



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

June 27, 2021 *(as preached on Thurs., June 24)*

Pastor Randy Ott

5th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [1 Samuel 21:1-6](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 122

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Colossians 2:13-17](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 2:23-28](#)

Worship Gives Real Rest

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, mercy and peace are yours through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Throughout my ministry (almost always) I had served in a church which had week night services, like the Thursday night service we have here tonight. In many ways, they have always been kind of my favorite. It's not just because Ron Timm is here, which you might think, but that's not it. It's because usually there is nothing afterwards. I'm not thinking about what meeting I have to run to or who I have to go see this afternoon or after the service is done, like sometimes if they are on a Sunday. The day has kind of come to a close. We come into the church at 7p.m. and sit down and you don't have to think about all this other stuff that can kind of distract you. Instead, you can just focus on God, who He is, what He has done for you and, at least for me, I've always been able to focus on Him better when I'm not thinking about everything else I have to do after a Sunday service.

That distraction by what I need to do is kind of what Paul is writing to the Christians in Colossae about. They were getting pressured. Last week we talked about the false teachers in Colossae that Paul is writing this letter about. He had heard about it from Epaphras. He had never been there, but he sends this letter to them while he is in prison in Rome because he does not want them to focus on what they are doing. The false teachers were telling them (as you can kind of hear from what I read to you) that you need to keep New Moon festivals. You need to keep the Sabbath laws. You need to keep this law and that law, and if you aren't doing all the ceremonial things that were there in the Old Testament, you're not really good enough Christians.

So Paul, as one of the errors he is addressing is what he addresses in what I read to you, again stresses the all-sufficiency of Jesus. That's the theme of this letter, like we talked about last week. Jesus is enough. You don't need Jesus plus. You just need Jesus. Who He is and what He has done for you. He brings that out tonight when he is talking about what worship is all about.

That whole first paragraph is talking about who Jesus is and what Jesus did. It's not talking about what any of His people did. It starts out by reminding us that there isn't anything we could do to pay for our sins because when you were dead in your sins, Christ made you alive. He lived and died in your place. He sent the Spirit. It's HIS work. God is doing the work. So don't place your confidence in keeping ceremonies or these other things because that's not how you became a Christian in the first place, and that's not what makes you a Christian, and that's not what even makes you a better Christian than someone else. It's all about Jesus. He just hammers that home.

He talks about all of those ceremonies and how they were just a shadow of things to come. The reality is Jesus, so focus on the reality. It's only Jesus that ***forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us.*** Our legal indebtedness that stood against us and condemned us is that written code of the Law. The ceremonial law which they couldn't keep, the moral law (which is God's right and wrong of all time), they couldn't keep them perfectly. You can't keep them perfectly. No one can do all the things that are required of us in the Law because we're dead in sins. So if you're going to say "I'm a better Christian. Look at what I'm doing," you're looking in the wrong place and the wrong direction. Paul says to put your eyes on Jesus. He is the one that canceled the written code of the debt you owed of perfection because He paid it in your behalf. He's the one that hung on the cross as the punishment for your sins. He is the one that defeated the powers and authorities that stood against you (the devil), that were condemning you, because you didn't keep the Law. He is the one that defeated the devil and then led a triumphant procession in the cross and made a public spectacle of them leading them in triumphant procession. It's a picture of the old Roman armies after they defeated someone. They would parade the conquered people through Rome and show how the people that were a threat are no longer a threat to you because they have been defeated. Jesus did that, when you look at it in other places in the Bible, when He went and made proclamation to the spirits who were in prison who died long ago during the days of Noah. This is talking about His descent into hell. We say it in the Creed all the time. Jesus descended into hell. He did not descend into hell to pay for sins. He had paid for all of our sins on the cross. Right before He died, He said ***"It is finished."*** ([John 19:30](#)) He wasn't talking about His life. He was talking about His ministry, His work. Atoning for your sins, cancelling the written code that stood against you, that legal indebtedness; He forgave us all our sins when we were dead in our sins. Then He let Satan and all those who had failed to listen to His Word know that He had won the victory. The debt had been paid. The charges against us were all ripped up. And we are His forgiven children, holy in His

eyes, because of His life and His death. This is what God's plan is for us when we come to worship. This is what we are to focus on.

There were those in Colossae that were saying "That's a good start, but you have to do this, this and this; New Moon celebration, Sabbath day and all these other things because these are requirements of the Law." He reminds them that the Law has been canceled by Christ. It was a shadow of what was to come, so don't focus on the shadow. Focus on Christ. But they were being tempted to turn around back to placing their confidence in what they would do. So he says, "Don't let anyone judge you in that because you have been forgiven in Christ and you have been set free." This is the focus of our worship.

We don't come to worship to do something for God so we can make Him love us. He loved us before we were born. He loved us before the Creation of the world when He planned our salvation through Jesus. His love for us is already complete, absolute and perfect. We don't do things to make Him love us. If you say "I'm going to come to worship so that I'm a better Christian than those who don't and God will love me more," you're looking in the wrong direction. You're looking at yourself instead of at Jesus.

Now, on the other hand, I've talked to people lately that I think avoid THAT ditch of saying "I'm doing something for God so that He'll love me" by driving their car right into the ditch on the OTHER side of the road that says "The written code has been canceled. Nothing I do saves me. Going to worship doesn't make God love me more, so I'm not going to go. I don't have to go. I've already been saved by Jesus." That's a ditch just as certainly as "I'm going to make God love me more by worshiping more" is a ditch. Both of them have the wrong focus. The focus is on "I," what I am doing or what I don't have to do.

Worship that is going to give us rest, rest from the work of saving ourselves, is the worship that lives in Jesus and only Jesus and marvels at the depth of His love for us. Even though you and I know that Jesus has taken away the guilt of our sin, there are times when we wake up in the middle of the night troubled by the guilt of our sin. We know how we have failed our God. We know what He has asked us to do that we haven't done.

In worship, in our faith, our trust that Jesus took away our guilt, we find peace. We find rest. I don't know why I wouldn't want that rest, why I wouldn't want that peace, why I wouldn't want the promises of God to abide in presence in my life. Worship, whether it's alone or with others, gives me that rest. The advantage that worship with others has is what God talks about in [Hebrews 10](#). *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.* As we worship together, we have the opportunity to point each other to the only thing that gives rest, which is Jesus. We remind each other it's all about

Jesus as we speak our Confession together, as we rejoice in the Absolution together, as we sing our hymns together. We're saying something to each other about who Jesus is and what Jesus has done for us. I want to encourage my brothers and sisters in Christ. I want them to encourage me because at various times we are all hurting units. And we all need to be pointed back to who Jesus is, not to what we do, not to what we don't have to do, but to Jesus.

Worship doesn't save us. But worship builds our faith. And our faith is in Jesus, who has saved us. That brings us closer to Jesus and enables us to find peace and rest in His promises day after day after day.

I think one of the marks of a Christian is someone that starts to get it. They don't view this as something they are doing for God. They view it as a place that's like a hospital; that when I am beaten, bloodied and broken, God gives me rest for my soul. He does it by pointing me to Jesus. He doesn't do it just through the pastors. He does it through our brothers and sisters in Christ as we worship together, or before or after worship as they point me to Jesus and not to myself. This is the rest Christ has won for us. And this is why we want to keep building our faith, because we want our focus to always be on Him and worship provides us a wonderful opportunity to keep our eyes (and encourage each other to have their eyes) focused squarely on Jesus. Amen.

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