



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 4, 2021

Pastor James Enderle

6th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [2 Samuel 12:11-25](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 30

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [2 Timothy 1:8-14](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 5:21-24a, 35-43](#)

Worship Prepares Us for the Ultimate Test of Faith

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:

You maybe know this about our family, but we had a little addition about six weeks ago, little Elisha. Our family went from four to five. The parents are outnumbered now. Often when you get in that situation in today's world you go from being able to fit everyone into a little sedan, our four, to needing something a little bit bigger, like a minivan. So weeks and months before Elisha came, that was one of the things we had to do; some car shopping. If you've done a lot of car shopping, you know it's not always the most fun event to do; finding the right car, finding all the prices, and trying not to get ripped off. What you probably often have when you start looking for a car is a list of things that you really want or need. It may be a list of nonnegotiables. For us, we wanted a minivan. We wanted it around this sort of miles. For some reason, for me a nonnegotiable was that I wanted it to possibly hold eight passengers instead of seven. It just was on my list. You have your list of nonnegotiables.

Think of other things in your life where you have nonnegotiables. I was talking to a friend recently. This was a younger lady in her early 30's. She was talking about dating and wanting to get married, but she had her list of nonnegotiables. It's someone who needs to be Christian and wants to have kids. That's fair. You have your list of nonnegotiables when you're dating.

There are things in our life that are nonnegotiables. I think in some ways they define us. In other ways they are the things that we worship. We tend to worship what is nonnegotiable. What do I mean by that? Think about some of the things in your schedule that are nonnegotiable. Think about in the fall or in the winter, is a Packer game nonnegotiable for you? Are there people who would never miss a Packer game?

Again, these aren't bad things, but are they things that are nonnegotiable? Are there things in your schedule that you're not going to miss?

Why do we say they are nonnegotiable or that we tend to worship them? When it's nonnegotiable we're saying "This is the most important thing. I'm not going to miss it. Above anything else, this is the top priority." And this is what worship really is—to make something the most important thing in your life and to say "This has power, influence and is very important to me." Isn't that what we do in worship? In a lot of ways we worship what is nonnegotiable.

They also somewhat define us as well, the things that are nonnegotiable. If you went sailing two times a year, would that be something nonnegotiable and would you call yourself a sailor if you only did it twice a year? Or if you ran three times a year, not three times a week or four times a week, it wasn't something so nonnegotiable, would you call yourself a runner—probably not.

As Christians we have to see what is nonnegotiable. What are we worshipping in our life and what defines us? As we look at worship and who God is and what is nonnegotiable, we have to see what God makes nonnegotiable as well. That's really what is important when it comes to worship because it's not so much about us but about God.

In Paul's letter to Timothy, we are going to see three nonnegotiables that God gives us. The first one maybe is a little bit surprising but we see it talked about twice in this small section. In Verse 8, he says: ***So do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord or of me his prisoner. Rather, join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God.*** Then later in Verse 11: ***And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet this is no cause for shame...*** For Christians, suffering is a nonnegotiable. Why is that important for us? It's not something we really like or want to admit or want in our life. We don't want suffering. In fact, we want to get as far away from suffering as possible. Yes, suffering really is part of everyone's life, not just Christians, but the difference is that God tells us not to suffer as those who deserve punishment or those like a criminal, those who are suffering for the sins and the things that they deserve.

Instead, what does Paul focus on that in fact we suffer BECAUSE of the Gospel? We suffer because we're Christians, because we're sharing God's Word, and because we trust in Him. That might not be a direct persecution because of our Christian faith, but maybe it's that we trust in Him and the devil is attacking us and telling us, "Don't believe that. Don't do that." So we have suffering because of our faith in Christ. It's important to know this because our life is filled with difficulties.

I think it's kind of fascinating what the two other lessons for today were. They are both instances of losing a loved one. These are some of the most difficult times in people's

lives. It's suffering. It's hardship. These are the times that we need to know that this is not something unique to us. This is why we need to know of the other nonnegotiables, of who God is and His love for us.

When Paul writes to Timothy, he tells him: ***What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.*** In the older translation it says *keep in sound doctrine*. When we hear that, sound teaching/sound doctrine, what is our first thought when we think of those things? Often we think of all those difficult teachings or maybe the Ten Commandments and all the Laws and all the things that we need to do as Christians, how to be a good Christian; the teachings of the church. When we look at this section though, what does Paul focus on? In these short, few verses, how many times does he mention the word "gospel?" It's in there three times. He also says "grace" a few times. Not only does he say "gospel" a few times, in Verse 9 he really explains what the Gospel is. ***He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time.*** Notice his focus is not "teach them to do this and be this way" and all these things. What is his focus? What is the sound teaching and doctrine that he is showing Timothy? The sound doctrine and the hope is the Gospel, which is that nonnegotiable.

As Christians coming to worship, you need to hear the Gospel. The purpose to come here is so that you are filled up and forgiven, that we focus on Christ and what He has done for us. That's very important because the rest of the world is teaching us to worship something else. Here we come and we focus on what Christ has done for you. He has forgiven you. He has loved you. But the rest of the world is teaching this self-love and doing whatever feels right. "If it feels good, do it. Just be proud of who you are, what you are and bring it to the outside, whatever your heart's desires are." We need to know and see that in order to hear the Gospel we also have to come and confess our sins, which we do every day, but here in church we are reminded we are sinful. We have made mistakes. And we do that in order to hear the Gospel and to be filled up and forgiven.

If you come here on a Sunday and you don't hear those words of forgiveness and that Jesus died for you, then I might as well take off the robe and quit. You can tell me "Hey, what are you doing today? What happened? Where is the Gospel?" The Gospel is that nonnegotiable that you come for worship to hear about Christ and not about ourselves because we have to focus on Him and hear of that forgiveness and love. We make mistakes. There is a lot of suffering.

Then as we talked about those two other readings, there are times where we face such difficulties or sadness and we have to question and say "Why is this happening? Why would God allow this? Is God punishing me? Is God there?" That's what suffering leads to when we aren't in the Word, when we aren't in the Gospel. But even for Christians,

it's sometimes easy to doubt. So we need to return to His Word and be reminded that God's love is nonnegotiable. This is what He says *...keep as a pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus.* And earlier when it talks about him being revealed, it says: *...but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.* Jesus and His love for you, God and His love for you, it's a nonnegotiable. We saw that in the other readings.

When David was struggling and praying to God, he prayed that God would change His mind with his son, but he knew he was loved and forgiven. Even after what happened, the first thing he does is he goes and he worships. He knows about this newborn son's death and he doesn't question and say "God hates me. God hates this child." He says God loves him.

In the midst of the darkest times, we need to be reminded that God loves us. We are forgiven. But also there are times when we struggle to know how this fits in God's plan or have we made too many big mistakes? Can God still love me? God loves you. It's a nonnegotiable that we come for worship because we need to hear it and be reminded of it. We struggle with it. We rely on ourselves and the influences around us tell us that we have failed and made too many mistakes. Those sufferings and difficult times will come. So we are reminded that God loves us.

But be reminded to make worship nonnegotiable because in worship you hear of this. We hear that life isn't easy and we shouldn't expect it to be. We shouldn't expect the easy things, but we should know that we will face difficult times. And when those difficult times come, if worship is a nonnegotiable, if I am in the Word, if I am surrounded by Christian friends, what happens? They'll tell us that you are forgiven and that God loves you, as Paul does for Timothy. He says, "Don't be ashamed. This suffering that we're facing, don't be ashamed." When we're in that, when we are in those difficult times, this is exactly what we need.

The things in your life that you make nonnegotiables, you do so because you know that they are important. You grab your meals every day because you know it is important to eat. Maybe you go to a fish fry pretty often, maybe a couple times a month. It's time to get that food and to be with the people that you are friends with. What are the nonnegotiables in your life?

Our prayer is that you continue to make Christ and His Word a nonnegotiable, to be in worship, to know that He loves you and that you are forgiven and that in the midst of suffering you don't forget that God loves you and works all things for your good. Amen.

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