



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 11, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

7th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Ezekiel 2:1-3:4](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 143

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [2 Timothy 3:10-4:5](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 6:1-6](#)

Faith Overcomes Persecution

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:

We all like different things. One of the things I really like and enjoy is to have a cup of coffee in the morning. It just brings warmth to my heart. It encourages my day. I like coffee. If I don't get my coffee, I'm even more annoying than I usually am. But do you know anyone that really likes or enjoys being attacked, conflict, being yelled at, being told you're an idiot or a fool or backwards and superstitious and being patted on the head because you believe in some invisible guy in the sky? I know of one person that enjoys that kind of stuff. Of all the different people I've met, I know one person that really enjoys conflict like that and kind of enjoys being persecuted for their faith. I think that's kind of a dangerous thing because it could lead you to not being persecuted because you're standing up for Jesus but being persecuted because you're just being a jerk and hiding behind Him when you say you're standing up for Jesus.

The one thing you notice in here is when the Holy Spirit has Paul tell Timothy, *Get ready. You're going to be persecuted.* He's also having Paul tell us to *get ready. You're going to be persecuted.* But notice how he talks about patience. Notice how he talks about not responding in anger. *Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have but do so with gentleness and respect (1 Peter 3:15-16)* is what God always says. God wants us to know that persecution is going to come when we live our faith and we stand up and confess Jesus as the only way to heaven. It's going to cause problems at times. He lets us know this because He wants to remind us how important it is that we keep doing it. He tells us there are going to be people with itching ears that want to hear something other than the pure Gospel.

I experienced that growing up. We would go visit my dad's uncle often, Uncle Martin. Uncle Martin was Jewish by race but had become a Christian and was a member of one of our churches. He married my grandma's sister. He was always in church. He was a faithful churchgoer. But his mother was not only Jewish by race but Jewish by faith. Every time we would go to visit him, we'd talk about things for a while, but after a little while things would get heated between him and dad because Uncle Martin wanted to hear that his mom was in heaven. Dad would say "If she didn't believe in Jesus, she's not in heaven." Then it would start getting heated and they would go back and forth a little bit.

I can understand why Uncle Martin wanted to hear that his mother was in heaven, but I think deep down he knew that she wasn't. He eventually found a Lutheran pastor that told him his mother was in heaven because she was a good person. Even though she didn't believe that Jesus was the Savior, she was in heaven because she was good. He found a Lutheran pastor (not in our church body) to tell him that.

I would still go visit Uncle Martin all the time. Uncle Martin paid the way for one guy to go through our Seminary even after he left our church body. I think he knew what was right. He just wanted to hear something different. I understand the scratch that was in his ears.

I don't think any of us would want to stop and think about how *my mom is not in heaven*. But we need to be faithful to the Word and not just say what people want to hear. That's what God has called us to do. When we do that, know full well that at times you are going to be persecuted. You're going to be attacked.

I remember in Minnesota when I was doing premarital counseling. I learned a whole new vocabulary that I had never known before. We were talking about what we were going to be able to do and not do in the wedding. The groom, who wasn't our member, he called me things I had to go home and look up. I had no idea you could be that creative in using obscenities. Man, was he mad at me! That's okay. It's going to happen. My job isn't to get mad back at him (although my sinful nature sure wanted to). My job is to continue to say "I have to do what God says because He lived and died for me and I want to serve Him, not just make you happy." You have to learn to say that in love. It's not always easy and you and I are going to fail. Sometimes you and I are going to answer in kind and then we're going to have to go home and say "Lord, forgive me, a sinner." But just know it's going to happen. When you live your faith, there are going to be those that think you're out of touch with the times, that you're intolerant, that you're unloving, and that you're hateful. Just don't let them think that because at times you actually are. If you're going to disagree with someone, do it in love. If you're going to proclaim the truth of the Gospel, do it in love, not in anger. If you're going to correct and teach and admonish someone, do it in love. That's what God calls us to do.

Paul tells Timothy and he tells us that persecution is going to come. So what is the answer? ***...you know those from whom you learned it, and how from infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed...*** That means God gave the writers the thoughts, the words, the ideas to write. This wasn't Paul's idea. God gave them this idea. This is His/God's Word. Since it is inspired (God-breathed), it's going to have a power that goes beyond my words or your words. When we use Scripture, we have something that is so much beyond us that not only does it keep us in the faith as we are being attacked (which is why Paul points Timothy to it), it is the only power that we have to change other people's hearts. Our winsome arguments aren't going to change their hearts. Scripture changes hearts. So we need to speak it in a way so that it is heard.

Notice what he says to Timothy. *You are going to be attacked. Hang onto the Word. Use the Word to teach, rebuke and admonish, but do so with patience...* I don't know about you, but when I get angry, I'm not very patient. I think to me that kind of rules out anger in answering people. *With great patience and love, instruct, teach, rebuke, admonish,* and all these things God has called each and every Christian to do.

Notice he says ***do the work of an evangelist*** at the end in there. What is the work of an evangelist? The evangel is the good news about who Jesus is and what He did for us. So don't major in the minors. When you are talking with someone and they are going to attack what you believe and they want to attack something specific, like what you teach/believe about homosexuality or what the Bible says about this/that/something else, state the truth but always make sure you get back to talking about Jesus. Do the work of an evangelist. An evangelist shares the good news about Jesus.

Spiritual truths are spiritually understood. *A person without the Spirit is never going to understand them because they are spiritually understood* ([1 Corinthians 2:14](#)) is what God Himself told us. So the only way the Spirit is going to live in their hearts is through faith in Jesus Christ. It's the Gospel of Jesus Christ that creates that faith in their heart. So don't worry about being right and winning an argument. Worry about sharing Jesus. Do the work of an evangelist.

A lot of the people that we are going to talk to that get upset with us don't really understand the Gospel. On some level they really think Christianity is about doing the right thing or being good or keeping rules or appeasing an angry God. Christianity is about the truth that the wrath of God has already been appeased through the life and death of Jesus Christ. We have a God who loved us enough that He lived and died in our place to take away the guilt of our sins. Christianity is not about being perfect; it's about being forgiven and then trying to live in that love that God has shown to us as we love others even in the face of persecution.

You and I will fail. We will sometimes be quiet because we don't want to have that same discussion we've had with a family member. You and I will answer people in anger and not be patient with them and try to "help yell" them to be right. When we do any of those things, we sin. Just know that your God already took care of that sin. When you fail, say "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." And then know that His forgiveness surrounds you and that forgiveness will be the power that enables you to overcome persecution in the future by loving as Christ loved you. Because that's 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.