



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

September 26, 2021

Pastor James Enderle

18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; Welcome Home Sunday

First Lesson: [Numbers 12:1-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 31

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [James 3:13-18](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 9:30-37](#)

### **Grace Leads Us to Put Other Family Members First**

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:

When we host an event like "Welcome Home" and you think about going home, one of the thoughts for most people is an idea of feeling welcome, "Welcome Home," and to be at peace and to be comfortable. That's what we really want in the world, to find peace and to be comfortable, to be at home. In recent months and in the past years, it's been hard to find peace and to be comfortable, hasn't it? We're pretty divided in our world. It seems that with some issues there is no middle ground. People over here and people over there and there seems to be no peace. It's hard to be comfortable. It's hard to feel at home and to be at peace with people.

When you think about being welcomed home, for some people the idea of going home and spending time with family is something different. For many, it is very welcome. It's a great feeling. But for others, the idea of a family reunion, where you see that cousin or that aunt or uncle, is difficult. Maybe it's even closer, a brother or a sister, a mother or a father, or a son or daughter that you haven't seen in years and those ideas of home are a little bit different than what other people imagine.

What about church? For many, church is very welcoming and you feel at home here. But for others, the idea of stepping into the doors of a church terrifies them. They don't feel welcomed or (talking to some people recently) for reasons of their own, they say "I can't go in there. I'm not welcome there." Is that true? Why is that? Why do people sometimes not feel welcomed at church? We'll talk about that later.

I find it interesting where everyone might feel very comfortable. I think of the older TV show (which I know the younger generation doesn't really know anymore) Cheers. You walk into the bar and everyone knows your name. There are people there you know and

it's comfortable. You feel welcomed. Why is that? There are a lot of people who might feel so much more comfortable to walk in there where it feels like there is no judgment or it's just comfortable. But is that Godly wisdom? Is that really true? Is that the place where you are the most welcomed?

When we look at the letter that James writes, he speaks to us a little bit about Godly wisdom and earthly wisdom. He is writing to Christians who knew the Gospel but are struggling on how to live that out; how to be Christians in this world. They are struggling with the wisdom of this world and Godly wisdom that comes from the Bible. So he asks this question to begin. He says, ***"Who is wise and understanding among you?"*** Do you want to raise your hand right now and say "Hey, that's me"? It's easy for us to think *I got this figured out*, but I think the point of him saying that (who is wise and understanding) is that he's getting them and us to rethink a little bit and say "Where is your wisdom coming from?" What are you relying on to see how you look at the world and to look at others? He is going to lay out a couple different wisdoms here and what it means for us as we interact with others. He says, ***"Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."*** This is the good wisdom, but we'll get to that in a bit.

First we're going to get to the other wisdom. He says, ***"But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such 'wisdom' does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice."*** He talks about this second wisdom that he calls ***earthly, unspiritual, and demonic***. How does he describe it? He says it brings out ***bitter envy and selfish ambition***. Earthly wisdom produces envy and pride in our lives. How does that happen? How do we see that in our life? I think of envy when we turn on the TV or whatever you are streaming and the commercials are always trying to get you to not be satisfied with what you have. You need a new car. Your car is not new enough. You need to get this car that has all the bells and whistles and is electronic or whatever. Then someone else gets it and you're envious of it. We're always kind of working in our hearts that we're not content and we want what someone else has. Social media is horrible with that too. People post the best things in their life and we think *Oh, my life isn't good. Look at their life! Why isn't my life like theirs?* We're envious. Or, it's the other way; that we're told to show the best of ourselves and to really try to get ahead of everyone else because that's the only way to do it. I have to fight off everyone else so I have to be prideful and put others down. Notice how much competition there is in this. I'm either envious of others or I'm prideful and putting others down. But where is the peace in that? Where is the peace in that with others? Where is the peace for myself?

Earthly wisdom gives us no peace. There is never enough. There is more and more to be accomplished and more and more to feel fulfilled. We have to follow our own hearts

and do what we feel is best. Where does that get us? We see where earthly wisdom leads us. It says, ***“For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice.”*** I think it’s easy to see in our world. It’s not just now but in the history of our world. That’s what it is, right? Disorder; we can’t find peace in this world because it’s constantly in disorder.

So where do we look to? What hope do we have? It says ***“But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.”*** How does that sound? It sounds pretty good, right? When you compare that to your life and how you live, how does that sound? Sincere, impartial, full of mercy, peace-loving, considerate; notice earlier it says ***“Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.”*** From Godly wisdom; Godly wisdom produces humility. Humility because we see that we don’t live up to this standard of what God says Godly living is. This is God. This is how God loves us most of all. We see that we have fallen short so it produces humility in us because we are no longer in competition with one another. We’ve all fallen short. We know that I can do nothing to work out my salvation. Those sins that I continue to commit (the things I know I do not want to do but keep on doing), those family members that I want to keep promises to and help and show love to, we keep falling short. We see that Godly wisdom truly produces humility in us because it shows us our sinful nature. It shows us the sinful nature of others and that we’re all equal. We shouldn’t be surprised when others sin and make mistakes because that’s who we are.

So we don’t get envious or prideful when others make mistakes or feel like a failure when we make mistakes because we know of God’s love. We look at God’s wisdom. God is ***pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.*** God is impartial. It doesn’t matter. You’re loved and forgiven. Whatever is your past, whatever thing you’re struggling with right now, you’re forgiven and loved. That’s the message that we want to share every day with everyone. No one should have the feeling that they don’t belong here, that they’re not welcome because every one of us is in the same situation. We are in need of a true and perfect loving God that forgives us, that gives us true peace.

What does that accomplish when we have peace? Notice it says, ***“Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.”*** When you look at the original words, it’s almost better to flip it around a little bit. There is a new translation that translates it this way. It says, ***“And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who practice peace.”*** ([James 3:18](#), ESV.) This isn’t a huge difference but the way that the NIV has it focuses more on the Peacemakers, like they are the ones who are doing the work. I like where it says, ***“And the harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who practice peace.”*** We’re not perfect in this but we practice peace because we have been given peace. The focus is not on us and that we’re so good at doing that all the time,

but there is a harvest of righteousness. When we are focusing on Jesus (the most important thing), then we can be at peace. Even if we disagree, even within the walls of this church or at school or in the community, we could be on different sides, but we can keep Christ in the middle and forgive and be at peace and put others first and make ourselves the servant of all.

Why is that important? We have to be able to give others peace because we've been given peace. If I don't give others peace, then am I at peace? If I don't know the love and forgiveness and peace of God, am I able to give others that true peace and hope and forgiveness that they need? We already said this world is struggling. This world is so divided and hurting. What does it need? It needs peace. But if I'm not at peace, if I don't know Jesus and His love and forgiveness, then it's really hard for me to give others peace.

You see that in your home or at work when you're struggling with that sin that you have done and you don't want to tell your spouse, it's very easy to get upset and blow up and take it out on others. But when I am at peace, when I know of my forgiveness and my love from Christ, it enables me to love and forgive others in a way that the world cannot do. It's a little different because, as we talked about when people walk into the bar they are welcomed, they are accepted, this is the idea of the world, earthly wisdom because everyone is accepted. But are they really? Is that the best type of love and peace?

Think about a parent, when you love your children you correct them and teach them what is right and good. That's real love and real help. So as Christians, we don't just ignore sin but we show that Christ has died for that sin. That sin is serious but it's forgiven. We love and forgive and bring peace to everyone, but we also share God's Word and His love. Just being accepted at a place might feel good for a short time, but it's not an eternal peace. The harvest of righteousness, the peace that God gives us, it's a peace that passes our understanding because it's an eternal peace.

Peace in this world is hard to find. Peace in our hearts is hard to find. Christ gives us the peace for today, but also for forever. So as you look and see how Jesus has suffered and died for you and forgiven you, remember that peace. Know that peace that is for you forever and give that peace to others so others may know of Christ and His love for eternity. Amen.

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