



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

August 29, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

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

First Lesson: [Exodus 7:8-13](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 71

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Hebrews 11:24-28](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 6:60-69](#)

### **Faith Responds by Continuing to Cling to God's Word**

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:

When I was growing up back in Hemlock, Michigan, my little sister loved cats. We always had a cat in the house. I got a dog for a little while, not long, but we always had cats. I got kind of used to cats. In fact, even when I was a vicar in Juneau, Wisconsin I had a cat in my apartment. It was a really cool cat named Freddy, after Freddy Krueger. The cat was a lot of fun.

Right now I have a cat called Eli, named after Eli Manning because it showed up at the Super Bowl party the first time the Giants won the Super Bowl. It's probably the best cat I've ever had. It's really laid back, so it's unlike anyone else in our house. It's got an innate sense of time. I've looked, it doesn't have a watch on a single one of its paws and yet every morning when I open the bedroom door at about 6:30 a.m., the cat is sitting right there waiting for me. Every night when I come home after meetings or things like that, the cat is sitting at the top of the steps waiting for me and demanding I go feed it even if I fed it before I left. The psalmist says "We are fearfully and wonderfully made," but you look at things like that and you say, "All of God's creations are fearfully and wonderfully made" the way He has designed them.

A cat has that innate sense of time, but there are certain things I'm not going to ask that cat to do. If I need an oil change, I'm not going to put a wrench in Eli's hands and say "Get at 'er. Here's the oil filter." If you see me out there with a car up on a ramp and me telling the cat to do it, you're going to think I've had some kind of break, aren't you?

And you're going to try to get me help because it's just ridiculous to think the cat is going to do that. I'll grant you that.

Have you ever stopped and thought how ridiculous it is to think that we know better than God when it comes to some of the things that happen in our lives? Yet we still, because we are sinners, have all these questions coming into our heads at times. *God, why did you let this happen? Or God, why are you asking me to do that? God, why are you having me go through this?* To live by faith and not by sight is an incredible challenge for us as Christians. Even though the very nature of a Christian is faith that Jesus lived and died in our place, it's still hard to trust in God and lean not on your understanding, isn't it?

Today we are reminded that faith responds by trusting God, even when it seems unreasonable, even when sight is saying something else, and even when people all around us are saying "God makes no sense. I want nothing to do with Him." As Christians, the response of faith is that we continue to trust in God at those times.

That's what we see in Moses from what I read to you. We saw it in the First Lesson. If someone tells me to throw a stick down and it's going to turn into a snake, my first thought is, *do I really want a snake that close to me?* But Moses and Aaron did what seemed unreasonable and God worked through them in all the plagues. Look at what it says there about Moses. By faith he was willing to be identified as a child of God, and that meant leaving behind the treasure of Egypt, the pleasures of sin for a time. By reason or by sight, that would make no sense. *I'm going to go live as a slave. I'm going to live in the household of one of the most powerful men on earth.* Who in their right mind would choose, *yes, a slave, that wins?* Is that reasonable? Not at all! But we're told it was by faith that Moses did that because he saw the One who was invisible.

Remember Moses, after he left and then came back and led the children of Israel out, one of the things he said to them is "Remember, pay attention when the Great Prophet comes. Make sure you listen to Him." That's what he said. The Great Prophet is Jesus. Jesus Himself said "You search what Moses wrote. He was writing about me. He was talking about me." So when it says **for the sake of Christ**, that's what Moses did. He looked ahead to the promised Messiah to come. He didn't know all the details that you and I know, but it was his faith that God would keep the promise given to Abraham; that all nations on earth would be blessed through a descendant of Abraham, that would come from the children of Israel, that would come from all the things that the prophets would point out. He trusted that.

So by faith he set aside earthly pleasure for the sake of serving God. Humanly speaking, it looked ridiculous. By faith he left Egypt. It says **not fearing** Pharaoh even though Pharaoh was trying to kill him, so it tells us it wasn't that he did it because of that. He

did it as a matter of faith in God and going to serve God in another place so that God eventually brought him back to lead them out of Egypt.

***By faith he kept the Passover and the application of blood...*** After all the plagues, the last one was the killing of the first born. God came and told them "Take a year-old lamb without blemish or defect, slaughter it and make sure you eat all of the meat that night and leave none until morning. Take some of the blood of this spotless lamb, without blemish or defect, and put it on your doorpost and then the Angel of Death will pass over you." We know the story. We know what happened. But think about that if you're on the other side of it, before it happens. Does any of that make any sense? "ALL of the first born, people and animals, in Egypt are going to be killed by the Destroyer. You put some blood on your doorpost and it won't happen to you." That's an incredible matter of faith and yet we see Moses do it and instruct the Israelites to do it because his eyes were on God and His promises. He believed those promises and he reacted according to faith, not according to sight. That's what our God calls us to do.

Think about it in your own life. I would think for each of us here this morning we are facing different things that are opportunities to serve God but they maybe seem unreasonable; trusting that God is going to work good through something maybe bad that we are going through, something uncertain that we are going through. Trusting Him it's all going to be okay. Sometimes our reason leads us NOT to do the things that God has called us to do.

I'll give you an example. This last week I taught the Fourth Commandment in **New Life in Christ**. We looked at the passage where it says "Parents, don't exasperate your children." That's in one passage and another one it says "Parents, do not embitter your children." How do parents do that? I think back when my kids were little and I'd tell them to do something and they'd ask "Why?" God has told me I'm supposed to bring up my children in the training and instruction of the Lord. There is a wonderful opportunity to teach, "Because God has given to you me as a blessing and I'm telling you to do this and this will help our family in this way, that way, or the other way." I could have taken the time and done all of that, but instead, what did I say... anybody? I said, "Because I said so!" It's quicker. It's easier. And it better get them moving or else they were going to get into trouble, right? Reason says, "It's going to get it done a lot quicker." Faith would say, "God has given you an opportunity to do what He has called you to do as a parent. Why don't you just stop being lazy and do it?!" Because reason tells me it's a lot easier to say, "Because I said so!"

We might not think of that as a big matter of faith or reason, but you see how it shows up in our daily life? We don't always focus our eyes on God and live in response to him. So often in many, many details of our daily life we live by sight instead of by faith.

I'll give you another example, later in life. I often go and visit people now who can't do what they used to do. They've lost the strength to do the work they had done all their life. They can't even get in a car and drive because that's just not save anymore. Now they look around and say to me "Pastor, why does God still have me here? I can't do anything. What good am I?" I've had those discussions with numerous people in our congregation over the years. The answer I almost always give them is this. "When you were young, your children relied on you to take care of them and you served God by taking care of them. They served God by letting you take care of them. Now instead of doing and serving God by your actions, you do and serve God by letting others show Christian love to you." That is a valid purpose for any Christian, to be an object of Christian love from someone else. It isn't always just us doing. Sometimes it's us receiving these blessings from the Lord by others showing Christian love to us and us having the humility to let them because sometimes sinful pride makes it hard for us to let them, because we can focus on what we see. "I want to be able to do. I should be able to do. I can't. I need your help but I don't want it because I'm stubborn." Then we walk by sight and not by faith.

I would guess there are all kinds of examples in your own lives. We usually think about it more in the bigger things; when we lose a loved one, when we go through a change in life. *Is God still going to be there if I move away to college?* Things like that. *If I lose a job, am I ever going to find another one? How am I going to do this? What is going to happen?* We think about walking by faith not by sight at those times and it's important we do that. It's hard to do it at those times. But as Christians, we walk by faith all the time when we cling to God's wisdom all the time. And one of the things we do as we cling to God's wisdom is we are going to see how often we don't, how often we go by our wisdom instead of God's. How often we think we know better than God. How often we think we are a cat that can change motor oil. We're not. We're sinful human beings and one thing that you can be certain that sinners will do is sin. You and I are going to sin against God by walking by sight, not by faith. We're going to sin against God by going at times with the crowd. We're going to sin against God at times by following what is reasonable instead of what God has said. Sometimes it's because we are such lazy Christians we don't even know what God has said.

When you see that from God's wisdom, you see yourself for what you are. Make sure you keep looking at God's wisdom because it will tell you of His unfailing love for you in Christ Jesus.

Notice in this hero of the hall of fame of faith when it talks about Moses, there are a whole bunch of other examples in Hebrews 11, but they all talk about by faith. Then here we heard how his eyes were focused on Christ. When you look at Christ, what do you see? You do not see a God that wants to punish you for your shortcomings. You see a God that punished Himself FOR your shortcomings, a God who left heaven, who lived perfectly because you and I can't, and then who took all of our sins and threw

them in a backpack on His back, on the cross, and took all the punishment for all of it. This is the God who loves you!

So when you see that even though you fail Him, He still loves you and He forgives you because Christ did it ALL, then the Spirit works in your heart this trust that "Whatever He says, I'm going to believe it. I might struggle at times, but Lord, forgive my unbelief and help me to believe." This is what we grow into as Christians and it comes through Word and Sacrament, Word and Sacrament, Word and Sacrament. There is no other way to grow (that God has told us of) except by the means of grace. The more time we spend with them, the more we will be connected to that wisdom. And the more the Spirit will shape our hearts so that we simply say, "I trust you Lord, because I know you love me." Amen.

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