



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

March 22, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

Lenten Midweek 4

Sermon Text: [Philippians 2:3-4](#)

Acceptable Sins: Selfishness

1. Selfishness shown...
 - a. _____
 - b. In _____
2. Not _____ - _____ but _____ - _____
3. Remember to _____ the _____

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.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

When you think of someone who is selfish, maybe prideful, always pointing to their self, who might you think of? I think it's easy to think of professional athletes who want millions and millions of dollars. "Unless I get this much money, I'm going to another city to play. It has to be this way and these people on my team." That might happen sometimes. You might think about politicians; people who are just out to get things for themselves, or bankers. We think of these people who are selfish and self-seeking. We can think of those people out there, the ones that are more famous and are really pointing to themselves and are very self-centered and selfish, but there might be some people in your life that are pretty easy to recognize.

One of the interesting questions is when you think about someone who is NOT selfish. When they are humble, it's actually really hard to notice. Why is that? It's easy to notice the people who are self-centered and saying "Look at me! Look at me! Look at me!" But the truly humble people, what are they doing? "Don't look at me." They are not pointing to themselves and they are not making it all about themselves. They are making it about and are building up other people. If you are in a room, you'll really notice the self-centered/self-seeking people, but will you really notice the humble people? Not really.

On top of that then is the biggest problem of it all. It's the fact that selfishness is very easy to see in the people around us. What about ourselves? Do we fail to see the places where we are selfish? That's what this whole series is about. We could talk about those bankers and the Wall Street people that are selfish, but what about us? Where are we selfish and self-seeking? Where does it start and how does it hurt us and those around us? What's the solution?

Paul writes this in Philippians: ***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*** It's simple, right? Always look after others. Don't do anything out of selfishness or vain conceit, how simple. Not at all! What is the problem? We know that there is something inside of us that causes us to be selfish. When does it start?

In [Galatians 5](#), Paul also writes this: ***You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love.*** Where does it start? It starts in our own flesh. Selfishness is there and a part of us and it starts so early. Where is the first place that selfishness is shown? *Selfishness is shown from infancy.* We are born with that sinful nature.

I had a pastor friend when I was in Texas and a pastor in Oklahoma. He made the point that people want to say "children are so innocent." They are cute, right? But what child comes out praising God? Of course none, right? But quickly from infancy, what do children do? We don't have to teach them to be selfish and say "Mine!" We have to teach them to share. They are focused on "me" and "my way," and it's all about them. It starts from infancy and never leaves us.

That sinful nature is so focused on getting what is right for me and being right. It's all about us. That affects everything. It affects how I look at God. God says He is the God who loves us and takes care of us and has died for us and we say "Well, God, you're not really the God I want you to be because I have this list of stuff that you really haven't taken care of; and that thing happened, and that thing happened. That's not right." We're so selfish from infancy to the day we die. We make it all about our way and getting things the way we want.

One of the saddest things is where this really shows itself as well. Selfishness shows itself in infancy, but where else? *Selfishness is shown in our families.* What does that mean? Has your child ever hit anyone? Most of you probably would say "My child never hits anyone. They don't hit kids in the playground or anything like that." Has one of your children ever hit one of their siblings? Probably, right? When does that start? You have a little baby and he smacks sometimes. There is this selfishness that grows. Where do we take it out on? You might have angels out in the park and when playing

with other kids, but when they are at home the kids fight and say "It's my toy! It's my way!" Selfishness shows itself over and over again, and especially between the ones we love.

We can talk about kids all we want, but what about us, as adults. On the list on the back of the Sermon Notes, there are some sins of how selfishness shows itself (own interests, use of time, use of money, being inconsiderate, getting my way, lack of compassion and understanding). One of them is time. Think about that for parents or spouses. Are we ever selfish with our time? What do kids really want? Most of the time, the kids might say they want a toy or a gift, but what do they really want? They want to spend time with you. They want your undivided attention; not where you are watching TV or on your phone or tablet or whatever, or maybe you looking at them from time to time. They want your time. But are we selfish with our time? "I've been at work." You get home and you're tired. It's true, but how selfish are we with our time.

We have to also be considerate and look at how we take time away from others, too. I have to sometimes say I am selfish with my time and don't give it to others. I never want to make it sound like I'm busy. It is Lenten season and we have a funeral and someone says "Pastor, you're so busy!" I never want to be so busy that I don't have time to speak with members.

But think about when we are selfish with time of others or the other sin here, being inconsiderate. We can be inconsiderate and take up time of and bash others because maybe "It has to be MY way. They're not doing it right." Yes, we can do that in so many different ways in the world but sometimes the worst places where this happens is in the family and between spouses. And not just in your biological family.

Did you hear the words we spoke at the beginning of the service? *"With these words we were called by the Holy Spirit to be members of God's family at our baptism. Gathered together as brothers and sisters in Christ, let us humble ourselves before God, and admit to him and to one another that we have not lived as God's children ought to live."* What family do we often hurt the most? Our Christian brothers and sisters, and it hurts so much more because in the Church, in this family, we should be loving and caring and compassionate and forgiving and building each other up. Do we do that? What do we make it about? "MY way" and the selfishness of saying things without thinking about how they might be taken or saying things and not really understanding the situation and all the work that someone has put into something, or bashing a program that we have no idea about. It's very easy for us in the Church to be concerned about the things that we're involved in. We spend time on that and then "This thing over there," but they don't know anything about it. Instead of building up or assuming the best, we become selfish and begin to make things about us and the way WE want to do things; the way that WE would do it.

We can see how that plays itself out in our families and in the Church. It's hard. You can see selfishness in other ways. One of the other ones here is interest. It's maybe a subtle thing but when you talk to someone and say "Good morning. How is your day?" Or the person says "How is your day" and then they turn the corner and they are gone for the rest of the day. Do they care about you? Or in a conversation, is the person only sharing about themselves and what they know is important? Are people seeking to find out about you? Are you doing that? Are you seeking to be interested in the interests of your spouse, your kids, your friends, people you meet at church?

There are many ways where we can show selfishness; in small ways and in big ways, with interest, with time, with money and all sorts of different ways. A big part of this is that it's easy to be self-centered. I'm going to pull out one thing over here. I have this little bike. I wanted a tire but I couldn't pull up a big tire. What is one of the problems with tires? If you don't have enough air in there, it doesn't work very well. If you have too much air in there it doesn't work either. It could be dangerous. Self-centeredness can show itself in two ways. We see it in pride, where we are puffed up, but sometimes self-centeredness is this way where we still make it all about ourselves but we kind of pull up. It's still all about us but it's kind of the opposite scale of pride and showing it in front of everyone else. I can be on that other side of the scale with the tire and be so deflated. Again, it's selfishness where I'm making it all about me.

What is the solution? It's *not being self-centered but being Christ-centered*. Whichever way I am, deflated or inflated, the focus is me. That's where I'm getting my identity; about what I did or what I didn't do, what people think about me and say about me—my performance. We make it all about ourselves. But if I'm Christ-centered, what is it about? It's about Christ and His love for me.

The section after what we read in [Philippians](#) speaks about Christ humbled Himself. He went to the cross and emptied Himself. He went to die for you; to die for all the times that we are self-centered and focused on ourselves. Christ suffered and died for us and said it's all about you. He was God. He was King. He was the King of Kings, the King of the Jews, the King of this world, and what did He subject Himself to?—mockery, beatings and death on a cross, and if anyone says anything about us? "How dare they?!" When we make it about Christ and see His love for us, we find our identity in a God who loves us and that no matter what we face, no matter what someone might say about us, we are loved and redeemed. Even when we fail, when we are self-centered, we go to the cross and see that He has loved and forgiven us.

What it would be if we were always Christ-centered and saying "How can we glorify God in this? Not to make it about myself but to make it about Christ. How does this/how can we serve God? How can we glorify God? How can we show the love of God?" One way to do this—we don't earn anything from doing these things. It's all been done by Christ when He said "***It is finished.***" ([John 19:30](#)) But I heard a comment recently. They

said "You go out into town and what do you notice? No one holds the door anymore. You go to a store and no one holds the door open." True or not, I think there's a good point. *Remember to hold the door for others.* What do I mean by that? I would love to steal this phrase from another pastor that their church uses all the time—"You first." Think about it in the same way of holding that door. That's the same thing we're doing. When you hold the door, you are saying "You first." But when you hold the door, what do you have to do? You actually have to stand back and let other people go.

In a book we're using for the basis of these sermons, they talked about interests and serving, how I could be so concerned about my interests. Think about at home. When we serve, what do we often do, maybe with chores for kids, husband or wife? We like to do the bare minimum. Mom and dad said "Put the dishes away." Do we go any extra? Do we sacrifice our time or our service to serve and to put someone else first and give of our time and our effort, to empty ourselves and to say "No job is too big for me"? Can you do that? Can you show the love of Christ by serving in little ways? It doesn't have to be big ways. It can be small ways. Even just with our kids, trying to instill that little idea, like holding the door and letting people go first, or playing with toys—"You first. I don't need to do this first. I don't have to go first." If we can instill that early, what about when we're older? As we do that, as we work together, as you do this in your marriage, say "You first," and seek to serve and love, we can show the love of Christ because we have been loved by God.

I think in a big way what is shown too, when serving and showing that love, is forgiving—not making it all about ourselves and always being right but knowing who is the most selfish. (Raise your hand.) Each of us can raise our hand and know that we're just as selfish as anyone else. If God can forgive me and has redeemed me, a selfish person, what should I do? I can love and serve those around me, forgive others and try to be less selfish. I can show that love and point people to Jesus, the One who emptied Himself, who died on the cross and humbled Himself so that we don't have to look at our own interests. We can find our identity, not in what we do or what has been said about us but, in Christ. Be less self-centered and much more Christ-centered. Amen.

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