

St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church—WELS

Sermon by Pastor Anthony E. Schultz

Advent Vesper #3. December 14, 2011

Isaiah 40:9 to 11



⁹ You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, "Here is your God!" ¹⁰ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. ¹¹ He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.

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

There are lots of lists on the *Internet*. A list of the Top Ten Poisons. Cyanide! Hitler used cyanide to put to death some 6 million Jews. Anthrax! Spores sent in the mail – that look like baby powder – 90% deadly and fatal! Sarin – a horrible nerve agent. Amatozin – just one little mushroom – and you are a goner! Strychnine – and your lungs shut down – you can't breathe! Mercury! Did you ever play with a broken thermometer – pushing little blobs of Mercury – to swallow up other little blobs of Mercury? Tetrodoxin! That's from Puffer Fish/ Blow Fish. I saw one of those – stuffed – at the sushi bar by the VA in Madison! Puffer Fish poison would kill you in 2/4 hours! There's Ricin. A sample the size of a grain of sand would kill you. VX a fraction of a drop on the back of your hand – will kill you. And Botulim – a teaspoon could literally kill millions! As dangerous as all these powders, juices, spores and mushrooms might be – they are nothing compared to the deadly poison of sin. Sin infects every single one of us. We are all terminal – poisoned by sin. It is through and through our system. It's only a matter of time! The precious good news is the Gospel of eternal life for Jesus' sake! That's why

Advent Is About Good News

1. Our Savior is powerful
2. Our Savior is our Shepherd

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today – is from the scroll of the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah understood we are saved by grace alone! Remember Isaiah's commission? Sure you do! ¹ **In the year that King Uzziah died,** (*Remember King Uzziah? The one who tried to burn incense – and got leprosy on his forehead?*) **In the year Uzziah died – real time – a real place...I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple.** ² **Above him were seraphim (a very special kind of angel), each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying.** ³ **And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory."** ⁴ **At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke.** ⁵ **"Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of**

unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty.”⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar.⁷ With it he touched my mouth and said, “See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for.”⁸ Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?” And I said, “Here am I. Send me!”

Remember King Ahaz? There was King Uzziah – then Jotham--then King Ahaz. Jerusalem was under attack – under siege. In this darkest hour – the LORD – the Great I AM – the Holy One of Israel told his people don’t be scared! The LORD is with you. Ask for a sign – a miracle – a wonder – that would reassure them – the LORD was with them. Remember King Ahaz?¹⁰ **Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz,**¹¹ **“Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.”**¹² **But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.”**¹³ **Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”** Immanuel means God is with us! As the Church looks at different translations – this section – the promise of the Virgin birth – is one of the first verses to look at. **The virgin will conceive** – not just *a young woman* – but a virgin – someone who never had “hugs and kisses” would have a baby in her tummy – a miracle only God could accomplish!

Isaiah wrote some 650 to 700 years before the fact how Jesus would suffer to save us. Isaiah chapter 50 **“The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears, and I have not been rebellious; I have not drawn back. I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint... Isaiah 50:5-7 with a grim determination that will not be discouraged – Jesus came to rescue us!** Isaiah chapter 52 talks about how great was Jesus’ anguish to save us... **Just as there were many who were appalled at him – his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness – so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Isaiah 52:14,15 But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him and by his wounds we are healed. We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53:5,6** Jesus was the Lamb of God, who suffered for sheep like us – who love to wander and stray. Jesus died for every mistake no matter how hurtful or wrong!

⁹ **You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, “Here is your God!”** Shouting! There are signs in the tunnel of Lambeau Field. They say, “Use your outside voice!” I like that. There are signs in the tunnel of Lambeau Field that say, “If you shout at your TV it doesn’t help! If you shout here it does!” People at Lambeau are not bashful about shouting. They shout names – the name of the fullback when they give him

the ball to punch it into the end zone. They shout when we pick off a pass – and run down the sideline. They shout when somebody does the Lambeau leap! When it comes to Jesus, though, it's tempting to keep quiet. But sometimes you can't! When you are a shepherd in the live nativity – after bowing down by Jesus' manger bed – we are supposed to walk through or around the people who are sitting on the bales of hay – watching. You are supposed to do what the shepherds did that first Christmas night. Tell everyone we meet the things we have seen and heard. Angels – real holy messengers from our Heavenly Father announced, **“Fear not! For behold I bring you good tidings of great joy which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior which is Christ the Lord! And this shall be a sign unto you – ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger!”** Suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, **“Glory to God in the highest and on earth good will toward men!”** You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid. I'm afraid some of the shouting heard this Advent time is, “Hey! That's my parking place! I saw it first!” I'm afraid some of the shouting heard this Advent time is, frustrated teachers yelling – literally yelling at students who are not paying attention. Husbands yelling, literally yelling at their wife because supper isn't ready because they have been baking cookies and wrapping presents and sending out Christmas cards and watering the tree and vacuuming because the hyper-critical mother-in-law is coming over to find fault! We have opportunity to lift up our voices Christmas Eve and Christmas Day – to sing the praises of our newborn Savior and King. Our children and grandchildren have the opportunity to life up their voices in both services Christmas Eve – then go to grandma's house because baby Jesus is the reason for this season!

¹¹ He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young. The fact that Jesus is the Good Shepherd is again – nothing new! King David wrote, **“The LORD is my shepherd, I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures. He leadeth me beside still waters. He restoreth my soul”** *Green pastures – still waters.* Martin Luther wrote this is far more than daily bread. This is God's Word – the Gospel is the green pastures and the still waters – nourishment for our faith and refreshment for our soul! Again – God's people need to read God's Word! The Prophet Ezekiel wrote familiar words, **“I myself will tend my sheep and have them lie down declares the Sovereign LORD. I will search for the lost and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak. But the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice!”**

The ten most poisonous snakes? Yikes! One of the absolute worst – the Black Mamba. It's not a whole lot bigger than your finger – how bad can it be? “The feared Black Mamba is found throughout many parts of the African continent. They are known to be highly aggressive, and strike with deadly precision. They are also the fastest land snake in the world, capable of reaching speeds of up to 20km/h.” That's about 12 ½ miles an hour – not very fast if you are driving through Watertown – but certainly faster than I could run! These fearsome snakes can strike up to 12 times in a row. A single bite is capable of killing anywhere from 10-25 adults. Think about that – 12x in a row – and each bite – killing 10 to 25 of us! Usually 100 mg of snaky

juice—but capable of up to 400 mg. If they hit you you are in big trouble! If you get bit it hurts where the bite is! *Really?!* Then you experience a tingling sensation in the mouth and extremities, double vision, tunnel vision, severe confusion, fever, excessive salivation (including foaming of the mouth and nose) and pronounced *ataxia* (lack of muscle control). If the victim does not receive prompt medical attention, symptoms rapidly progress to severe abdominal pain, you toss your Christmas cookies—you turn pale—*I don't think that really matters!* You go into shock. Your kidneys fail your heart is poisoned and you become paralyzed. Eventually, the victim experiences convulsions. You can't breathe—you go into a coma and finally comes sweet death at any time between 15 minutes and 3 hours! As terrible as that is—again—it's nothing compared to the eternally deadly serpent from Hell! The devil is responsible literally for billions of people to spend eternity right beside him in the unspeakable horrors of hell! There is safety, sanctuary—anti-venom only in the baby born in Bethlehem. Again this year Advent has gone by so fast! Already tonight Pastor Gartner and the teenagers and their parents have made barbecue with just a little zip from Picante sauce in the Church basement for Jesus. And we will get to enjoy it. Already the Sunday School and the Day School students are practicing hard to sing the Christmas Gospel! Already we are almost there. Christmas—then Epiphany—then Lent and then Easter! Unto you is born a Savior—Christ the Lord. Let us worship the person of our humble Advent King! Amen!

To God alone all glory!

Rev. Anthony E. Schultz