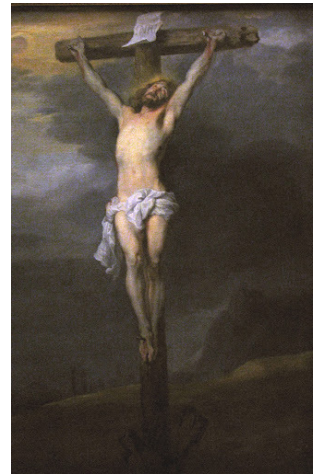


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz
John 12:20-33 Lent 5. March 25, 2012

Jesus Predicts His Death

²⁴ Very truly I tell you, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. ²⁵ Anyone who loves their life will lose it, while anyone who hates their life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ²⁶ Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me. ²⁷ “Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!” Then a voice came from heaven, “I have glorified it, and will glorify it again.” ²⁹ The crowd that was there and heard it said it had thundered; others said an angel had spoken to him. ³⁰ Jesus said, “This voice was for your benefit, not mine. ³¹ Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. ³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die.



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

I read this week about a man named Raymond – just 4 years younger than I am. Raymond worked like 15 years in this really huge silo where a conveyor belt would dump dried pinto beans – little beans. Well the other day – something went horribly wrong – and Raymond was buried in a 20 feet – 2 story high pile of beans. He couldn’t breathe! He was buried alive. Raymond’s friends – his co-workers desperately dug with shovels – with their hands – to try and rescue him! Dozens of rescue workers dug. Even 4 inmates from a nearby prison came and helped. For over an hour they dug. And Raymond must have struggled too – and so? But in the end it was too late. Still, they don’t know for sure what went wrong. I’m sure when Raymond went to work that day – he didn’t think it would cost him his life – but it did. When will we die? How will we die? Do you know? Jesus knew exactly when and where and how and why he would die. This Sunday before Palm Sunday:

Jesus Promises To Die For Us

- 1. The prince of the world will be driven out**
- 2. Jesus will be lifted up!**

As we catch up in Spirit with Jesus it’s Tuesday of Holy Week. This is the last day that Jesus is going to publicly teach. Jesus is in the Temple Courtyards where his enemies the Pharisees and the Teachers of the Law are attacking his authority and his students, followers and imitators. There are Jews and converts to Judaism from all over the world in Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. Believers in Jehovah – the LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of

Israel—from Greece are in Jerusalem. They ask Jesus' disciples if they would introduce them to Jesus. This is the background to Jesus' words we are concentrating on. Jesus said, ²⁴ **Very truly I tell you, (remember the King James — “Verily, verily I say unto you...” This is the truth! I'm not making this up!) unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.** Sometimes we act like dying is the worst thing that could possibly happen. We take countless precautions. I'm not saying we should be reckless but think about it! We have smoke detectors—but maybe we should have carbon monoxide detectors, too. And Radon—do you have Radon in your basement? Maybe you should check for that. Air filters—you can get air filters—to keep out all the pollen and allergens in the air. Air? What about the water you drink and bath in. Do you swallow water in the shower? Do you have hard water or soft water—water with all that salt in it? Then there's the sunshine—that could give you skin cancer. I read the other day most of the damage that leads to skin cancer occurs before you are 20. How do you undo that when you are my age? There is no end to the things that could be killing us. Some people say you shouldn't charcoal grill food. Some people say you shouldn't microwave food in the little plastic trays it comes in. Some people say you shouldn't eat fruits and vegetables that have been sprayed. You could worry yourself sick—do you know how bad stress is—if all you had to worry about was getting sick and dying! But Jesus is saying death is not the ultimate tragedy. Jesus came to die to rescue us! When the seed that is Jesus dies—lots and lots of seeds—you and I will have life—eternal life! How glorious is that?

²⁶ **Whoever serves me must follow me; and where I am, my servant also will be. My Father will honor the one who serves me.** Serve Jesus. Follow Jesus! This is not going to be easy. Jesus said, **“Whoever will come after me must take up his cross and follow me!”** Not your pillow—pick up your cross! Serve Jesus whatever you do! Like if you are a student—study hard! Do your homework. Learn your memory work! Memorize Bible passages and where they are from. Memorize hymn verses so you can sing for Jesus. Memorize the *what does this mean*—and *this is most certainly true part!* Study hard because what you are studying are the wonderful works of God! Study math—so you can be a very good manager of everything Jesus gave you. So you can work very hard to stay out of debt—so you can help people in desperate need! Like children in the Amazon Rainforest and people in Mexico—and people in Haiti and people in the inner city that don't have enough to eat! There is a huge sign in Madison that says 1 out of 6 Americans struggles with hunger! Can that possibly be true? Serve Jesus in the most obvious ways—like teaching Sunday School—and making Supper for Jesus and Easter breakfast for Jesus. Some little children Wednesday night actually picked up branches in Jesus' lawn! Sing in the choir. With as many wonderful singers as we have in Church—the balcony ought to be too small to hold our choir! Play your instruments for Jesus. Take care of Jesus' flowerbeds! Someone left an envelope the other day—to buy materials to make more beautiful banners for Jesus' Father's house of prayer. If every family invited one person to Church Holy Week—we would need more ushers to set up more chairs for more people to praise our Crucified and risen Savior. Do whatever you do the best you possibly can—to give glory to Jesus. Like if you work at a Taco place and you ask—do you want sauce—and they say, “Why, yes. Mild, please!” You

don't throw 5 packets of "HOT!" You can work at a burger place—and when people order shaved prime rib sandwich and a burger and an order of onion rings and an order of fries—don't give them a bag of food—missing the fries! When you bag groceries—don't put the meat with the soap! Don't put the melting ice cream with the soap! Don't put the eggs and bread on the bottom and the laundry detergent on the top! Don't use 9 plastic bags when 2 cloth reusable bags would do! Do whatever you do—cleaning washrooms at gas stations with great skill and faithfulness—because the one you are really doing it for is Jesus!

²⁷ **"Now my soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. ²⁸ Father, glorify your name!"** Jesus' soul was troubled—because he knew and fully understood the suffering he was about to endure because of our sins! If you read the papers—listen to the news on the radio—watch the news or open the Internet to your home page—you hear day after day—about terrible crimes. The young 17 year old who was carrying a bag of Skittles for his little brother and an ice tea—and was gunned down. They found the remains of a 15 year old girl—buried just off the path where she used to walk to school. Little Jewish children and their Rabbi gunned down in Toulouse in France. Wives are beaten and battered—sometimes with fists—sometimes more painfully still with filthy words and curses. People have "hugs and kisses" before marriage and outside of marriage. Babies are put to death at the rate of more than one million per year in our country. God's gift of marriage is mocked and ridiculed. What God has joined together people dismantle again and again. Again it's all about attitude. Hundreds of years before the Christ child was born the Prophet Haggai wrote: ⁵ **Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but have harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it."** ⁷ **This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Give careful thought to your ways."** Think about it! Does it sometimes seem like our whole nation is spinning her wheels? What's wrong with this world? Could it be the problem is in my heart? **Give careful thought to our ways!** Appreciate the seriousness of our sins and all that Jesus suffered to forgive us!

³¹ **Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.** The prince of this world—is the devil—the father of lies—dishonesty and deception! Hey, taste this forbidden fruit. It's not poisonous! It will make you smart—just like God. You will know from experience what it feels like to be bad! You will know the excitement that comes from doing something forbidden! The prince of his world is the lord of the flies! When you grow up on a farm—and hear flies buzzing you know there is something dead, something decaying, something filthy! That's where the devil is—by death and rot and decay! The devil is the ultimate loser. He was once an angel of light—who knew the bliss and wonder and joy of Heaven. Now as the song says, *"Fire is the devil's only friend!"* He burns—in his heart and in his soul he burns. He is in the midst of death and decay and there he will spoil forever! The devil's only hope is that he might gather as many of us as possible—to share that home over which the sign might as well say, *"Abandon hope all who enter here!"* The streets might as well be cobbled with the skulls of unfaithful called workers. Eternal worms—forever dying but never knowing

the sweet relief of death. The prince of this world was driven out – when Jesus rose triumphant Easter morning – never to rule in your heart or mine!

³² And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” ³³ He said this to show the kind of death he was going to die. Good Friday and Easter change everything! They are forever making lists. There are lists of the 100 events that changed the world. They choose events like Abraham Lincoln and the Civil War and the freeing of the slaves. Imagine if our country was actually 2 – the north and the south! There is the Great Wall of China – so huge you can see it from outer space. The Normandy Invasion – if that had failed we might all be speaking German! Napoleon – if he had his way we would all be speaking French! There is the whole civil rights movement – *I have a dream!* There’s the computer chip. Imagine if there were no computers – no cell phones! The Wright Brothers – imagine if there were no planes – the Model-T – imagine if there were no cars or trucks – no assembly lines. Imagine if there hadn’t been Julius Caesar and the Roman Empire – or the Mayans or Aztecs or Incas! What if there was no Thomas Edison – no light bulbs – no electricity! There are the pyramids of Giza and the first man on the moon and the A-bomb. All these things put together do not amount to the Carpenter from Nazareth who was lifted up on a Friday afternoon – to pay for the sins of the world – since the Fall into sin. Jesus was lifted up – that we might be lifted up to heaven forever. That’s all that matters – Jesus lifted up on the cross to redeem us. Amen!