slabs of meat covered with a slimy green sauce – with grass and more stones and cardboard to cook the meat and potatoes and then pudding made with a white kind of pumpkin – that Guinea Pigs like to eat, too! Here are little people – just 4 and 5 feet tall – with big brown eyes and long black hair – with ladies wearing hats and men with wind burned faces and gentle smiles – who believe in Jesus just like we do. People you will very probably never meet face to face here – but you will meet them in Heaven – because they know too, we are *saved by grace alone, faith alone and Scripture alone!* How wonderful is that?

I have said before – it never ceases to amaze me – the different way people find to die. **The wages of sin is death** – and there are countless ways to get your severance pay. The other day a lady – a doctor – a person with lots and lots of earthly education died – trying to sneak into her boyfriend’s house. She tried to slide down the chimney. She got the ladder – up onto the roof – the cover off the chimney and in she went – only to get stuck part way down. The more she wiggled the more she got stuck – until she couldn’t breathe! There was a guy who is a bit of a ghost hunter. He tries to investigate paranormal stuff. He was trying to record this ghost train. The legend has it – there is the sound of a train – the ground trembles – you can smell the exhaust – but there’s no train – it’s a *ghost* train. Well this guy got run over by a *real* train! How tragic is that? And there’s the truck driver who was leaning out of his truck to get the little toll booth paper – and hits his head and dies. How sad is that? People are breakable – very breakable. The wondrous good news of the Gospel is simply this – however we die – whenever we die – we will come home to heaven because Jesus died for the worst sinner. Jesus died for me! Amen!

To God alone all glory!



Rev. Anthony E. Schantz