



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 10, 2021

Pastor James Enderle

20th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Genesis 2:18-24](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 139b

Second Lesson: [Ephesians 5:21-6:4](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 10:2-16](#)

God's Grace Leads Us to Honor Him in Family Life

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:

If I were to ask you who the most important person in your life was, what might you say? The truth is that throughout time and throughout your life that has probably changed. As a child, you might say mom or dad, and maybe that changes from day to day. I know sometimes the kids really want mom. Sometimes they really want dad. Right now the most important person in my kids' life is Mickey Mouse. They found Mickey Mouse's Clubhouse and that's all they want, Mickey Mouse. As you grow up, other people maybe become the most important, maybe a girlfriend or boyfriend and then maybe a spouse. As your family grows, who might you say is sometimes more important, maybe a child? It's easy to see that sometimes those people become really, really important. A child that you've raised and you love and you care for might be the top of your heart at that time.

Do you know what the correct answer for that really is? This is difficult for all of us because He's not here in front of us all the time, but who should be the most important person in our life? It should be God. Why is that? Why should we put God first? This is what we are going to look at in our text; that grace leads us to put God first so that we put our family first. Why is that?

Let's look a little bit at our text. It says: ***Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" "What did Moses command you?" he replied. They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied.*** Notice here Jesus is on His way to Jerusalem for the last time and He is confronted by the Pharisees and they ask Him this question. "What do you think about this question? Is it right to get a divorce? ***Is it lawful for a***

man to divorce his wife?" Their reason for asking this isn't like normal for the Pharisees. They are trying to trap Jesus. Notice what He said when He asked "What did Moses say?" He said "Moses said you can," so if He says you can't get a divorce, then He's going against the Law of Moses (who wrote the first five books of the Bible), so that would be a problem. If He says you can get a divorce and it's permissible all the time, that's kind of against God's Word, too, so they tried to trap Him. But instead of that, He asks them, "What did Moses say?" He puts it back to them and they say that it was permissible for a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away.

But then Jesus explains why this happened. ***"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law,"*** Jesus said. They have to see first that God wants us to put Him first so that we put our family first because otherwise we have some issues. When we put God first, we can serve Him and listen to His Word and we don't put ourselves first. The other problem is when you listed all those different people that are important in your life, what happens? Can you put all those different people first in your life? Can you put your parents first and your kids first and your spouse first? No. So you're going to have conflict.

I have a little example here. I shared this at our parenting study the other week. These are two professional soccer players who are married. I was following them because I grew up in Kansas City and one of the players plays in Kansas City. They got married and had kids and then just recently they wrote this:

"I have always been a transparent person (this is from one of the parents). With that, I would like to share that Dom and I are ending our marriage. My children have always been and always will be my first priority. I ask that you respect my family's privacy during this time."

And then the other one says:

"Being Cassius' and Roux's father is the single greatest joy that I've experienced in this life. As Sydney and I work through this difficult chapter in our lives, the growth and well-being of our children will remain the highest priority. We greatly appreciate your continued support and respect of our family's privacy."

Did you notice what they said is most important? They say that their kids are. They are making their kids the most important thing. But what is one of the problems? They are ending their marriage. They are divorcing. Is that really what is best for their kids? Maybe some of the problem was that they were putting their kids first instead of putting their marriage first.

I know marriage is a very difficult subject. Whenever we look at marriage, we know that sin is involved. Yes, there are times when one person is wronged and they are justified in seeking a divorce. But sin is always involved, no matter what. Often people have good intentions. They are putting their kids first, but I think there are also some other issues. When we don't put our spouse up there as well and we haven't put God first (what God says is to love and respect our husband/wife/spouse), it takes maintenance.

Think about your car. Have you ever heard of anyone who didn't change the oil in their car for a long time? Maybe you heard stories or maybe you know someone who did that. They drive and then what happens is their engine explodes. So what do you need to do? You need to do regular maintenance so you don't have the car explode.

It's what we need in our marriage and our family. Putting our spouse first is also putting our kids first. Doing all these things but putting God first as well.

One of the biggest issues is what it talks about here. When Jesus asked, ***"What did Moses command you?"*** they said, ***"Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away."*** Jesus responds, ***"It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law."*** The biggest problem is that our hearts and happiness are deceitful. He says why He allowed divorce is because our hearts are hard. Jesus goes on to point to Genesis (which we read) and talked about how marriage was given when things were perfect. Marriage is good and God doesn't want them separated but what happens? Our hearts are hard and we're stubborn and instead of putting others first, we put ourselves first. Our hearts are deceitful and hard. What does that mean?

It's been said that marriage is so hard because every day and almost every minute you have the opportunity and the time to consider putting someone else first. Think about that in your marriage. All the time is spent on making decisions or living your life and it's always deciding between what you want and your wife wants, and then you add your kids in, so it's always opportunities to serve someone else. What do we do most often? It's so easy to serve ourselves. Most of all our hearts are hard, they're deceitful, and then the world and our heart say "You should be happy." Happiness is this thought that people say and it leads them to make decisions that are pretty hurtful and pretty hard. Why is happiness deceitful? It's really fleeting. You might be in this situation and you might say, "I'm not happy." Then you leave that situation and you maybe find that didn't fix it either. Maybe some of the issues are things that you need to work on too. The sin and issues, not that it's just you, but there are issues that you have to work on as well. If we leave that, it's not always "Oh, there is where happiness is." Happiness is this moving goal post. We think we have it and then it's gone.

The truth is does God promise that this life will always be happy? Pastor Ott says it this way often in marriage sermons: you're promising to love, to be married, as long as you live, not as long as you love. Why is that? Our ideas of love and happiness are kind of

messed up with what the world thinks love is. Love is really self-sacrifice. That is shown by what Jesus has done.

In that Ephesians Lesson it speaks of marriage as that picture of what Christ has done for us. He loves us and serves us. Love is not what joy and happiness can I get from this person. It is how can I love and serve. You see that with your children. You see that with your family. You know that when you do that, that happiness really isn't fleeting and it means so much more.

I'll use this one example. Our kids have been sick for a little while. Don't worry, we got them tested for Covid and they are negative, which was really good news. We have three kids under the age of 5, all not sleeping well for the last week. My wife is exhausted, and she's amazing. Yesterday morning all of them were able to get up and I was able to get them up (at 6:00 in the morning) and my wife was able to sleep and she slept until noon. During that time I was thinking, *you know what would be awesome?* I know she was tired the other days so I folded the rest of the laundry and had the kids help clean up and had the kitchen cleaned up so that after being exhausted and finally being able to sleep, she could come down and see things that she probably thought she would have to get done were done. I was able to serve her in a way that she probably didn't expect. I'm not saying this to say how good I am. That's a rarity for me to do all that, especially fold laundry. You can ask her.

You know that as you serve and help others, especially in your marriage, what that means and for kids to actually ask your parents, to serve your parents, to help them out; that joy and that happiness is greater than when you are seeking them to serve you or to get your way. Most of all though, it's nice to serve, it's nice to help, but there is one more, more important thing that we can do for our family. Not just serve and love them.

Do you see at the end of the text what happens? It says: ***People were bringing little children to Jesus for him to place his hands on them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. Truly I tell you, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." And he took the children in his arms, placed his hands on them and blessed them.*** More than serving our spouse or our children, the more important thing that we can do is to bring them to Jesus. We need to bring our family to Jesus. Not just put our children up there, but bring your family to Jesus. Maybe it's your spouse. Maybe it's your kids. Maybe it's a parent. More than serving and loving them, which is very important and maybe is necessary before you can share Jesus with them, but share Jesus with them. That will mean eternal life for them. Share Jesus with them because that means forgiveness. Forgiveness brings eternal life. We need that forgiveness in this life. For those of you who struggle in family, this is exactly

what you need. This doesn't mean just your immediate family. This can also mean your family as the Christian Church. I know some of you maybe don't have a family, but that means you can bring others to Jesus as well.

We have this huge Christian family that is always able to share that love with others, but if I myself am not going and putting God first, can I bring others to Jesus? Can I bring them that forgiveness and hope if I am not close to Jesus? Maybe, but I think it's pretty hard. When we look at bringing our children to Jesus, whose job is that? Easy answer: clearly we know it's the parents, but is that how we live our life? Is that what we do more often? Sometimes it's very easy to say "Okay, here church or school. Pastor, you take care of this." It's easy for us to do. But if we, in your home, in your life, if you are putting Jesus first, that's going to mean so much more than what a pastor or teacher says at school. The statistics of parents, of mother and father coming to church together and being in God's Word of kids remaining in the church, it will blow your mind. If you want your kids to be close to Jesus, you need to be close to Jesus, in His Word, growing and most of all, seeing His love and forgiveness. Know that you are forgiven for the times that you haven't put others first.

Marriage and family is hard. You go through all the different things of life and all the troubles and the surprises and the sins and the mistakes and it's often easy to forgive those who aren't close to you. Those people who did that thing and I don't see them very often but those people close to you, sometimes it's hard to forgive because they're around you and you see them and you see their mistakes over and over again. But if you are close to Jesus and you know that you have sinned and fallen short, you can love and forgive and give Jesus to your family, to your spouse, to your kids, to your parents, to those people who need it most.

Life isn't easy. Marriage isn't easy. God never promises it is going to be easy. It is hard. But it's an amazing blessing. Most of all, we get the blessing to bring Jesus to those who are closest to us. When we do that, we know that they have hope in this life and in life eternal. Amen.

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