



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

August 8, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

11th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Exodus 16:2-20](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 145

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 11-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 6:24-35](#)

Faith Responds by Reordering Priorities

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:

One of the most interesting parts of having adult children is sometimes watching them make the same mistakes you made and wishing you could tell them "That's not a good choice," but then also understanding they are going to have to make their own choices because your mom and dad, they don't really know what they're talking about. Even if you don't have adult children, you probably have friends, others that you've watched make decisions and you know those decisions are probably going to lead to problems. But there's not much you can do about it.

I have a feeling that's one of the reasons why Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians. He had heard the reports of what was going on in the Corinthian congregation. There was division in the congregation. They weren't getting along. They were arguing about who was the better teacher. The one that taught them was better than the one that taught the others kind of sounds like 21st Century Americans arguing about who they voted for. "I voted for this person, so I'm better than you are because you voted for the other person." It was that kind of division that was setting in. There was also sexual immorality within the congregation that Paul said even the pagans could shake their head at. It sounds like 21st Century America when we can't even decide how many genders we have anymore. There were all kinds of struggles and troubles. There was a misunderstanding and a misuse of the means of grace in Corinth, as we are told.

Today you talk to people and I get the impression they don't think the means of grace are as important as their prayer life. When I ask people, "How is your walk with Jesus; are you staying close to Jesus?" they tell me they pray every day. Prayer is good and wonderful, but do you have a friend that does all the talking and do you love spending time with them? Don't you kind of like a dialogue where God talks to you and strengthens you through His Word or His Sacrament to build up your faith so you can face the challenges of the day? We have a misunderstanding of the importance of the means of grace in our society and in Christianity today just like they had a misunderstanding about the use of Communion in Corinth.

There are a lot of things in Corinth that remind me of Christianity today. So Paul writes them this letter. He deals with a lot of these things. But in the section right before I started reading to you, one of the things he was talking about is "Some of you Christians are so busy saying 'This is my right. I don't care if it hurts anyone else,' you're hurting your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ." He's telling them to knock it off! That whole [1 Corinthians 13](#) about love (love is patient, love is kind), that's all in the context of [Chapter 12](#), which is congregational life; not marriage but congregational life. He's addressing this throughout the whole letter.

They were eating food sacrificed to idols and they knew they were free to do so, but there were some that weren't and they were trampling all over them and it was leading them into doing things that were for them at that time sin. They didn't take the time to teach. They just said "Look at me and be more like me." In the exercise of their "rights," they were causing people to have a problem in their walk with Jesus.

So he writes to them and says, ***"For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our forefathers, whether Jew or Gentile (our forefathers as God's chosen people), were the children of Israel.*** And our children of Israel ate the spiritual food and drank from the spiritual rock in the wilderness." They headed to the Promised Land after the plagues, after walking through the Red Sea on dry ground with walls of water on each side, and then they got to Mount Sinai. They put up golden calves. They saw the power of God. They saw people destroyed because they disobeyed God. They got to the Promised Land and they said "We're grasshoppers. They're giants. God couldn't possibly give us the land." So they then had to wander 40 years in the wilderness. In that 40 years of wandering in the wilderness, God gave them water from a rock. Spiritually, He performed a miracle for them. He gave them spiritual food of manna. That's literally the Hebrew word, manna. "What is it?" they said when they saw it, as we heard about in our first lesson.

How did the Israelites react after God had delivered them with all these powerful things? As we heard, they reacted by complaining there weren't enough Kwik Trips in the wilderness and "We don't have enough food to eat." They whined and they complained and they grumbled and they said "Aaron, it's your fault!" Moses and Aaron told them

"No, you're really complaining against God! Look at all He has done for you! Can't you see that if He has done this for you, He'll take care of you?!" Instead of looking at the spiritual blessings that were in front of them, they looked at what they wanted, their desires and what they could see, the physical things. When those became a priority, it led to complaining against God. He says their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

Of the 600,000 people or so that left Egypt, TWO went into the Promised Land; Caleb and Joshua. They were the ones that got to go in. Not even Moses got to go in. The rest, their bodies were scattered in the wilderness because they didn't listen to God. They didn't put their focus on God and make HIS priorities their priorities.

Now, these people that were scattered into the wilderness, do you think some of them will be in heaven with us? I would guess so. I would guess some believed in the promise of the Savior to come. I would guess some of them won't be because they didn't believe and the changing of their priorities led them to lose their faith in the promises God had pointed them to.

Look at what they missed out on. The land of Canaan God always described as the land flowing with milk and honey. They had manna and quail. Why? It was because they didn't listen to God. They didn't put His priorities first. They missed out on the blessings God had for them and they died in the wilderness. They might well be in heaven with us, but they certainly missed out on blessings that God had for them because they made their priorities more important than God's priorities. That's what Paul is telling the people in Corinth and that is what the Holy Spirit is telling us today.

As God's people, we want to make His priorities our priorities. Following His priorities does not save us. Going to church does not save us. Obeying the Ten Commandments does not save us. But when you make God's priorities your priorities and you live in response to His blessings as a response of faith. When you put His priorities first, God has blessings in store for you. You are saved by Jesus alone. By His life and His death in your place, that's the only thing that will ever save you. But that incredible, glorious grace of God, God's plan is that it changes us so that we put His priorities first. Then we'll be blessed and we'll be a blessing to others, blessings to our community, and blessings to our family. But when we go our own way, it ends up causing difficulty for ourselves and for others.

I just don't get how often I talk to people and they say "I don't need to go to church to be a Christian." I never said you need to. I just said "This is how you stay close to Jesus, so He can build your faith and bless you." We seem to think if it doesn't save us, I'm not doing it. That's kind of foolish, isn't it? If I drive home today, I can drive home and stay on the road, pull into my garage, walk in and not even get wet. I could probably survive if I'd run my car flat into a tree and the airbag goes off, but I wouldn't advise that! That isn't a good plan, is it? Is it really a great plan to say "God, this is what you want me to

do, but guess what God? I know you made the earth and the heavens, but I know better. Let me tell you what I should be doing, God." Are we really that arrogant? The answer is "Yes!" Of course we're that arrogant. We're sinners! There isn't a single one of us in here that hasn't made our priorities more important than God's priorities at one time or another, in one situation or another, probably already today. This is who we are. We sin.

That's why God, through Paul, points us today to when you're tempted, God is faithful and He'll provide a way out. When we look to Him, He'll provide a way out. But even when we don't look to Him and we do sin, He has already provided that way out. He is desperate to have us be blessed. He tells us, "Living according to my will, it will be a blessing to you, but I know you aren't going to do it so here is what I'm going to do. The night I am going to be betrayed, I am going to take my time before I hang on a cross and I'm going to give you the gift of the Lord's Supper so that you know just how desperately I love you. Even when you screw up, I don't stop loving you. Here's my body. Here's my blood that is going to be given on that cross tomorrow afternoon for you. That's how much I love you." He gives that to us. He assures us of His love even when we screw up just like they did. When we understand the depth of that love of our God, when we see this incredible love that is so persistent, so unending, and so personal for we who have made our priorities more important than God's, we rejoice in our forgiveness and we say "Lord, help me to serve you. Help me to strive against my flesh and blood like we sang in the first hymn. Help me to look to you for all that I need in life, and not just to myself and my efforts. Help me to trust you. Help me to put your promises and your priorities ahead of my own." And by the grace of God, He helps us do just that. Amen.

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