

Sermon for The Funeral of Leonard Alvin Meyer

Date: March 21, 2019

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

Old Testament: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Epistle Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-22

Gospel Reading: John 3:1-21

Sermon Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-8, 12-22

Sermon Title: Salvation Though Christ Alone



Hymns:

LSB 801 – How Great Thou Art

LSB 729 – I Am Trusting You, Lord Jesus

LSB 744 – Amazing Grace



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Text: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-8, 12-22

Brothers and sisters, I am making known to you the Good News which I already told you, which you received, and on which your faith is based. You are saved by this Good News if you hold on to the doctrine I taught you, rather than believed without purpose. I passed on to you the most important points of doctrine that I had received, that being: Christ died to take away our sins as the Scriptures predicted.

He was placed in a tomb. He was brought back to life on the third day as the Scriptures predicted. He appeared to Peter. Next he appeared to the twelve apostles. Then he appeared to more than 500 believers at one time. (Most of these people are still living, but some have died.) Next he appeared to James. Then he appeared to all the apostles. Last of all, he also appeared to me.

If we have told you that Christ has been brought back to life, how can some of you say that coming back from the dead is impossible? If the dead can't be brought back to life, then Christ hasn't come back to life. If Christ hasn't come back to life, our message has no meaning and your faith also is without purpose.

That would make us witnesses who lied about God because we testified that he brought Christ back to life. If it is true that the dead don't come back to life, then God didn't bring Christ back to life. Certainly, if the dead don't come back to life, then Christ hasn't come back to life either. If Christ hasn't come back to life, your faith is worthless and sin still has you in its power. Then those who have died as believers in Christ no longer exist. If Christ is our hope in this life only, we deserve more pity than any other people.

Yet Christ has come back from the dead. He is the first-fruits of those who have slept to come back to life. Since a man brought death, a man also brought life back from death. As everyone dies because of Adam, so also everyone will be made alive because of Christ.

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Grace to you, peace and mercy in Jesus name. Amen.

Why do bad things happen? Is God trying to tell us something? Are we doing something wrong? Is God angry with us? What can we do to fix the problem?

These kinds of questions often come to people's minds when faced with troubles and trials. How we answer those questions is very important. It's important because you will make decisions about your life based on the answers. Your future may change based on the answers you find to these questions.

First we need to understand something about God. God is not like us. He does not get even, or lash out in anger against His children. We might be like that, or we may know people like that, but God is not like that. Although there are many records in the Bible of God punishing people because He is angry with them, it is only after endless warnings, and always there is a promise of salvation. You see even in His holy perfect anger God is still working to save all people. God doesn't give up on anyone. People give up on God.

To help you understand that. Let me give you this example. I'm sure all of you can think of someone who just rubs you the wrong way. Someone who bothers you or makes you angry, and maybe you don't even know why. All of us in some sense are like that to God. God created us perfect, and gave us a perfect world to live in and we messed it all up. We brought sin and death into His perfect world. God will not tolerate anything but absolute perfection in His presence, so now we all bother God. We rub Him the wrong way. Simply because we are who we are, we make God angry. We were in fact born enemies of God.

Now as you think about that person who taxes your patience I want to ask you to think about this question: would you be willing to die for that person to help them, or give them a few extra good years on this Earth? Probably not. Let's make that hit much closer to home. Would you be willing to die to give Leonard a few more good years on this Earth?

For some of you that question might cause you to hesitate and think. You might have to pause on that one for a bit, but probably if it really came down to having to make that decision you would say no.¹ Now let me take that same question to its most opposite ludicrous extreme. Would you be willing to die to give Vladimir Putin, the president of Russia, a few extra good years on this Earth? I can venture a guess that question would receive a resounding, "No!" In fact I think I am safe in assuming that some folks here would be more interested in helping him on his way out, rather than helping his stick around a little longer.

We would never be willing to die for an evil man. We wouldn't be willing to die for a person who annoys us. We probably wouldn't even be willing to die for a beloved family member. Yet God would, and did. That is exactly what Jesus did. Jesus came to die for us who were born His enemies. What Jesus did for us would be even more than asking you to die for someone like Putin. Far more than that. Jesus came to forgive the sins of every person that has, or ever will, live.

It doesn't matter if they are evil, good, or the most holy person you know. Everyone of them is a sinner. Everyone of them is an enemy of God. Everyone of them has been given the free gift

¹ Romans 5:7 – Finding someone who would die for a godly person is rare. Maybe someone would have the courage to die for a good person.

of God's grace, through the death of His Son. You see that is the singularity of Christianity. That is the one thing that sets the Christian faith apart from all others. It is only in the Christian faith that God comes to save us. We don't have to find God, or earn God's love, or fix the problems between us and God. God does that for us.

So then what does God expect from us? What are we supposed to do? What are our responsibilities? The only thing we are required to do is repent and believe. 'Repent' is just a fancy Church word that means apologize. When we apologize to God, and mean it truthfully in our heart, God forgives us. When He forgives, it's not like when we do it. We may have trouble forgetting the pain someone has caused us. We may hold on to those old grudges of the past, but God doesn't. God chooses to forgive, and He chooses to never remember what you have done again.

That is the wonder of our God. He doesn't expect anything more. No amount of money, service, or materials can buy God's forgiveness. Nothing you can do will fix the problem between you and God. The only thing you have that God wants is your love and respect. With that you have half of what you need to receive all of God's forgiveness.

What is the other half? Faith. In our Gospel lesson you heard Jesus tell a man named Nicodemus that everyone who believes in Jesus will have eternal life.² Faith is that one thing that holds us close to the God who loves us and saved us. Faith is that one thing that keeps us in His Word and His ways. Faith is that one thing that saves us.

Lots of people will say Jesus is a joke, and Church is for the weak. Just this week I watched a show on the History Channel[®] where a man claimed to prove just those very things. He is not the first person to mock God and call the faithful fools, and he won't be the last. God has given us His opinion of such people. The Bible says, "The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'³"

Let them rail and rant over how ridiculous you are for believing what they call nonsense. For those who deny the truths and promises of God, their day will come. A day of reckoning when they will know the truth, but too late to set them free.

You on the other hand should not be a fool. You should not abandon the truths you were taught. You should hold on to them and cherish them because you too will have to face that day of reckoning. It is a day we call the Last Day, or Judgment Day. On that day each and everyone of us will stand before God's throne and give an account of who we are and what we've done. For those who repent and believe the Judge's verdict will be, "Innocent. Welcome home." For the others, for those who deny God and God's grace, they will only hear, "I never knew you."

Faith is hope in things not seen.⁴ Faith is trusting in God, and God's Word, through all trials and all troubles. Faith is the key to salvation. Faith when combined with repentance that comes from love and respect for God, and who God is, becomes the key to eternal salvation. We believe and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord and God, and that He died and rose again so that we could have eternal life. On that truth we will not waver or sway. If Christ has not been raised

2 John 3:15 - Whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

3 The fool says in his heart, 'There is no God.'

4 Hebrews 11:1 - Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

the message taught here in this church has no meaning. If Christ has not been raised the whole Christian Church on Earth is a liar and a pack of fools.

But Christ has been raised. We have those truths recorded for us in the Bible from eye witnesses who were actually there, who saw the events as they happened, and who wrote down those truths so that we could know that salvation has come and His name is Jesus. It is on that, and that alone, that we rely when life brings us troubles.

Why do bad things happen? Why so many painful things? Is God trying to say something? Are we doing something wrong? Is God angry with us? What can we do to fix the problem? Only in the truths of true faith in Jesus Christ and the salvation He won for us can these question be answered.

Bad things come because the world is a mess. It is a mess because we, the human race, brought sin to it. Though the trials may come they are not punishment from God, though they are a time to reflect upon our lives and where we are. To fix the problems between you and God there is only one thing required. An apology given in faith to a God whom we love and respect as our Heavenly Father. Faith in His Son our Savior and brother. Faith which is grown and fed in you by the power of the Holy Spirit as you read, and hear, God's Holy Word.

There is where we find hope for a future free from trouble, that will never end.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.