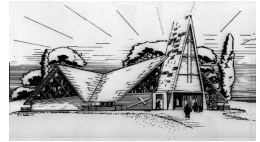




Free Evangelical Lutheran
Synod in South Africa

Sermon- Sunday Reminiscere Jesus rescues us from destruction and makes us citizens of Heaven



St. John's Lutheran Parish Shelly Beach

• The Word of God for this Sermon is written in Philippians 3,17- 4,1:

- **ESV** 17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
- 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ.
- 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things.
- 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ,
- 21 who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.
- 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.
- **Let us pray:** *Come Holy Spirit, open our ears, inspire in us the love for Your truth and a deep trust for Christ and a heart filled with thankfulness and awe for the ministry of suffering and death He fulfilled for us. Amen.*

• **Dear Beloved in Christ!**

- **“O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it!”** Words of Jesus, as He was making His way up to His final destination, to Jerusalem, where His Exodus would begin on the one hand, but also, on the other hand, His final *rejection!* As He was getting closer and closer to Jerusalem the opposition amongst the Jewish Sanhedrin, the council of Jewish religious leaders, mounted. Jesus didn't held back either. He warned them with some very clear and stern words what would happen to those who rejected Him and His ministry!
- [28] **“In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves cast out.”** Jesus was telling them that their own forefathers they were bargaining on, because they were descendants according to the flesh, would be in the kingdom whilst they would be cast out! Their minds are set on earthly things, on family ties instead of being participants of Christ.

- The table in the kingdom of God will not be empty although someone had asked Jesus if only a few would enter the kingdom of God. Jesus confirmed that *“people will come from east and west, and from north and south, and recline at table in the kingdom of God.”* The rejection Jesus would experience in Jerusalem would not halt the Mission of God. The kingdom of God will be opened up for others, and they will come from all directions of the world. This is a very strong statement by Jesus, especially in those times, because we have to remember that religions were very nationalistic. Each nation had its own god and religion. Jesus claims that the little mustard seed would grow into a huge tree going across all national boundaries. The hidden leaven would soon leaven all the flour.
- The Kingdom of God starts small and it starts hidden, and it takes time, but after a long while it has grown into a huge tree and all the flour is leavened.
- We are in the position that we can look back onto history and say, yes, that is exactly what had happened and still continues to happen. It started small, very small with eleven disciples and it has grown into a huge tree.
- The fact that the very nation in which Jesus set up His new kingdom, the Jews, had by enlarge rejected Him, did not stop it from spreading out far and wide throughout the earth. The Bible is the one book which has been translated in the most languages of the world, by far. This is unique to the kingdom Jesus set up. Religion normally doesn't work like this, that if the religion of a nationality would be rejected by its own people, it would die quickly, because the other nationalities all have their own religions. But although Jesus was rejected in Jerusalem, by most of His own people, His church did not die but spread and grew to the largest body on earth!
- In fact, if one really looks at this sharply, you will realise that whilst Jesus hangs on the cross He alone was Israel! No human being, except Jesus Himself, believed that God's Mission would still continue after His death. He alone trusted His Father's promise at that crucial stage! So, with the crucifixion of Jesus the common mindset amongst humans of how religion works was radically crucified too! There you have the major conflict between the cross of Christ and all other ways of religion revealed! The members of the Sanhedrin were just as sinful as the members of all pagan religions. They needed the forgiveness of God given to them by Christ dying on the cross just as much as the “hamartoloi”, the sinners, the gentiles, the pagans. But they rejected this truth.

• That is why Paul calls them ***“enemies of the cross of Christ”***. The cross of Christ was and still is a stumbling block for the Jews and for many people inside and outside the church. Unfortunately one hears critical remarks being uttered against the Cross of Christ by leaders of so-called mainline churches. Most of this is done in the name of mission. They try to repackage the Gospel in such a way that it would be more acceptable to non-believers. Many people in our days are not willing to accept that the loving God would go to such extremes as to have His own Son sacrificed. “What father does that”, they ask. And so they try to find another way of salvation in the Scriptures without the necessity of the Cross. However, if you remove the Cross of Christ out of the Gospel it is not the Gospel of Jesus anymore! The Cross of Christ is absolutely central to the Gospel. And it always has been and will be a stumbling block for all people who resist repentance. That is, who resist to have their minds changed by the Word of the Cross.

• The Word of the Cross crucifies our old Adam’s ideas about God. The God who sometimes appears very strict and harsh in the Old Testament is the loving Father of Jesus Christ! This is a fact against our old Adams incompetence to understand and believe this. The Word of the Cross buries the ideas we have about ourselves too. By nature we are blind to the way of the Cross. It is foolishness to the intellectuals and not miraculous enough for the religious crowd. Instead of finding fault with the Gospel of Christ, the problem lies with us, with humankind as a whole! Now, let us be honest who likes to hear that he/she is at fault. Even worse, who likes to be told, you are wrong?

• This is where the conflict lies. It doesn’t help anyone to try and avoid this conflict. That would be like a person, sick with a curable disease, going to the doctor and the doctor would tell the person, feeling sorry for him/ her that nothing is wrong. But, after two weeks the person dies. Was that the loving thing to do? Having a curable disease!

• Yes, amazingly, sin, original sin is a curable disease, has become a curable disease through the Cross of Christ! The loving thing to do is, to tell the person the truth, yes you are sick, with a deadly sickness, but here, here is the cure, don’t be afraid. It is on God’s house. He has paid for you through His Son’s death. The terrible news would turn into fabulous news.

• This is true in a much greater way with the true Gospel. Not only did Jesus come to cast out demons and perform cures, but He came to fulfil all promises of God

concerning our eternal life, our bodily eternal life. Whœver is baptised into Christ, that is, whœver is united with Him in a death like His receives a new citizenship! Our citizenship is in heaven, in the kingdom of God, in God's Isrœl, the Body of Christ, Mount Zion. We wait for our Saviour to come back and transform our lowly bodies to be like His glorious body. They will be completely healed. All perishability will be completely removed! We will receive bodies who will be completely free from sin, free from rebellion and revolution, free from resentments and issues with others and with God.

• Our citizenship is in heaven, which is a present tense reality. Now! We participate in heaven now already, in a hidden way, but Christ has united us with Himself. That is, what He has done on the Cross, counts for us before God! We have direct access to the Father of Jesus Christ! He hears us when we pray, because we have become His children.

• Therefore, my brothers and sisters in Christ, stand firm in the Lord, and Him crucified! The fruits of His Cross make us participants of His eternal Body. That is why I may hand out to you today real gifts, forgiveness of Sins, true eternal Life and Salvation. Table fellowship with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all prophets and our risen Lord amongst us as the One who serves us! It is worthy to stand firm and to confess the Word of the Cross, against all rejection and resistance, even if it should cost us our live here on earth! May the Lord strengthen all of us to remain steadfast in His Confession. Praise be to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit! **Amen.**

*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **Amen.***