

Sermon for The Funeral of Signe L. Carlson

Date: July 10, 2018

Location: St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, MN

Old Testament: Isaiah 25:6-9

Epistle Reading: Revelation 21:1-4

Gospel Reading: John 16:12-22

Sermon Title: Faith is a Miracle

Hymns:

LSB 461 – I Know that My Redeemer Lives (v.1,2,5,7,8)

LSB 744 – Amazing Grace

LSB 801 – How Great Thou Art (v.1,3,4)



Pastor James Groleau
St. John's Lutheran Church
1200 13th Avenue NW
Austin, MN 55912
Office: (507) 433-2642
Shepherd@JamesPlace.net
StJohnsAustinLCMS.org
[FaceBook.com/StJohnsAustin](https://www.facebook.com/StJohnsAustin)
[Twitter.com/StJohnsAustinMN](https://twitter.com/StJohnsAustinMN)
[FaceBook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau](https://www.facebook.com/Shepherd.James.Groleau)



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Grace to you, and peace, in the name of Jesus Christ, our saving Lord. Amen.

Scripture teaches us that we are to approach the kingdom of God with the faith of a child. Jesus said, “If you do not believe like a child, you will never enter Heaven.¹” That can be hard to do for us adults who have lived life. We live in a world where a healthy dose of skepticism is more than necessary to function in our society. There are all sorts of people out there making all sorts of claims. They all want to win you over, so they can role you over, and empty your wallet.

Perhaps the worst of all these swindlers are those claiming to be Christian. The airwaves are full of charlatans telling you that God’s grace is yours for the right price. They tell you that God will do what He is told, so long as the price is right. These people are no Christians at all. It is John, the closest disciple to Jesus, who called them antichrists.² It was Jesus who asked these sort of people, “How can you escape being condemned to Hell?³” That is a weighty question when you consider who is asking it.

These so called preachers of peace make all sorts of claims explaining why they are the voice you should listen to. They will tell you all sorts of reasons why they’re right. Usually you will hear word from their mouths like, “I have received a new word from the Lord.” This claim almost always means, “I couldn’t find what I wanted in the Bible so I’m making up something that suites my needs.” They will say, “God is speaking to me!” That usually means they know nothing about the true and holy Lord God Almighty.

Now the truth be known I can probably presume that you folks here don’t need me to tell you that many TV preachers can’t be trusted. You are savvy folks. You know a swindler when you see one. So why would I bring up their nonsense here on this day? The reason is to help you get a better grasp of what sin really is and where salvation really comes from.

There are so many voices claiming to be Christian in our American society who have wandered far from what is repeatedly and clearly taught in God’s Holy, inspired, inerrant, Word, the Bible. They all sound very good. They all teach a high and commendable moral standard. They are voices that join ours when it comes to judging right and wrong in our culture. As we listen to them they say words with which we can, and should, agree. So what is my problem with them? What is the problem you should have with them?

The problem, and I pray you will forgive my harshness as I say this, but the problem lies right here before us. There in that box is the problem. Right there we see Scripture’s truth when it says, “The wages of sin is death.”⁴ Even before Signe was called home we saw sin crushing her. We saw sin destroying her. It was a challenge to watch.

The question then becomes, “Whose sin?” Whose sin caused this to happen to her? Whose sin caused her to endure such afflictions and disease? Was it her sins? Was the condition of the end of her life her fault or was it someone else’s? The answer is some of both, and more.

Sin is what causes all our trials and troubles. Sin is what causes all our sickness and suffering. It is sin that we must understand. Sin is not just the bad stuff we do. Sin is not just the mistakes we

1 **Matthew 18:3**

2 1 John 4:3 – Every person who doesn’t declare that Jesus Christ has come as a human has a spirit that isn’t from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist that you have heard is coming. That spirit is already in the world.

3 **Matthew 23:33** – You snakes! You poisonous snakes! How can you escape being condemned to hell?

4 **Romans 6:23** – For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

make that offend our God. Sin is our condition. Sin is, in fact, the condition of the whole of creation.⁵ Every aspect of all that God has created is affected by sin.

When God created the heavens and the earth⁶ they were all created perfectly. All of it was there for us to enjoy. When we brought sin into that creation we stained it. We ruined it. Like red wine on white cloth the stain was there. It was permanent. It was burned in and it could not be removed. The only thing that can be done is to throw it away.

That is just what God had the right to do. He could have simply destroyed what He had made after we messed it up, but God could not do that. I am sure Adam and Eve could not foresee how messed up the world would become because of sin. The truth is, as bad as the world might appear to us here at times, there are places in the world where it is far far worse. Though we are all under the influence and affect of sin some of us bear it more obviously than others.

The important thing to understand is our suffering does not necessarily have a direct correlation to our sin. As Signe's mind and body failed her no one should have blamed her. It was sin, the condition of the world, that caused her troubles. The truth is in the end sin gets all of us. The wages of sin is death.⁷

The Bible teaches, "If you do not believe like a child, you will never enter Heaven."⁸ The Bible teaches, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the words of Christ."⁹ Faith in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ is the antidote to sin. That faith comes, not from our own efforts, not from our own work, but by hearing God's Word.

When you teach little children, have you ever noticed how easily, and unquestioningly, they believe what you tell them. They are so trusting. By our adult standards we would call them gullible, and naive. God designed children to be that way so that parents could teach them. The Bible says God's Law,

is for your children and your children's children. Teach it to them when you get up and when you lie down, when you come in and when you go out. Write it on your door posts and your gate.¹⁰

Why does God tell us to indoctrinate our children? Because if you don't someone else will, and they will not have your child's eternal salvation in mind when they do.

As we grow up we become more skeptical, we ask more questions. We tend to doubt more, and trust less. As adults, when we read or hear God's Word we are always asking questions like, "Can I really trust this?" Now here is the wonder of our God. He still performs miracles. In fact He does so, so often that we take them for granted. You have probably all seen them many times and taken no notice of them, but they are miracles of a standard unmatched by any other. They are miracles where God stoops down and touches us. Miracles where He gives us the free gift of faith. Faith that saves us from eternal death.

5 **Romans 8:22-23** – We know that all creation has been groaning with the pains of childbirth up to the present time. However, not only creation groans. We, who have the Spirit as the first of God's gifts, also groan inwardly. We groan as we eagerly wait for our adoption, the freeing of our bodies from si

6 **Genesis 1:1** – In the beginning God created heaven and earth.

7 **Romans 6:23**

8 **Matthew 18:3**

9 **Romans 10:17**

10 **Deuteronomy 11:19-21**

Where do we see them? We see them in the Means of Grace: In God's Word, in Holy Baptism, and the in Lord's Supper.

The first is God's Word. God says,

"My word, which comes from my mouth, will not come back to me without results. It will accomplish whatever I want and achieve whatever I send it to do."¹¹

It was God's Word that sustained her. Even though sin was affecting her mind it could not stop God's Word from affecting her heart and soul. God is greater than sin, and God comes to us through His Word.

The second is Holy Baptism. Jesus Himself commanded Holy Baptism when He said:

"Wherever you go, make disciples of all nations. Baptize them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teach them to obey everything I have commanded you."¹²

In the water's of Holy Baptism God touches us through the power and person of the Holy Spirit. Just as was done at Jesus' baptism.¹³ Just as God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit were present at the Jordan River 2000 years ago, our Holy Triune God was present when this beautiful woman, then a little girl, was baptized. On that day God claimed her as His own and declared, "Nothing can take her from My hands."¹⁴

The third is the Lord's Supper. It is there we receive Jesus true body and true blood with that bread and wine.¹⁵ There again our God physically touches us, plants and grows faith in us. There He makes us clean and make us His own.

At the end sin had done much to Signe. Sin had its way with her mind and body but she remains a child of God. She lived this life under her heavenly Father's promise and now knows truth. The truth of God's will, and God's Word, has set her free.

She now waits like all those faithful saints that went before her. She waits the way a child waits for Christmas day with eager anticipation and nearly unrestrainable excitement. She waits for that day, that Last Day, when Jesus will return. On that day Signe's body will be lifted out of that place where we will soon set it to rest. Her body will be made whole, fully restored, perfect again. As perfect as God intended her to be. Then body and soul restored she will walk in the wonder of a new creation; a new heaven and a new earth,¹⁶ where sin will never again be known as anything but a distant memory. That truth, the truth of salvation, is not just for Signe. It is for you too. It is for all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

In the end Signe's faith was just like that of a little child. She did not question it, she simply believed it, because that's what she was told. You can doubt what people say, you can even doubt

¹¹ **Isaiah 55:11**

¹² **Matthew 28:19-20**

¹³ **Luke 3:22** – The Holy Spirit came down to him in the form of a dove. A voice from heaven said, "You are my Son, whom I love. I am pleased with you."

¹⁴ **John 10:29-30** – My Father, who gave them to me, is greater than everyone else, and no one can tear them away from my Father. 30 The Father and I are one.

¹⁵ **Luke 22:19-20** – Then Jesus took bread and spoke a prayer of thanksgiving. He broke the bread, gave it to them, and said, "This is my body, which is given up for you. Do this to remember me." When supper was over, he did the same with the cup. He said, "This cup that is poured out for you is the new promise made with my blood."

¹⁶ **Revelation 21:1** – I saw a new heaven and a new earth, because the first heaven and earth had disappeared,...

what I say, but do not doubt your God. He has saved you. He has redeemed you. You are His. Do not walk away from all that He has done. Do not abandon the free gift of faith His has given to you.

Use the gifts God has given us, those Means of Grace. Use them for the purpose God intended, to bring faith and salvation to you. See in them the wondrous miracles that too often we over look. Know that God, your God, is not far off. He is here dwelling with us. There He will be, until that day when, like Signe, we are called safely home.¹⁷

In Jesus' Holy name.

Amen.

¹⁷ Matthew 28:20 – "... remember that I am always with you until the end of time."