



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

March 15, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

Lenten Midweek 3

Sermon Text: [Ezekiel 33:7-9](#)

“Acceptable” Sins: Silence

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Now is the time of God’s favor. Now is the day of salvation. Amen.

In Christ, our risen and ruling Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

Have you ever sat through a completely uncomfortable silence? Sometimes some silences can be awkward and uncomfortable. I’ve told this in some Bible studies, I don’t know if I’ve used it in a sermon or not, but when I was at the seminary I had a professor that taught education and a couple other Jesus classes and he would call on me. If I wasn’t absolutely certain I had the right answer, I wouldn’t say a thing. He was really good at just letting the class sit like that for a while. I was even better at not answering. I got really comfortable with silence. It didn’t bother me. I just figured “I’m going to out wait you.” It became kind of like a game for me. That’s why I always tell you kids in my class, “Just give an answer, if you’re wrong, so what, just learn from it. I’m trying to teach you not to make the mistakes I did.” But the one thing I have become completely comfortable with is silence in classes. That’s why I always have coffee with me because then I have something to do while I sit there and wait for you all to think for a while.

I don’t think it’s always good to rush in whenever there is silence and fill it with noise in speaking. Sometimes it’s good just to let people process things. Sometimes silence is really good, even if it might be uncomfortable at first. But I do believe in my life that I have become comfortable with silence that God would call sin. It isn’t awkward to me. It’s completely comfortable and natural. I can excuse it quite readily. How about you?

Today God has told us and it’s pretty clear in Ezekiel, “If I tell you to warn someone and you don’t warn them and they die in their sin, I’m going to hold you accountable for their blood. If you do warn them, and they don’t turn away from it and they die in their sin, you are not accountable for their blood.” God is telling you, “I expect you to talk.” When you know someone has done something that is against God’s will, you are called by God to give an answer and to speak the truth—to do it in love and all those things.

I can understand why we don't want to. I think about what we talked about last week. Sometimes when I am going to rebuke someone that has done something that has hurt me, I am really tempted to do it in anger because I'm irritated. I have to take a step back away from that because then those words themselves, even if I'm doing what God has called me to do, would be a sin because of the attitude in my heart. So I can tell myself "So I don't go down that path, I just won't say anything." Then my silence is sin. Sometimes maybe we say to ourselves, "That's not really what God has called me to do. That's someone else's job. He was talking to the prophet Ezekiel. He's not talking to Randy, is he?"

Has God, in Scripture, called His people to be His vocal chords? ***Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another...*** [\(1 Colossians 3:16\)](#) Unless you can do this teaching and admonishing telepathically, you've been called by God to speak. ***Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do so with gentleness and respect...*** [\(1 Peter 3:15\)](#) That answer, again, is speaking. All these are over and over with the "one another" passages. God calls us to do things, to be His witnesses, to do things that involve speaking on behalf of God, as His representatives, whether it's to rebuke someone caught in a sin or whether it's to show someone how their sins separate them from God. And Jesus Christ, His life and death, is the only answer that takes away that sin. It isn't an option among many, but it's the only thing that removes the guilt of our sin. There are so many people that don't know that.

I can understand why we don't want to do it because sometimes it creates waves. It creates blowback when you say to someone else "I love you. I want you in heaven with me, but what you are doing is wrong before God." "Well who are you to tell me? I know what you've done!" "Yes, and that's why I want you to know the forgiveness that I live in now, too. I want you to enjoy that." That blowback can come from unbelievers. I have been patted on the head and told how silly and backward and superstitious I am that I believe in some invisible guy in the sky and all these kinds of things. But I understand the desire not to go through all of that. So to just keep my mouth shut when those opportunities come up is much easier.

If you're honest with yourself, and if I'm honest with myself, there are times I have been silent when God has put in front of me opportunities to speak His truth, in love, and instead I've changed the subject, talked about something else, and I didn't seize that opportunity. We might think to ourselves, "That's not that bad. It's understandable and a lot of people do it." But God says that is sin because He has called us to do these things. When we don't do what He has called us to do, it is a sin against our God and that sin condemns us to hell just as much as any other sin that you and I might think are big and terrible and awful that are out there someplace. During the time of Lent, the discipline of Lent, we are supposed to be looking at the sins that are in here, in our own

hearts. This Lent, especially, we look at the ones that maybe we have become comfortable with or that we excuse or that we can live with and not think about.

The older I get it seems like the more sins haunt me. I know that in Christ I am a forgiven child of God through faith that Jesus lived and died in my place. I know that, but I still at times, as I'm driving or in the middle of the night, can be troubled by my silence and the things that I've done. I can be troubled by the words that I've spoken in anger or any of these other things (pride or the different sins that we'll be looking at). They haunt me now more than they used to. But I don't think that is that bad because if I think these sins that are common to me aren't that bad—I may believe what the kids sang (Our sins are many but His mercy is more), but if I realize just how many my sins are, that mercy becomes bigger and bigger and bigger in my eyesight. I become just amazed that my God loves me in spite of these many sins that I don't think are that bad that nailed Jesus to a cross.

You and I have failed our God over and over and over in so many ways. This idea that He walked the path that lead to Golgotha just amazes me. The love that our God has for us becomes immense in our eyes when we see how often we have failed Him. So don't minimize these sins we have become comfortable with. See them for what they are. These sins are the echo of the hammer hitting the nail that went through Christ's hands and feet. These sins are the blood that ran down His head because of the crown of thorns that was jammed on Him. This is what we have done to our God. But then rejoice that He was willing to endure the cross, for us and for our forgiveness.

Then in response to that incredible love, let's go forward. We can't go back and change the times we have been silent, but we can start looking for more opportunities to speak His truth, in love, in patience, and in kindness because that is what our God has called us to do. Amen.

And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. [\(Philippians 4:7\)](#) Amen.