



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 24, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [2 Chronicles 26:16-23](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 22

Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 9:7-12, 19-23](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 10:35-45](#)

God's Grace Leads Us to Selfless Service

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:

Which do you prefer? Being waited on or waiting on other people? Being served or serving others? I suppose there are times when we like to serve other people or wait on other people. When I go out to South Dakota and have coffee with my mother-in-law, when I grab my cup and go put it in the sink she yells at me every time. "Oh leave it. I can do it," because she just likes waiting on everyone and making sure we're all taken care of. There are times we might enjoy serving in areas like that, but I think there is some service that at times in our life you have to end up doing that we don't really enjoy, so we really choose not to.

Have you ever been in line at a service department at some store and someone in front of you is returning something and they are getting downright irate with the person they are talking to and going on and on and on about how terrible the product was? It doesn't matter that they wore it seven times, they still need to return it and it's that person's fault that they bought the wrong thing. I've sat and listened to some of this and I find it fascinating. I've had friends that did customer service on the telephone, which I think has to be even more frightening because the anonymity of a telephone leads people to use words that used to get their mouths washed out with soap for a while. Now they say them all the time because we have that courage that comes with anonymity. Talk to some of your friends that work in customer service. I bet they can tell you some of these stories. I think some of them are sitting here this morning.

In those areas, I'd much rather be served than to serve because service sometimes comes at a price. It's the price of some teeth marks on your backside.

We all want to be acknowledged. We all want to be thanked. But if I only serve to get acknowledged and thanked, I'm kind of missing the boat. Did you notice what Jesus said when He was talking to the Twelve after He gathered them all together? He didn't say "you guys shouldn't do this." He said "**Not so with you.**" What He is telling them is, if you are going to be inside the circle of Christ, if you are a believer that Jesus lived and died to take away your sins, faith changes you and this grace that led Jesus to take away the guilt of all your sins changes you. God's plan is that we serve as He served us; that we serve selflessly, without looking for something in return. So today we'll see how this focus on Jesus has the power to change us so that our service becomes less selfish and more selfless, like Christ.

If you were here on the 18th Sunday after Pentecost, this Gospel sounds kind of familiar. You might even think *that pastor is so old he could have forgotten and read the same Gospel that we heard a month ago.* I am old, but I didn't forget. It's talking about the same thing. If you remember then the disciples were arguing, back when they were in Galilee in the north, about who was the greatest. When they got to where they were going, Jesus said "What were you guys arguing about on the road?" knowing full well what they were arguing about on the road. Then He set a little child in front of them and said "You have to receive the kingdom humbled and trusting like a little child, not being worried about who is the greatest and all this rigmarole."

Now Jesus is heading south. He is on His way to Jerusalem for the last time and He says the same thing He said to the disciples back then, right before what I read to you. He says the same thing to them that He had said up in Galilee. "We're going to Jerusalem. It's the last time I'm ever going to go to Jerusalem. I'm going to be betrayed. I'm going to suffer and die and I'm going to rise again on the third day." Their response was "I guess the kingdom is going to be established." So then they argued about whom was going to be greatest in the kingdom. When they heard it again, now James and John decided to do an end run around this discussion about who is the greatest. "Let's just go right to Jesus so He knows that He should recognize that we're the greatest. When you come into your kingdom God, we want you to do this for us. Have one of us sit at your right and one at your left. That's what we want." "Can you drink the cup I'm going to drink and be baptized with the baptism I am going to be baptized with?" What He means there is the cup of the suffering He is going to endure (like in the window above), "Take this cup from me," when He prayed in the Garden. It's the cup of God's wrath against sin and all the suffering He would have to go through. And His baptism here was His death to pay for the sins of all people. They wouldn't go through His exact suffering or a death to pay for the sins of all people, but they said "We can." I don't know if they knew what He was talking about to be honest. Jesus said "You will," and they did.

Remember, James didn't make it past Acts 12. James died already in the Book of Acts for his faith. He went through the baptism that Jesus went through, dying for Jesus, because he was talking about Jesus. John is the one that lived the longest of all the apostles. We think he died probably around 95 A.D. but he died while he was in exile on Patmos. He certainly drank the cup of suffering because he served the Lord faithfully. You wonder when old man John was sitting around talking to people if he told them the story about what a fool he was when he was a young man thinking it was about making sure he was recognized and honored when it is really all about Jesus. But that was a lesson they were to learn this day.

So Jesus calls all Twelve of them together and explains it all again. "You know that this is what the leaders of the Jews do. You know that this is what the leaders of Gentiles do. They have authority and they want that authority. They want to be recognized. They want to be served. They want to be honored. Not so with you!" He doesn't say *you shouldn't do that*. He doesn't say *I'm telling you don't do that*. He just says, as a statement of fact, "Not so with you." That's pretty strong. When we're in Christ, He's saying it changes you. It's an interesting thing to think about.

It said ten were indignant, I suppose because James and John had done this and run around them, but whether it's the ten or whether it's James and John, I imagine humanly speaking they all thought they had something coming because of how they had devoted three years of their life to following Jesus, serving Jesus, doing the things Jesus had told them to do. James and John were the Inner Circle (Peter, James and John). They were on the Mount of Transfiguration not that long ago. They had seen incredible things. You'd think if anyone would have known "Not so with you," it would have been that Inner Circle. If anyone should have remembered "You have to receive the kingdom like a little child," it should have been the disciples after Jesus had rebuked them.

But what this shows us is that even the Inner Circle of Jesus' disciples, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, they are just like you. They are just like me. They're sinners; sinners sin. Sinners forget who Jesus is and what Jesus did for them and what He had taught them. They need to be taught and retaught over and over and over. Jesus, in perfect patience, teaches them over and over and over. All of you that have had me in class know I would have probably thrown my sandals at those guys for asking that same stupid question again. But Jesus is perfectly kind, loving and patient, unlike us.

Then Jesus lays in front of them the reason to be a selfless servant. "Whoever wants to be great among you must become the servant of all, the slave of all." You serve for the eternal good of other people if you are in Christ. You are a slave in the sense of your words and your actions belong to serving them, putting their interest ahead of your own. That's what Jesus is telling all of us here.

Here is the problem with folks like us, sinners. It stands to reason when Jesus says "If you want to be great in the kingdom of God, you have to be the servant of all and slave of all." We know Jesus is great in the kingdom of God so He is really telling us He is the servant of us and the slave of us. Then He says ***"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*** That's the best news in the world. That's the Gospel explained clearly and beautifully. But you and I still have a sinful nature that will take this and twist it. Your sinful nature will hear that Jesus is a servant. My sinful nature would hear this and think *Jesus is a servant to me and slave to me? That must mean I'm pretty doggone good. He's pretty lucky to have me as one of His servants, isn't He?* My sinful nature all of a sudden starts making it about me instead of God's love for me.

So think about this. If your sinful nature brings that thought up in you, think of the biggest jerk in the world that you know. Think of the person that when you see walking down the hallway it's just like fingernails on a chalkboard (I wish I had a chalkboard right now because I like doing this) going right down that chalkboard and making you squirm. Think of that person and remind yourself that Jesus is the servant and slave of THAT person and He came to redeem THAT person just as certainly as He did you. Whether that person loves Jesus or not doesn't matter. He came and offered His life and paid for their sins.

It's not about how great you are or how great I am, it's about how great Jesus is. It's about this incredible love that He has for us, this incredible patience He has for us even when we fail Him, and we need to be taught the same lessons over and over and over. Man, we need to be taught this lesson over and over.

If you don't know me, I'm at times a bit of a smart aleck. When I get together with my pastor friends, at times I'm a smart aleck on steroids. From time to time when we get together and we talk about how to solve all the world's problems and all of ministry's problems, I've said this more than once, obviously more than I should have, I've said "Ministry is wonderful. Ministry is great. Ministry is terrific. Except at times with the people you minister to." That's a horrible thing for a pastor to say, isn't it? But what you have to remember is we're all sinners and sinners sin. Perhaps you have been here in worship and you've gone home and said "Hey, you know worship is great and wonderful, except for the pastor," because you're sinners and you're going to sin too. This is the nature of it. This is why we have to be taught this over and over and over. God taught me it in a very specific way in the last couple of weeks.

A week ago last Saturday, Ben came home and said "I can't taste anything." Sunday we had him tested. I wasn't here in worship two weeks ago and I wasn't here in worship last week because he ended up testing positive. So everyone in downtown Morrison now thinks I'm a creeper because I stood and looked out the window all the time. I got to thinking about those words I've said at times, "Ministry is great except for those you

minister to," and I thought about how much I missed the people I minister to. I thought about how God has a great way of getting your attention at times, because there was someone I dearly love that I really would have wanted to go and minister to last week and I couldn't. I couldn't do it.

You don't go into ministry because you want grace and honor. You do it because you love Jesus and you want to share Jesus with others. Today we will love and honor Katie Muchka and Pastor Enderle, and it's good and fitting that we do it, but I guarantee that when they were little kids they weren't thinking *you know what? I want to go into ministry so sometime some congregation will honor me on my tenth anniversary.* I'm pretty sure that isn't why they went into ministry. Knowing them, knowing our other Called Workers, knowing those who lead in our church and serve in all these different areas, they and these others do it because they love Jesus and they want to serve Jesus.

I'll guarantee you my ministry, their ministry and all of us, as we live to serve God it's not always selfless because we're still sinners. I told Katie I would call her a sinner in church on Sunday, so Katie, you're a sinner. And James, you're a sinner. We screw this up. At times we are selfish. We do things as Called Workers and we think, *how come people didn't notice all this stuff I did?* But we didn't go into ministry for that. And I know you guys didn't. I know where your hearts are. I understand that.

What we have to remember is that one of the things God calls us to do, both those who are served and those who serve, is always point each other back to Jesus. He is the one who gave His life as a ransom for us. Now our response is to serve and love Him by pointing other people to Him. Sometimes we'll screw it up. Sometimes we won't do it perfectly, but then it's our job to remind each other He came to give His life as a ransom for us, for the times we are still selfish. He came to give His life as a ransom so that now we would have that part of us, that new self in us that loves God and wants to make sure other people know Jesus.

That's why they entered the ministry. Your congregation has been blessed with Called Workers that all have that same heart. It doesn't mean you don't have to kick them in the rear end from time to time because they're still sinners just like you are, but this is what we're here to do. To point each other back to Jesus, to forgive one another when we fail, to tell each other we still love each other even though we have failed, and to keep our focus on God's grace for us in Christ.

If we, as Called Workers, and if we, as a congregation, do that, God will do great things through us in this community. That's what He has called us to do. Keep your eyes on the One who redeemed you and we'll get better at doing it. Amen.

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