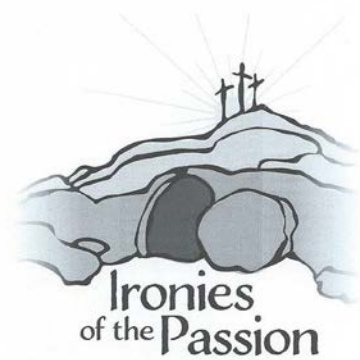


St. Luke Ev. Lutheran Church
Sermon by Pastor A.E. Schultz
Ash Wednesday,
February 10, 2016
Luke 18:9-14
The Parable of the Pharisee
and the Tax Collector



⁹To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ¹³“But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ¹⁴“I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted.”

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

You can buy a Kit Kat candy bar – at the check-out counter at the Pig. As you stand in the check-out line – waiting for the person ahead of you to swipe their card – and hit debit – and then realize they don’t remember their PIN – you look around – and they have what’s called high impulse items. I could go for a Kit Kat about now – or some lip balm or a magazine! A young lady in England bought a Kit Kat the other day – and when she broke off that first little bar and bit into it – she fully expected to encounter chocolate and whisper thin crispy cookie – and chocolate and cookie and chocolate and cookie and so? What she discovered was only chocolate! Horror of horrors – only chocolate! She has spoken to an attorney about her physical and mental and emotional anguish. What would make it better? A lifetime supply of free Kit Kats? Someone was at the Golden Arches the other day. They ordered some Mozzarella sticks and again unspeakable horror – they bit into one only to realize – they had bitten into a breading stick! That’s right – only breading – woefully empty on the inside – no cheese?! Now what? This is the world in which we live – a world of grief and pain – disappointed by Kit Kats and cheese sticks? We are here in God’s House on Ash Wednesday – with God’s Word and Holy Communion because what is important is our sinful helpless condition and the forgiveness that is ours by grace through faith. It’s not the main thing – it’s the only thing – that Jesus died and rose again to save us. Amazing grace – how sweet the sound – that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost but now and found – was blind but now I see!

Jesus Is Our Forgiveness!

I. The devil tempts us to be self-righteous
II. Jesus is our righteousness!

This Lenten Season with Jesus' permission we will walk with Jesus for some 40 days – from Ash Wednesday – through Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday and Sunrise Easter morning. This year with Jesus' permission we will think about Ironies of the Passion. Ironies – things that make you say, "I didn't see that coming!" Ironies – where it comes out just the opposite of what you would expect. It's like the tortoise and the hare – and the turtle wins! There are lots of examples. Tonight – the Pharisee and the tax collector – both pray. The tax collector goes home declared not guilty. Next week we will hear, Caiaphas say, "It's better that one man die for the people!" Caiaphas – with the pomegranates embroidered at the bottom of his gown. Caiaphas – who hated Jesus with a burning passion – speaks the Gospel when he prophesies Jesus' sacrifice in our place to redeem us. Then we will hear Tutor Chartrand with the irony of the Jewish leaders say, "This Jesus needs to die – but not during the Festival of the Passover!" What irony when that's exactly when Jesus chooses to sacrifice Himself to save us. Pastor Gartner will preach about the irony of King Herod – who had wanted to see Jesus for some time – hoping to see a miracle. Maybe some water into wine – or healing a leper or maybe even raising the dead. That would be pretty amazing – and so? We will hear the thief on the cross say to the other thief, "Don't you fear God?" We will hear the irony of the Jews telling Pilate – "We have no King but Caesar!" Palm Sunday we will hear the children sing, "Hosanna in the Highest! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD! Hosanna in the Highest!" Maundy Thursday Jesus says, "Do this in remembrance of Me!" As he establishes Lord's Supper – Holy Communion! Think about it. 80 days to confirmation – 87 days until first communion! How wonderful is that? Good Friday – the irony – that Jesus' enemies remembered Jesus said, "I will rise again!" What irony – that the Roman soldiers who were supposed to make sure Jesus' disciples didn't steal His cold dead body and tell everyone He was risen – were in fact the witnesses to the angel rolling away the stone – to reveal the empty tomb! Easter Sunday Pastor Gartner will preach about the irony the angel asked, "Why do you look for the living Christ among the dead – at the cemetery?" I can hardly wait!

The part of God's Word we are concentrating on today is from the Gospel of the Physician Luke – the one our congregation was named after some 167 years ago! What makes Luke's Gospel unique? Of all the people in Watertown – we ought to know. Luke of course was not one of the 12 disciples. Luke's Gospel begins: **1 Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, 2 just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. 3 With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, 4 so that you may know the certainty of the things**

you have been taught. Luke's Gospel is especially full of accounts of miracles of healing! Jesus healed the Centurion's servant. We have said before – if you don't feel well – you need to go to the doctor. They will weigh you – take your blood pressure, listen to your ♥ and your breathing. They will take some small tubes of your blood and more and run some tests. Then they will tell you what they think is wrong. They will write you a prescription for some pills. There are pills for everything. I told a pharmacist the other day – there is even a pill for too many pills. They said, "No, there's a shot for that!" That's pretty funny – and so? The Roman Centurion had a very powerful faith – which was a gift from the Holy Spirit. He confessed that faith when he told Jesus, "**Lord, don't trouble yourself, for I do not deserve to have you come under my roof. ⁷ That is why I did not even consider myself worthy to come to you. But say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I myself am a man under authority, with soldiers under me. I tell this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and that one, 'Come,' and he comes. I say to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it.**" Luke 7. Jesus – the very Son of God – willed it – and a slave – on the brink of death itself – was healed – immediately! Still Luke Chapter 7 – there is a funeral procession coming out of the city of Nain. Do you know where Nain is? Prof. Scharf always used to tell us – to work with him at the map. One of the potential blessings of having screens like we had with Missionary Weiser – would be we could work at the map. Close your eyes and imagine a map of Israel if you can. Basically – it's a line – with the Mediterranean Sea over here. There is the Sea of Galilee – pretty small – you can see clean across it – kind of upside down tear drop. Then the Jordan River – down, down, down, down – to the Dead Sea – salty – dead from the salt – the Dead Sea. Back up by the Sea of Galilee – Bethsaida – at the very top – then coming around – Capernaum – where Jesus did so much ministry – Cana – where Jesus changed water to wine at the wedding reception. Then Nazareth – where Jesus grew up – where he preached in the Synagogue where he grew up and they were going to push him off the cliff. Remember that? If you read Meditations last week – all week from Epiphany 4 to Transfiguration were devotions about that! Then comes Nain. There was a funeral procession coming out of Nain – a young man – the only son of his mom – and she was a widow. People from town were with the mom – sad with her – sad for her. Out of town came the procession of death – crashing into the procession of the Lord of Life! Jesus **walked up and touched the coffin and those carrying it stood still. He said, "Young man, I say to you, get up!" The dead man sat up and began to talk and Jesus gave him back to his mother!** Again – what could you say besides, "Thank you, Jesus!" That was just the start!

Today God's Word says, **⁹ To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told this parable: ¹⁰ "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹ The Pharisee stood by himself and prayed: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other people – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. ¹² I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'** Pharisees were very – I mean very well behaved! The usual time for

prayer in the Temple was 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. You could be sure to find Pharisees all over the Temple praying. God's Word – the Law of Moses required God's people to fast 1 day each year. Pharisees fasted twice – a week! Usually on Mondays and Thursdays! God's Word – the Law of Moses required people bringing thank offerings that were a tithe – that is 10%. Pharisees gave 10% of everything – salt and pepper and garlic salt and A1 Steak Sauce – and Oregano and Bay Leaves from their home made spaghetti sauce! Pharisees were very faithful – not only keeping the Law of Moses – but about 365 manmade rules – the traditions of the elders! God's Word says they **"were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else."**

¹³ **"But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'** Tax collectors – collaborators with the accursed Romans – cheats – embezzlers – liars and crooks – stealing from their fellow Jews – to pay for the Roman heathen occupiers and at the same time lining their own pockets. Tax collectors – and sinners – tax collectors and people who sold "hugs and kisses" – the worst! The tax collectors were not self-righteous or arrogant. They were humble repentant people painfully aware of their own wretched sinfulness. Only Jesus could live without sin – then die – claiming the blame for all our failures.

¹⁴ **"I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted."** One man went home forgiven – the man who prayed, **"God be merciful to me a sinner! Father forgive me!** That's what he prayed. I heard about Henry – Henry Worsley – just 55 years old and in incredible shape! Henry was determined to walk 913 miles through the Antarctic! Henry was determined to do this "unsupported and unaided"! Do you understand that? Unsupported and unaided! I don't want – *what* – I don't *need* anybody to help me. If you think about it – it's like the very little person who says, "I can do it myself!" Earnest Shackleton had tried it – 100 years earlier – in 1915. He failed, too! I can do it myself! I can be so faithful – so determined – so good – knowing and obeying God's Word – I can save myself! I don't need any help! Really?! That's just plain wrong. **All our righteous acts are like filthy rags!** We are saved by grace through faith. We are saved because Jesus died and rose again to forgive us. We are saved by grace through faith – not by obeying the law. We are forgiven! Let us rededicate ourselves this Lenten Season – every day of our life to say and live~**"Thank you, Jesus!"** Amen!

To God alone all glory!

