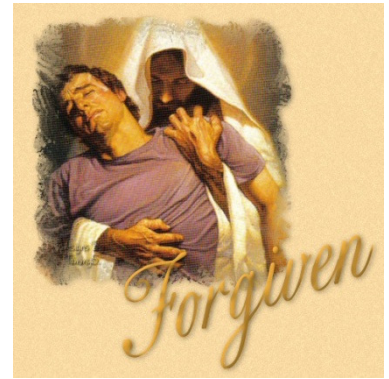


# St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Pentecost 16. October 2, 2011 Matthew 18:15 to 20 ESV



If Your Brother Sins Against You

<sup>15</sup> "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. <sup>16</sup>But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. <sup>19</sup>Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

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

Every year about this time – *Forbes Magazine* publishes a list of the 400 richest people in America. Bill Gates has been the richest person when it comes to money – for the 18<sup>th</sup> straight year. They estimate Mr. Gates is worth some \$59 billion! I cannot imagine that much money! What would you do with all that money? Would you fly to Maine to eat a fresh lobster? Would you fly to Paris to drink snooty Napoleon Brandy? Would you fly to Texas for a slab of Black Angus prime rib? Would you buy some Vincent Van Gogh paintings or Rembrants – maybe a statue by Michelangelo? Would you collect vintage cars – and build a pole barn to park them? Would you go to the World Series or the Super Bowl? Would you have parties and invite all sorts of gifted and beautiful people? If you had \$59 billion – would you give great amounts to help discover a cure for a dreaded disease? There are so many. How would you choose? Would you go after the disease that was the cause of the death of someone you loved? The frustrating part of that – it's already too late for the person you love. The fact is – the accumulation of *things and stuff* is never ever the point of life. Today God's Word reminds us what we want to store up is treasure for eternity. It is by grace alone that we can say:

## We Have Treasures for Eternity!

1. Treasures of forgiveness
2. Treasures of prayer
3. Treasures of worship

The Gospel lesson we have today – words of the Lord Jesus – are about sanctification – fruits of faith – putting our faith into action. Justification always comes 1<sup>st</sup> – before sanctification. We always talk about being declared not guilty – before we talk about living as a forgiven child of God. Context! In the verses just before the ones we are concentrating on Jesus tells *the parable of the Lost Sheep*. <sup>10</sup>"See that you do not despise one of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>12</sup> What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine on the mountains and go in search of the one that went astray? <sup>13</sup>And if he finds it, truly, I say to you, he rejoices over it more than over the ninety-nine that never went astray. <sup>14</sup>So it

is not the will of my Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish. We have the forgiveness of all our sins! Did you see the two hikers this week—freed from prison in Iran after two years of being locked up? Did you see them literally dance down the steps of the air plane when it landed in Oman? Did you see the smiles on their faces as they hugged and kissed their family members on the tarmac? They were free! As horrible as their imprisonment must have been—it pales—absolutely pales—compared to being in the forever prison of Hell. Jesus died to set us *eternally* free.

Now Jesus encourages and enables us to forgive people when they sin against us. <sup>15</sup> **"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.** As usual—this word of God is profound in its simplicity. If your brother sins—your brother or sister in Christ—a fellow believer! If your brother sins against you—sins. This is **not** a call to reform and rebuild your brother *correcting all their irritating habits or change his quirks of personality*. When you grow up with someone—or spend lots of time with your spouse—it's easy to notice their irritating habits or quirks of personality! Again the examples are countless—*snoring!* Who doesn't know someone that snores? There are people who snore so loudly—it could peel plaster! They snore so loudly—you can literally hear them on a different floor! I know someone who used to complain bitterly about their husband's snoring. If you asked them how they were doing—they would almost always say they were tired because of the horrible—absolutely horrible snoring of their spouse they were unable to get a moment's sleep! Their spouse has since gone home to Heaven—and they would give anything to hear them snore... In the sermon on the grassy hillside Jesus said, <sup>1</sup> **"Judge not, that you be not judged. <sup>2</sup> For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. <sup>3</sup>Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? <sup>4</sup>Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when there is the log in your own eye? <sup>5</sup>You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.** It's easy to see the flaws in other people. I was turning from something street on to Boomer Street the other day. I have seen countless times people turn left and right—without using their turn signal. It's illegal—to even switch lanes—without signaling first. The car ahead of me signaled a right turn. I thought good—their right blinker is on! Good! And they turned left! If I were a police officer—I could put on my lights—tweak my siren—and walk up to the car and say, "License and registration, please!" But I'm not one of Watertown's finest. If I want to issue moving violation tickets—I need to go to school to learn how to do that. It's not my job! It is not my job to be Martha Stewart—correcting the manners of the people around me. That's not my job! If my brother sins—I have a God-given responsibility in lowliness—gentleness and humility to warn them about the danger to their soul. To do this with great patience—because I love Jesus and I love them!

<sup>15</sup> **"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.** We are reading through the book of Proverbs—at Bible Class at Heritage Homes. We are reading the wisdom of King Solomon and a man named Agur—and also the wisdom of King Lemuel and other wise men. Did you remember that? There is very practical advice. **"Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine. *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. Blessed is the man who finds wisdom the man who gains understanding, for she is more profitable than silver and yields better returns than gold. She is more precious than rubies; nothing you***

**desire can compare with her.** Proverbs 3:9-13 Realize that the fear of the LORD – eternal treasures are far more precious than all the things and stuff in the world. Listen when the LORD – through people we love – disciplines us – and we will be forever rich!

We have treasures of prayer. <sup>19</sup>**Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.** There was a story – make believe – fiction – back in ancient China – about a young ne'er do well – what does that mean? Ne'er do well – never does well – where there is a sorcerer and a booby-trapped cave – a magic lamp and a magic ring – which if you wring your hands – a genie appears and grants your wish. This story was translated into French in the collection of stories – *One Thousand and One Nights* all the way back in 1709. What does this tell you? People everywhere – down through history – have been fascinated with the idea that you could have a wish – a desire – a desperate need – and wouldn't it be wondrous beyond words – if somehow – someone with unimaginable power would appear and grant your wish? And here is God's Word – the Son of God himself saying **if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.** What does this mean? It means exactly what it says – in faith – in trust and Godly confidence – pray – ask your Heavenly Father for what you need – and it will be done for you! Take for example – groceries! When I was pastor in Loves Park – a pastor nearby knew that one of his member families was in difficult times. They were praying for *daily bread* because they didn't have any money to buy groceries. So Jesus got them some groceries. My friend drove my car – in the dark – in the night – lest they recognize his car. We packed the groceries in huge boxes. I snuck up to their front door with the groceries and put them on their porch – pounded on their door like I was breaking in – then ran to the corner – jumped into the back seat of our car and we sped around the corner – slowly around the block to their street again. Here came the dad – to the front door. He looked back and forth – then looked down. There were the groceries – from Heaven! Have you ever gotten a tax refund in the middle of the winter – because the IRS made a mistake – and refunded the money to you? Have you ever had a friend or relative or neighbor call you up and tell you they had – I don't know – a new upright freezer that they got – and they don't need it or want it – so if you could pay them – just a few dollars you could have it? Or grandma – your friend's grandma dasn't drive any more – and they thought – maybe you could use their car? Or somebody they know – just found out they needed somebody to do some job – and they didn't know – maybe this was just right up your alley? Or you always wanted to be a missionary to Africa – and one day – you get in the mail – a whole packet of information saying – would you be willing to go to Nigeria for a month? Ask? All you need to do is ask! If you need or really want something – there is someone who loves you very very much who has the power to cure cancer – to cure leukemia – to restore strength and health to people that earthly physicians say will never ever walk or talk or wake up again. And they can and they do – because the one who answers prayer has the power to do anything – absolutely anything!

<sup>20</sup>**For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.**" We are pretty spoiled here in Watertown. There are 11 WELS Churches within a 10 mile radius of my home – 11! Back in the day – we used to have to drive 45 minutes one way – to find the nearest WELS Church – that's when the roads were good – no snow or ice or fog! We are pretty spoiled here at St. Luke's! Our first call – to Peace, Loves Park, IL – the Church was a double wide trailer house. There was a literal crack down the center aisle. We didn't have pews – but folding chairs. From the first hard freeze till the Spring thaw we didn't have washrooms in the Church. You had to go down the sidewalk to our parsonage – to use our downstairs bathroom. We had a gravel parking lot that was almost impossible to shovel when it snowed. We had a mimeograph

machine to print the bulletins and the newsletter – an A. B. Dick mimeograph machine. Thomas Edison – the light bulb guy and his friend Alvin Dick invented mimeographing – the thin membrane that you punched holes in with a type-writer? And then you smeared ink on the back side – and turned the crank and the papers went through – if you were blessed? Well – when Thomas Edison and Alvin Dick said – hey – I think I know how we can make the original invention a little bit better – they made our machine! The people from the A.B. Dick company said – put your machine in a box – and in a few years you can sell it back to the company – as a rare antique – and you will make money – it’s so old – so rare! Do we take a paved parking lot and air conditioning and padded pews and a pipe organ and wall to wall carpeting all for granted? We used to pray for 50 people on a Sunday. Christmas everyone was gone – gone up north to Wisconsin to visit grandma – so attendance was down on Christmas. Easter – they made Easter breakfast in the parsonage – the Church Council made French toast and we carried it up the sidewalk to the church tables where the mommies sat holding their babies! When the choir sang – there was almost nobody to hear them because almost everybody was in the choir! Jesus was there – in a little home mission. Jesus was there our first Ascension Service – a Thursday night – when the organist and the pastor – the organist’s husband and the pastor’s wife and their toddler son – and that was it – 5 of us – and the Ascended Lord – the Risen Christ! What a powerful comfort – when only two or three are there – Jesus is there, too! This is a powerful comfort – when a husband and wife pray for their child or grandchild that is in terrible danger – physical or spiritual or both! Pray for the most precious blessings – forgiveness and faith and Jesus will give it to you!

**<sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.**" A little grandpa – Arch West – was buried on Friday – his ashes in a very nice urn will be placed in the ground. But before they scoop the soil over his urn – they plan to crumble some Doritos into the grave. That’s because Arch West – 97 years old – is the guy who invented Doritos chips! 40 years ago – when he was 2 years younger than I am – he went on vacation with his family to Mexico and had fried tortilla chips at a snack shack and thought they would make a great chip! Officials at Frito-Lay were unimpressed at first – but test people liked them – and before you know it – there were no less than 36 different flavors – the first being Taco – the most famous – nacho cheese! The chips today are 20% bigger and 15% thinner with rounded – not sharp corners! Brilliant! The article I read said Doritos aren’t the healthiest snack – but that fact can’t hurt Mr. West any more! And that’s true! Once you die – nothing in this world can ever hurt you again. The fact that Mr. West must have been fabulously wealthy – because of his very popular invention won’t help him eternally either. What matters is not what treasures you have in this world – things and stuff. Jesus said, **“Store up for yourselves treasures in Heaven – where moth and rust cannot corrupt – where thieves cannot break in and steal. Where your treasure is – there will your heart be also!”** We have eternal treasures by grace through faith for Jesus’ sake. Amen!

To God alone all glory!

*Rev. Anthony E. Schultz*