

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E.
Schultz
19th Sunday after Pentecost—
series B.



Mark 9:38-50

³⁸ “Teacher,” said John, “we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us.” ³⁹ “Do not stop him,” Jesus said. “For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me, ⁴⁰ for whoever is not against us is for us. ⁴¹ Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward. ⁴² “If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea. ⁴³ If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ^[44] ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ^[46] ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where “the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.” ⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire. ⁵⁰ “Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.

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

Some 650 years before the Christ-child was born the prophet Isaiah was inspired by the Holy Spirit to ask, “Can a mother forget her newborn baby – and not have compassion on the little baby she nurses?” The obvious answer would have to be – *of course not* – most certainly *not!* And yet we were watching the news the other day when there was an Amber Alert from not far across the border into Illinois. It seems a little 3-week-old little baby girl was reported to have been abducted. Apparently she wasn’t

abducted – wasn't snatched at all. Apparently what happened was – her 19-year-old mom dumped her little newborn baby girl along a rural – a country highway. This helpless little baby girl was left on the gravel roadside from 8:30 in the morning until 8 at night! That's when – by the grace of God – two volunteer searchers found the crying baby and brought her to emergency workers. Can a mother forget her newborn baby? Can she have no compassion on the little baby she nurses? God's Word answers – though she may forget – it is possible for her heart to either be so cold – or so afraid – or so confused – still, your Heavenly Father will never ever forget you! That's the most precious news in the whole world. To hear that Jesus loves you no matter what – is such soul saving news – it never ever becomes old! It is in light of the Gospel of sin forgiven and Heaven won – that Jesus talks today about putting your faith into practice! Today we hear Jesus say:

Be A Salt Disciple

- 1. Encourage the weak**
- 2. Cause no one to stumble**
- 3. Be filled with God's Word.**

Ever since Trinity Sunday we have been reading from the Gospel of St. Mark. We took a little break – you will remember – 5 Sundays – reading from the Gospel of St. John – Jesus the Bread of Life. Remember? Then back to the Gospel of St. Mark – from now until the last three Sundays of the Church Year. Last Judgment, Saints Triumphant and Christ the King – we will again go to the Gospel of St. John. As we catch up in spirit with the Lord Jesus he has been telling his disciples again and again in the clearest terms – how he is going to suffer and die to wash away all our sins. **³¹ He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. ³² He spoke plainly about this...** Mark chapter 8. Mark chapter 9 – last Sunday **He said to them, "The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise."**

Today Jesus talks about putting your faith in his Gospel promises – into action. **³⁸ "Teacher," said John, "we saw someone driving out demons in your name and we told him to stop, because he was not one of us."** Does this seem like a difficult situation? Someone is driving out demons – throwing the devil and his evil angels out of the heart, mind, body or

spirit – or some combination of the above. The essential aspect is *out!* This man was by the power of Jesus’ saving name – throwing demons out of people! The disciples – the Twelve told him to stop because he wasn’t one of the Twelve! That can’t be right. And Jesus told them that. ³⁹ **“Do not stop him,”** Jesus said. **“For no one who does a miracle in my name can in the next moment say anything bad about me,** ⁴⁰ **for whoever is not against us is for us.** There are only two side – for Jesus or against Him. There’s no middle ground – no *no man’s land* – where you can take Jesus or leave Him. For Him or against Him – you are one or the other.

⁴¹ **Truly I tell you, anyone who gives you a cup of water in my name because you belong to the Messiah will certainly not lose their reward.** Do you read the WELS daily devotion on the Internet? The devotion on Tuesday told about a man named Dan Dewey. Daniel was visiting his father in a nursing home in Pontiac, Michigan 5 years ago – when he thought it would be nice if he went to a nearby Starbucks – and got his father a coffee. And then it struck Daniel – the only thing that would be even nicer – would be to get a coffee for each of the people who were sitting around his dad! So that’s what he did. He got coffee for his father and for his father’s friends and neighbors. Once a week – ever since – Daniel Dewey has been getting coffee for his dad and his neighbors. People have offered to chip in – to made a donation – a contribution – to help pay. And Daniel has said very kindly and very politely – no thank you! This is his gift – to his father and friends! How kind – how thoughtful – how generous. Is there something like that we can do? Is there some way we can show kindness and generosity – because we love Jesus?

Jesus said people who do this **will certainly not lose their reward...** This is a reward of grace! It’s not a reward in the sense that we earned or deserve a blessing from the Lord because of our thoughtful kindness and generosity. It’s a reward of grace. It’s like when you were really little and you “helped” your mom make cookies. She would put an apron on you – and lift you up so you could sit on the counter – and she would hand you this cup of flour or sugar or a tablespoon of something – and tell you to dump it in. And you would try and maybe you got it in the mixing bowl – and maybe you pretty much missed the bowl – but your mom would fix that, too. And then she would put the cookies or the cake in the oven and set the timer. And when it was all done – she would give you some – and thank you for helping so much! Or when your dad or grandpa was

mowing the lawn with the riding lawnmower and you would sit on their lap and try not to get in the way of the steering wheel. And again – when grandpa was done mowing he would carry you into the house and tell grandma that she should give you some “milk and cookies” because you had just helped cut the grass. The examples multiply. You hang on to the wrench and helped fix the car. You ride on the vacuum – and helped clean the house. You ride in the grocery cart and you helped get the groceries. So you stop on the way home and get ice cream at Mullen’s – your *reward* for helping.

⁴² **“If anyone causes one of these little ones – those who believe in me – to stumble, it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea.** One of these little ones – *ton micron* – like we get our word *micro* – little ones. These little ones could be really little children. Or it could be little ones in the sense of new to the faith – little ones – with not lots of knowledge about God’s Word and not lots of experience with God’s Word and God’s will. People who could be easily misled or easily confused. If you do spiritual harm to little people or spiritually vulnerable people and they stumble in their walk of faith--**it would be better for them if a large millstone were hung around their neck and they were thrown into the sea.** Millstones were common. They were huge solid stone donuts – too big to get your arms around – and plenty thick! Tie one of those around your neck – and kabloooooosh – drop you into the sea and that would be all she wrote! The point is obvious! Don’t say or do anything – that would do spiritual harm to people who are vulnerable – people who were breakable!

⁴³ **If your hand causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out.** ^[44] ⁴⁵ **And if your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell.** ^[46] ⁴⁷ **And if your eye causes you to stumble, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell...** God’s Word says we are in danger from the devil, the world and our own sinful flesh. Which is the greatest danger? God’s Word says, **“Resist the devil and he will flee from you!”** The devil is not everywhere at once. After Jesus was severely tempted in the wilderness God’s Word says the devil went away from Him – only to return again at an opportune time. We are in danger from

this sinful world. There is spiritual danger on TV – on cable – on demand. There is spiritual danger on the Internet – on Nook and Kindle and on smart phones. There is spiritual danger from peer pressure – even when you are much older – living in apartments close together – in assisted living – where everyone is close around you – pressuring you to go along with the crowd – even when it’s sinful. You can get away from the devil and you can get away from the pressures of this world. But where can I go to get away from me? No matter how quickly I go – here or there – as soon as I get there – there I am! It is the danger – the enemy within that often times is the world. We have met the enemy and he is us! The consequences of falling away are so eternally horrible – if push came to shove – we would be better off to lose a hand or a foot or an eye in this life – than to be lost forever apart from God’s love – to be thrown into hell!

It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where **“the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched.”** Very early on – there were those who were very harsh on their own bodies – in a very intense effort to do the right thing. Very early on – there were those who would wear very scratchy uncomfortable clothes. They would eat the smallest amounts of bread and water. They would sleep in a cold dark cave on the smallest pile of straw. They would literally beat themselves unconscious – literally taking off limbs and eyes – in the most literal sense of Jesus’ words. Jesus was of course not advocating people cripple themselves. Jesus was making the point that what is at stake is where our immortal soul will spend eternity. Jesus was making it very clear – the stakes could not be higher. We need to be very careful that our weak and sinful flesh does not lead us into the most faith and soul destructive sin. Jesus’ words echo those of Isaiah – some 650 years earlier – **“the worms that eat them do not die, and the fire is not quenched”** – the flames are impossible to extinguish. The flaming lake of fire in hell is more horrible than words can describe. It is only through Christ crucified and risen on Easter morning – that we are forever safe!

⁴⁹ **Everyone will be salted with fire.**⁵⁰ **“Salt is good, but if it loses its saltiness, how can you make it salty again? Have salt among yourselves, and be at peace with each other.** At the football game the other day – a lady in front of us got one of those soft pretzels – with the great big white cubes of salt on it. The first thing she did – when she unwrapped her

pretzel was to scrape off a whole bunch of those grains of salt! That's what the devil tries to do to you and to me. Scrape off the salt of the Gospel in our heart and mind – our attitude and our behavior! **Be at peace with each other.** We live in a world that longs for peace. Watch the news and again and again it's a story about violence. Just the other day two boys – just 13 years old – were arrested and charged as adults for taking the life of one of the boy's great grandmother. They took her life – robbed her – stole her car – then went out for pizza. They left the keys in the car and jewelry on the back seat hoping someone would come and steal the car and be blamed for the murder and the robbery. It didn't work that way. There is so much anger, frustration and violence – that there is a lady who has opened a business – vent your frustration with physical violence against “things and stuff”! The deal is – pay \$25 and for 5 minutes – wearing goggles and gloves – you can choose a baseball bat, a sledge hammer or a golf club – and just pound on everything. You can pound on TVs, Computer monitors, furniture, mannequins – all kinds of stuff. When you are literally exhausted from pounding on stuff and lashing out – the question is – are you better off? Oh, for a moment or two you might feel better – but are you a better person? Have you accomplished anything by losing all control? Again – God's people need to be different. Different on the outside because – by the grace of God – we are different on the inside. This new day of grace – only Jesus can make us strong to be the salt that makes a difference in our home – in our nation and in our world. To God be the glory.

Amen!

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