

**St. Luke Ev. Lutheran
Church-WELS
Sermon by Pastor
Anthony E. Schultz
Advent 1.**



Matthew 24:37-44 November 28, 2010

³⁷ For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. ⁴²Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

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

There is lost – and there is *really lost!* Samuel and Filo are 15 years old – Edward is 14 years old – and they were lost. They were in a tiny boat – about the size of one of those tables in the Church basement. The boys had planned to go from one clump of coral to another. They ended up drifting for some 50 days – and ended up 800 miles from where they set out. They lived off rainwater they trapped – some coconuts, some raw fish and a sea gull that landed on their boat. When rescuers found them – they were severely dehydrated – badly sunburned – undernourished and very weak. Crew members in a tuna trawler saw their little boat bobbing in the open sea and went to check on them. To their rescuers the three boys said again and again, “*Thank you for stopping!*” How desperate would you be – helpless and all alone in the middle of the sea? We were more desperate than that – spiritually speaking – **dead in trespasses and sin**. Jesus came to our rescue – to die to save us. And one day Jesus will come again – on Judgment Day to take us to our forever home. This first Sunday in Advent – just four Sundays from Christmas God’s Word is simple and to the point:

Jesus Is Coming Soon!

- 1. Watch out for indifference**
- 2. Watch out for unbelief**
- 3. Watch out for carelessness**

The part of God’s Word we are concentrating on today is from the Gospel of the Tax Collector Matthew. If you pay close attention to the Bible Readings printed on the back of your worship folder – you will notice that beginning today – it says ILCW – Inter Lutheran Committee on Worship Series A. There’s A, B, C – and we are just beginning A. If Jesus allows this world to continue through the year 2011 we will read from the Gospel of St. Matthew some 46 times – 46 out of 52 times – we will read from Matthew 46 times. This new Church Year – it’s almost always going to be Matthew.

The Gospel of Matthew is different from the others in several respects. The Gospel of Matthew begins with Jesus' genealogy – his family tree. Matthew includes **Tamar**. Remember **Tamar**? Chances are you never ever heard a sermon from Genesis chapter 38. Tamar was Judah's daughter-in-law. She was married to Judah's son Er. God's Word says, "**Er was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death!**" So – as we heard in the Gospel reading last week – the Sadducees' question about the man who died – so his brother married his wife to have children – until all seven brothers were married to her. Remember? Well, **Er was put to death by the LORD** – so his brother Onan married Tamar. Onan didn't want to have a baby – a son that would be counted his brother's son – and **that was wicked in the LORD's sight; so the LORD put him to death!** Judah didn't want his 3rd son to die – so Judah wouldn't let his 3rd son Shelah marry Tamar. Some time later – Judah's wife died and he mourned her. Then Judah went to visit his friend Hirah the Adulamite during sheep shearing time – a time of feasting and drinking and celebrating. On the way he met a very pretty girl who was selling "hugs and kisses". He had "hugs and kisses" with her. He didn't have a young goat with him to pay her for "hugs and kisses" – so he left his signet – his seal and its cord and his walking stick as a security deposit. When he sent the payment – to recover his security deposit – he was told – there's no lady selling "hugs and kisses" in these parts. Three months later – Judah finds out that his daughter-in-law Tamar has a baby in her tummy – and he says they should bring her out and burn her to death – for her wickedness and sin. Yes – she's pregnant – by the man who owns this signet and walking stick! That would be *Judah!* Tamar has twins – Perez and Zerah – part of the family tree of Jesus – our Savior. Matthew mentions Rahab. Remember Rahab – Joshua chapter 2 – Joshua and the battle of Jericho! The Gospel of Matthew says again and again, "**Thus was fulfilled what was spoken by the prophets!**" Remember the prophet Micah – who said Bethlehem would be where the Christ child would be born?

It is Matthew chapter 24 – near the end of Jesus' public ministry that Jesus talked more and more pointedly about his death to save us and about his return on Judgment Day to take us home to Heaven. Jesus said, "³⁷ **For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man.** ³⁸ **For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark...** Some things never change! Read Genesis chapter 6. ¹**When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, ²the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose.** Thousands of years ago – marriage and the family were under attack by the devil. Men were choosing wives on the basis of their outward beauty and married any they chose. They weren't looking for a spouse based on a common faith in the Gospel promises of the LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel. Outward beauty can be very beautiful. Our Heavenly Father has blessed some people with beautiful eyes, hair like in a shampoo commercial, teeth that fairly twinkle, skin as soft as the proverbial little baby. But sometimes that beauty is literally skin deep. Spend no more than a moment or two with some people and you quickly discover that the inside – their heart and their attitude and their words are very dark and ugly! Beauty that gives glory to God – is beauty on the inside – a reflection of Jesus' love and kindness, compassion and goodness. That beauty only grows over time – making your marriage stronger and stronger – warming houses so they become homes – illuminate by Jesus' love! The world was growing dark already in the days of Noah. ³**Then the LORD said, "My Spirit shall not abide in man forever, for he is flesh: his days shall be 120 years."** This was a message of judgment. Where people up until now had like Methuselah lived literally almost 1,000 years – from now on the average would be closer to 120 years. And even that was going to be too long! ⁵ **The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the**

earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. Isn't that still true? Almost everything you can think of – that could be a wonderful blessing – people have turned into an opportunity to do evil! Cell phones make it possible to call 911 from almost anywhere. But people use their phones to text when they are trying to drive 70 mph down the highway and get in deadly accidents. Cell phones make it possible to take a picture of a license plate or a crime or a miracle – and people use them to send terrible pictures. The Internet can accomplish great good – and social networking makes it possible for people to communicate with family and friends – and people can use it to be unfaithful to their spouse! **6And the LORD was sorry that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart. 7So the LORD said, "I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, man and animals and creeping things and birds of the heavens, for I am sorry that I have made them."** **8But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.**

11Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence. **Violence!** Of all the sins the LORD could have mentioned – he chose violence! Is there violence in our world today? Absolutely! I saw a commercial on TV the other day – for a video game you can buy your children for Christmas. Celebrate the birth of the Prince of Peace – by buying a video game – represented in this commercial by this enormous character – with body armor – and belts of huge bullets across his chest. Two moms want this character for their children – so they each grab an arm – and in a moment – one of the arms literally breaks off! Lovely! Meanwhile talk shows talk about raising bullies – children being taught by their parents that they are not going to be anybody's door mat. And so these children are taught – anybody lays a finger on you – you smack them down – so hard – so fast – that they rue the day they messed with you! Oh, did you see the report about the maid of honor – that pushed her best friend at her bridal shower – shoved her – just for fun – and how she's paralyzed. Did you read that? Have you read about the football players – helmet to helmet hits – and they suffer – like Kurt Werner – 5 concussions – 5 times when his brain quite literally sloshed from one side of his skull to the other? And people say – if you don't let people literally knock each other unconscious – and risk career and even life ending spinal cord injuries – you will be killing the game of football – pardon the pun? There are commercials for movies that say extreme violence and extreme gore! Really? And this is entertainment? **12And God saw the earth, and behold, it was corrupt, for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth. 13And God said to Noah, "I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence through them. Behold, I will destroy them with the earth.**

37 For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. 38 For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, 39and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Watch out for indifference! Be aware it will be business as usual right up to the moment Judgment Day comes! Day after day it's eating and drinking – breakfast, lunch and supper – morning coffee break and afternoon coffee break – supper – maybe some popcorn which you watch a DVD on your flat screen HD TV. Maybe some pizza rolls Monday night – when they sing – "Are you ready for some football?!" We are stuffed with stuffing and pumpkin pie – and for the next weeks it will be Christmas cookies and on New Year's Eve – crackers and cheese and venison summer sausage and maybe even some shrimp and some herring and some little pieces of bacon wrapped around anything! That's how it was! People with their little cloth bags going to the Pig and Pick'n Save and Walmart and Aldi's – and it started to sprinkle and then pour – and the ground broke open and

the fountains of the deep broke and everyone and everything was swept away! That's how it will be on Judgment Day!

³⁹and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. It has been said before – there are only two possible outcomes – heaven or hell. It is as simple as that! You are saved or you are lost. You spend forever with Jesus – sheep beside the Good Shepherd – or you spend forever in agony and pain that words cannot express – in unspeakable grief that knows no end. It's kind of like airport security. It's one at a time! You don't get to go through in clumps and bunches – don't get to say – “It's ok. They are with me!” It would be wonderful if we could have a designated hitter – someone who could believe for us – but we can't. Each of us will stand before Jesus. That's why it's so important that we talk to the people we love – before it's too late. To talk to people we work with – and ask them – this Jesus of Nazareth – who is He? What do you think about Jesus? If you know someone with a baby – ask them – is your baby baptized? Ask them – with gentleness and patience and kindness and humility. Share Jesus by how you love and forgive each other. And as Jesus gives you the opportunity – so Jesus will give you the words you need to share Jesus' forgiving love. The results are always and only in Jesus' hands.

⁴²Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But know this, that if the master of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. Ready for a burglar – a thief? It doesn't happen often – which only emboldens the thief. But there was a homeowner ready the other day. A great-grandma named Leda Smith – 85 years old – came home – only to see that her side door had been broken into. So she very quietly – very quickly got her loaded pistol and surprised the thief – in her living room – trying to steal her jewelry! She ordered *him* to call 911 – to phone the police. Then she told him to lie down on the floor spread eagle – to look away from her – and wait until the police came and took him away in handcuffs! Pretty good, huh? Judgment Day will come like a thief in the night – all of a sudden – without any warning – like a thief – a home invasion – the heavens will tear open. And there will be Jesus and ten thousand times ten thousand holy angels everywhere! Time as we know it – will stop! In an instant nothing in this world will matter at all! It won't matter if your sink is full of dishes – or your dishwasher is full of dishes and nobody put in the soap and turned it on. It won't matter if your back yard is full of leaves or it's way past 3,000 miles since your last oil change. It won't matter if there are whiskers and dried shave cream in your sink or dirty laundry everywhere. It won't matter if you need a haircut. Won't matter if you don't floss as much as you should. It won't matter if all your things and stuff are in complete disarray – or of all your things and stuff are obsessively and compulsively and painfully organized down to the last pencil and paper and all your DVDs are filed alphabetically – in subsets of subject matter! It won't matter! What will matter is a heart of faith – faithfully nourished by God's Word – read at home and preached in God's House! What will matter is Jesus' amazing grace and unconditional forgiveness. All that matters is Jesus loves you. Eternity won't be too long to thank him! Amen!

To God alone all glory!



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