



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

July 25, 2021 (*preached on July 22, 2021*)

Pastor James Enderle

9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Numbers 27:12-23](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 23

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Hebrews 13:7-8, 17-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 6:30-34](#)

### **Worship is the Joyful Response 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:

I don't know if you've seen the sports news in Wisconsin recently but something pretty big happened this week. Even today (*Thursday, July 22, 2021*) there is a bit of a big celebration. We have a little picture of that.



The one on the right is the night of game six where they had about 17,000 people inside but they said outside of the Bucks' game, game six, they said there were about 65,000 people outside the stadium. People think after the victory maybe 100,000 went down. The other side there is the celebration and the parade from today where they say up to about 500,000 people were around celebrating the NBA championship of the Milwaukee Bucks. Regardless of whether you're a fan or not, it's kind of neat. It's kind of exciting.

I also think it's kind of an interesting view of what we do and why. We like to celebrate. We like to get behind victories and good stories. A lot of people, not just in Wisconsin and Milwaukee, are cheering for the Bucks and they're happy because people like the team. They like Giannis, this guy who came to America and was really skinny and didn't look to be much and didn't speak much English. Then he became this MVP and brought

a championship to this team that he really wanted to bring a championship to, to Milwaukee. A lot of people had joy. And you can see from the people gathering around that it was important.

Do you think the people there that are all gathering around are not happy? Are they there going "Uh no" and are cranky and not happy to be there? Not only are they there, the hundreds of thousands of people, but they are all excited and joyful. What causes that? What causes people to gather and to, in a sense similar to worship, to celebrate and to do so with such joy?

I think there is a good story there. People like to get behind them. But most of all, they are celebrating a victory. They are celebrating what happened. What about on game six if Giannis missed a few more free throws and they lost that game? All those 65,000 people, would they be happy? I don't think so. And what if the next game they missed a few more shots and things didn't go their way, there would be no celebration today. All this joy is because of the victory.

I think as Christians we worship and we have joy because of the faith we have in who God is and what He means for us. Most of all, we worship and we worship with joy because He has given us victory. We don't worship a dead God. We don't worship a dead Jesus. That's what some people in the world still think. That we believe in a myth. Or "Why would you worship this man who died on a cross?" That's what Muslim's say. "Your God died on a cross? That's crazy!" Why worship? Why celebrate that?

Our text explains that in Verse 20. ***"Now may the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep..."*** It's all about that victory. That's why we're here, because Christ is victorious. Christ defeated death. He defeated sin, the power of sin. That means that He has defeated sin and death for you. The sin in our life that we struggle with so much and the death that we know we all face and the death that we know loved ones have faced, but they're victorious now. So we worship and we come to church not to pout or to squabble or to fight with each other or to get our way, but we come to worship a God who has given us a victory. We come with joy. We live with joy because we live with that victory every day.

That's what is different about Christ. You know the last time that the Bucks won the championship? It was 50 years ago. How often does a team get to celebrate a victory? Not very often. And what happens when you get let down? There is anger and there is sadness and you think *maybe next year*. Those sports teams we follow, they don't always win. We get let down and we fail and they fail. We're not perfect. We worship a God who is victorious but He is also faithful. Giannis could have missed a few more free throws and there would have been no victory. He isn't perfect. We look at Christ and in here it says: ***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*** He is faithful.

In the verses before our text, in [Verses 5-6 of Hebrews 13](#), it also says: ***Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have, because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." So we say with confidence,***

***“The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?”***

We worship God because HE is faithful. We don't come here to worship and learn how to be the best self. Yeah, we want to improve and we want to be faithful to God, but we come to worship a God who has been faithful TO US. He has loved us. It says: ***Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.*** Where people have failed, where teams have failed, where we look at ourselves and we know probably the things that stay the most consistent are our failings, the things where we continually let other people down, we're not as faithful. We know our failures. But God ***is the same yesterday and today and forever,*** so we worship this faithful God who said, ***“Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” “The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid.”*** He is faithful.

He will always be faithful. We don't have to worry about the past or the future. He is always with you and He will never, ever let you down. That is so important because we can often feel let down. We can wonder; *how is this God being faithful to me?* But we see that His plans and His love for us, His great compassions are greater than what we can see. He is not forsaking us even when we question what has happened or we question how we could have failed again. He is faithful.

Another way that He is faithful is He equips us. He equips us with leaders and He equips us for worship. A lot of our text spoke all about those different leaders that God gives us, Moses and Joshua, and we saw Jesus, that perfect Shepherd. In our text He talks about the leaders that we have in the church and ways that we can worship. We come together in worship, but we don't just worship on one day, do we? A lot of people think that. Christians go to church on Sunday and that's our worship. But He equips us for acts of service. We know that we want to make our whole lives acts of worship so that they are a fragrant offering to God.

How can we do that? There are a few different ways. He goes through a few of them in Hebrews here. Remember and pray for your leaders. Why is that important? A group often is only as strong as their leaders. We don't want to say that, we don't want to say it depends on the leaders, but why is it that way? He talks about it. We imitate our leaders so we want to pray for our leaders, for the leadership team, for the pastors, for the teachers, for the secretary, for all the people that serve in different capacities of this church. Pray for your leaders. Pray for them to be faithful and to live their lives showing mercy and living as Christians; loving one another and serving one another.

We pray for them, but that's only a part of it. We follow and imitate our leaders, but we also want to live that out in our lives. We can worship God every day. He says He equips us ***with everything good for doing His will, and*** that He may ***work in us what is pleasing to Him.*** Know that as you live your life, as you go out, as you work, as you are with your family (maybe as a mother who serves or a grandmother who is taking care of grandkids), those are acts of service, acts of worship. At your work that may seem pretty monotonous, when you're faithful and show love and care and you're honest and give glory to God, those are acts of worship. We can serve and worship God in many ways. But we know that when we worship and come together, it is quite a blessing.

One thing I do want to emphasize is that as we come together, it is so important. As you pray for your leaders and pray for our church, when you see that big crowd of people in that picture, if you watched it all, you see the Bucks' players up on the front, how do you think they feel when they see that crowd of people? They are excited. They are filled with joy because of all the fans and everyone out there that is cheering them on and are excited. As a church, we're not saying we have to cheer on the pastors when we come to church, but isn't it exciting to see each other here at church, to encourage each other? Sometimes we don't realize how, as pastors, as those who are shepherds, that's what a lot of the passages talked about (Jesus as that Good Shepherd, in the Psalm, the Good Shepherd), how the pastors care. The leadership team cares for each and every one of the people of the flock. So it's not just that we want to see the people that are here. It's specific people. There are people that we care about and have compassion for and it kind of hurts sometimes when we know these people aren't in the pews, they aren't getting connected to God, and they aren't being fed; that they aren't in the Word and that they aren't growing. Not for our sake but for their sake.

As you encourage each other, as you look around and you see others who are being fed and after church, as you speak to each other maybe say, "How can I pray for you?" Pray for each other and encourage each other.

Yes, we can worship and serve God at home, in our work, in our daily lives, but it certainly is a blessing to come together and to grow and to know that here is where we really learn about our faithful God. As much as we pray and have confidence in our leaders, that's what it says in Verse 7, ***Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority***, we know that we're not perfect. It's not about us. It's not about how good we are. It's about our Great Shepherd. So we want people to be here. We'd love to see the pews filled and everyone here because this is where we hear about Christ's great love and mercy for you. That He is victorious. That He is faithful for you. That there is nothing we face that we have to fear.

So continue to pray. Pray for our leaders. Pray for our church. And continue to live your life in acts of worship and service; not for earning anything but because He is faithful. Do so with joy because you have the victory, the victory today, now and forever. Amen.

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