

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
Lenten Vesper III. We Preach Christ Crucified.
Philippians 3:7-11 March 3, 2020



But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

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:

Recalls—it's not just *Toyota*—with cars that can suddenly accelerate to 100 mph and little you do can even slow them down! There were all kinds of recalls last month. Did you know that? Did you know that the glass water-bottles they were selling at *Starbucks* are being recalled? It's true. The little stopper—that you pull out—to fill it—then push back in—when it's full of water—can get stuck. And if you push really hard—the bottle splinters—and you could really cut yourself! That's bad. Also—*Bath and Body Works*—used to sell these really neat *Zippo* candle lighters—for when you have time to soak in the bathtub—with all those scented candles all around. If you set the candle lighter to maximum—and then push the little button—it can flame out-*woosh!* And you could burn yourself! There's danger for children, too! There's this *Knight Hawk* toy remote control helicopter. It's really neat. It actually flies. The problem is—these rechargeable batteries—built into the roof of the helicopter. When you recharge them—they can overheat—and start a fire. They started to flame—in a toy store! Danger! It's physical danger—physical hurt and harm. The list could go on and on. The problem is—physical hurt and harm isn't the ultimate danger. The ultimate danger is to our faith—to our immortal soul. Again—that's why we are here in God's House for the third Wednesday this Lenten Season—because of the danger of sin and the devil and eternal death. Tonight the Apostle Paul again reminds us:

The Gospel is More Precious Than Life Itself!

- 1. The things of this world are rubbish**
- 2. Jesus' forgiveness is everything!**

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on—part of the letter the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in the Roman city of Philippi. Remember? Krenedes—the gold mines—the trade. Remember—the city renamed for Philip—the father of Alexander the Great! Remember? The assassins of Julius Caesar—the Ides—the 15th or March—Cassius and Brutus—and on the other side Marc Antony and Octavian? Antony and Octavian win the battle—and Octavian becomes the new Emperor—changing his name to Augustus—Caesar Augustus! Remember the Decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed—everyone registered. And everyone went to their home town to be counted. And the carpenter from Nazareth also went to Bethlehem to be registered with Mary—his espoused wife—being great with child. And so it was that while they were there the days were accomplished that she

should be delivered. And she brought forth her first born son and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for him in the inn! Remember just a few weeks ago – the Christmas tree – the children sitting up in front – Christ the Savior is born. And already it's the Christmas tree cross – and we are almost half-way through Lent! Before you know it – it's going to be April 1st – Maundy Thursday. The world will say – April Fools – to think the Savior's body and blood in bread and wine! But it is – he is! April 2nd – Good Friday and April 4th – Easter!

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. Paul is talking about priorities – about what is precious and valuable and important. It is tempting to think what's important is the things of this world! There is nothing wrong with getting a good education – reading and learning and studying. I have said before, “Some of my best friends are books!” This world would be a better place – if more people were students of history! If we learned from the past – so we don't repeat the mistakes of the past! There are powerful practical even Scriptural truths in the concept – all I really need to know I learned in Kindergarten. Did you ever read that list – that book? It's about the fundamentals. *Share everything.* Jesus said that. If you have two of something – anything – and your neighbor doesn't have any – give him some of yours! *Play fair.* Don't cheat! Certainly when Jesus is in your heart you don't cheat. *Don't hit people.* Jesus said don't even be angry in your thoughts against your neighbor – forgive your neighbor from the heart the way your Heavenly Father has forgiven you. *Put things back where you found them.* That's just good stewardship – taking care of your things and stuff – because they aren't really your things and stuff – they belong to Jesus! I'm not saying you should hug trees – but you certainly should take care of them – because God made them! *Don't take things that aren't yours.* Thou shalt not steal – help your neighbor improve and protect his property and business! *Say you're sorry when you hurt somebody.* This is more to the heart of the matter. Repent! Only the Holy Spirit can work true repentance in your heart. Only the Holy Spirit can make you sorry when you sin against your Heavenly Father. Appreciate all Jesus suffered because of my sins. When you understand law and gospel – sin and grace – my rebellion and God's mercy – then you know *warm cookies and cold milk are good for you* if your doctor didn't tell you to avoid concentrated sweets and if your bad cholesterol number is good! *Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.* There's more to it than that! C.R. Johnson age 26 x-treme skier – died. C.R. had posted the following statement his MySpace page: "I feel it's most important to keep it real and enjoy each moment, you know, take advantage of every opportunity life provides, because who knows what tomorrow may bring." Again – *disclaimer* – there's nothing wrong with leading a full and even adventurous and exciting life. But all that really matters is knowing Jesus Christ – crucified and risen. Otherwise – what are you ahead – if you experience the whole world – yet lose your immortal soul? What good is it – if you try all the most wonderful things in the world – if you don't go to heaven? It's like Ferris Buehler's friend who saw priceless works of art – ate at a very fancy restaurant – saw the Cubs and Wrigley Field – rode in a very expensive sports car – and spent the day with his best friends – and was even in a parade where there was dancing in the street – still thought *nothing good had happened that day!* And – apart from Jesus – he would be right! Without Jesus everything is pointless and useless and worthless. It's all rubbish! Robert Fulgam – the guy who wrote – *All I Really Need To Know I Learned In Kindergarten* wrote, “*Goldfish and hamsters and white mice and even the little seed in the Styrofoam cup - they all die. So do we.*” The ultimate question is – *now what? Seriously, now what?* Do we know? Yes we do! We go

to Heaven or we go to Hell. There is no other option! Remember the man with the really big handlebar moustache – named William Saroyan? He was a writer. He wrote a play – kind of like *Cheers* – with Norm – where everybody knows your name! Except it wasn't so funny. William Saroyan had his face on a postage stamp. He was very famous. Shortly before his death in 1981, writer Saroyan telephoned in to the Associated Press this final, very Saroyan-like observation: "Everybody has got to die, but I have always believed an exception would be made in my case. Now what?" *Now what?* To die – not knowing the answer to that question – will not be funny! Not even for a moment! It will be the beginning of unspeakable and unending horror! It will be painful beyond words – and it will never ever end. It is only by the grace of God – that we know that Jesus took all our sins away. We know whenever we die – however we die – we will see Jesus. And that knowledge – that certainty is more precious than life itself! It really is!

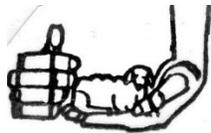
I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ... They say you should take a video camera – and very slowly – very carefully go through your house and film all your stuff! All your clothes, all your jewelry, all your tools, all your books, all your movies – all your stuff. Then you should store that DVD somewhere else – like in your safety deposit box – or the home of a relative. Then if something should ever happen – like a fire or a flood and all your stuff is destroyed you can prove what you had – and have it replaced. They say – if suddenly it was all gone – you wouldn't remember half your stuff! Think about it! It's not just that drawer in your kitchen. The one that often sticks – because it's so full – stuff catches – when you try and open it. The one with the spare keys – that you don't know what they open. The one with the trash bag twisties, the screwdrivers, the pens from the bank that don't write – when you try and take a phone message – the flashlight that doesn't work – the spare batteries that don't work – the coupons that are expired – the spare parts for Christmas tree lights – all the junk! If you think about it – there are drawers like that in the bathroom, in your desk, in the garage. Drawers and boxes and crawlspaces and attics full of junk – worn out, unorganized, broken parts and pieces of junk. It's really rubbish – seriously rubbish – compared to what is really priceless – knowing Jesus as your Savior from all your sins.

I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. I want to know. It has often been said – knowledge is power! To know what's going to happen in the future. Now that would be both a comfort and a great responsibility! Back 11 years ago – there was a TV series called *Early Edition*. It sounds like the *Twilight Zone*. A man named Gary Hobson – gets kicked out by his wife – and he doesn't know why? Really? Moving into the Blackstone Hotel – every morning outside his door – an orange tabby cat and the *Chicago Sun-Times*! The thing is – the *Sun Times* isn't today's paper – it's tomorrow! It doesn't report what happened yesterday – it's all about what's going to happen today! How great to know who's going to win all the ball games – and what the scores are going to be – what the lottery numbers are going to be – all the stocks that are going to go up! Is that where your mind goes? How can I make money – lots and lots of money off this? Or do you immediately think – there are going to be accidents – crashes and explosions – fires and murders and assaults and train wrecks and plane crashes. There will be horrible loss of life – unless somebody does something – anything – to prevent this disaster from becoming inevitable! What would you do? What *could* you do? Will you not put yourself in terrible danger – if you try and save people? That was the excitement – week after week – terrible physical danger again and again – to save others! Well – let me tell you – this *Early Edition* – is

going to be mentioned – not tomorrow – but Friday – in *Meditations*! It is! Do you read *Meditations*? It would be a blessing – if you did! Read your *Meditations*. Read *Forward In Christ*! Read your Bible! Read *the People's Bible*! Know Christ. To know him is to know for sure and certain what happens when you die! You get to know Jesus face to face! And all those people around you – that are in terrible danger! You need to tell them about Jesus, too! Before it's too late! Everyone you know – needs to know Jesus, too!

All that matters is Christ crucified! Everything else is just junk! Because we live in a world spoiled and infected by sin--there is danger all around. There are Wind Chimes – a baby toy. It's these little soft pads that go around and around – making wind chime noises. It's the metal rods that the soft pads hang from – that can be dangerous. One little person pulled the chimes apart – and then poked a rod into their pudgy little cheek! There is danger from a greeting card. No it's not a paper cut. With the card comes a little bracelet – with wooden beads. No – the beads don't break off and choke little people – although you are starting to think like someone paranoid. It's the paint on the beads – lead paint on the little wooden heart that says *smile* – and the little wooden butterfly. Lead pain on anything that little people put in their mouth is bad. And speaking of putting in your mouth – there's Haifa – out of Queens, New York – *Whole Schmaltz Herring*. It's uneviscerated. Do you know what that means – uneviscerated? Un-skinned? No – un – innards removed. Visceral – like your tummy and such – when something really gets you – inside? So the Whole Schmaltz Herring are literally the whole fish – and that isn't good either – although the chances of getting botulism from that is – pretty remote – you might need to know! Again – these are only a few of the latest – the very latest warnings – voluntary recalls issued within the last 4 weeks. You could go nuts – worrying about all the bad stuff – trying to read the tiny little numbers everywhere – on thing things you buy and use and wear and eat! Dried Apricots – with sulfites. I don't even know what sulfites are – but if you are allergic and think eating a bunch of these apricots – so dehydrated they will last into 2013 – could stop your breathing. Who knew? No – the real danger is spiritual. And the ultimate sanctuary is Jesus' forgiving love. Jesus forgiveness – the gift of eternal life – the simple gospel is more precious than life itself! Amen!

To God alone all glory!



Rev. Matthew E. Schantz