



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 7, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

2nd Sunday of End Time: Last Judgment

First Lesson: [Malachi 4:1-3](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 90

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 9:24-28](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 5:19-30](#)

The Word of God! It Is the Core of Christianity! Gives Us Confidence to Face Judgment

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 in abundance from God our Father through the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

It's a number of years ago and I'm not real good at time so I couldn't tell you how many, 15, I don't remember exactly, but I was talking with someone who was Muslim. I had just recently taught a comparative world religions class. So I said to this person, "Here is my understanding of your faith. Tell me where I'm wrong. You spend your life trying to do the best you can, the five pillars of Islam." I don't remember what they all are right now. I listed them off for him at that time. He was nodding and saying "Yeah, that's what we do." "You do that your whole life and then on the day that you die, you hope Allah is in a good mood because if he's in a bad mood, even if you have done those things he asked you to do he is going to send you to condemnation or whatever term you want to use. But if he's in a good mood, then you'll get to go to paradise." This person looked at me and said "Yeah, that's right." I said, "How do you sleep at night? How do you sleep not having this confidence that your god loves you and has saved you? Can I tell you what my confidence is?" I told him about Jesus. I said "Here is what I believe. I believe every night when I lay my head on the pillow, if I don't wake up I'm going to immediately be in paradise because it's all about Jesus; that He lived in my place, He died in my place, and this is a certain accomplished fact. I have a confidence every day of my life that I don't have to hope the one who judges me is in a good mood on the day that I die."

I never really got to talk to the guy again, so I don't know how any of that went. But that's a big difference, isn't it? As you and I sit here today with the Spirit living in our

heart, having given us the gift of faith, it should not be *I kind of hope the Lord will take me to heaven*. It's a confidence, a certainty, because it's all about God. It's not about us. It's not about anything we do. Our salvation exists outside of us. That's why it is such a certainty and that's why it's so important that we continually proclaim it to one another so that we can watch out because you don't know when the day or the hour is coming, as our Verse of the Day said.

Today in the Gospel we see Jesus trying to give the people some of this confidence, by saying you need to be connected to Jesus, to Himself, that they didn't really have because they were so concerned about keeping the Law, about doing the right thing so that God would then take them to heaven. These guys were really upset with Jesus. But notice how Jesus still takes the time to patiently, lovingly and kindly tell them this is of upmost importance.

Three times He uses "amēn amēn." It's translated "Very truly I tell you." That's a "Hey boys, you better sit up and listen to this because this is really important." He does it as He defends Himself against their accusations. Here was their accusation: He worked on the Sabbath. The work He did was to tell a guy who was lame from birth to stand up, walk away and carry his mat with him. They were upset at this guy because he was carrying a mat on the Sabbath and doing work and that broke their Sabbath laws; not necessarily God's Sabbath Laws but their Sabbath laws. So when they found out from this guy that Jesus had healed him, then they were even more incensed because Jesus **healed** on the Sabbath, which is doing work.

Did you catch Jesus' first offense right at the start? "My heavenly Father, God the Father is always working, whether it's Sabbath or not. He is always meeting the needs of people, taking care of people. The Son of God should do the same, so I'm always working." That got them even more incensed. You could almost sense that their blood was boiling because they understood that when Jesus said that, He was claiming to be God. The audacity to **heal** someone on the Sabbath and then **tell** that guy to pick up his mat and walk (which is breaking their Sabbath laws), and **then** He is now blaspheming by claiming to be equal to God! So He starts His defense with the "amēn amēn" statements.

The first one is all about how He and the Father are one. If you don't honor the Son, you can't honor the Father who sent Him. The Father loves Him because the Son has come to do everything the Father has sent Him to do. He talks about how interconnected they are as Father and Son, which just had to make their blood boil.

And then He goes into some things that I wonder if they understood what He was talking about, but it didn't stop Jesus from trying to reach out to them and say, "You need to be connected to me so that you can have eternal life." Look at what He says to them. "**Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me**

has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life." He is laying it right in front of them. If you want to cross over from death to life, it's not keeping Sabbath Law. It's not what you do. It's being connected to Jesus; who had come into this world so that people might have life and have it to the full. He's talking about life as in the forgiveness of sins through Jesus' life and death in your place. Not "you'll have it sometime in the future," but you HAVE eternal life. You've crossed over from death to life when you believe in Jesus. He is really reaching out to them and saying "believe I am the promised Messiah." He even calls Himself the Messianic term that had to have their blood boiling when He referred to Himself as the Son of Man. That's from Daniel. So He is saying "I'm it. I'm the one all the other prophecies that you study pointed to. Believe in me and you have crossed over from death to life. No ifs, ands or buts. It's an accomplished fact."

But He continues on and He says **"Very truly I tell you, a time is coming and has now come when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God and those who hear will live."** He's not talking about the dead in a cemetery there. He is talking about spiritually dead people. He's talking to them and saying they were spiritually dead. The time has come and it is now here when the dead will hear the voice of the Savior and the Savior will give them life. It's the Word of God that gives us this confidence that Jesus did it all. He's imploring these people who have spent so much of His time on earth attacking Him, He is still, in love, imploring them and reaching out to them and saying "Get connected to me." The love and the patience of Jesus are beyond my comprehension. I can't wrap my head around how patient and loving He is with those who always seem to be upset or mad at Him. He still keeps loving them and reaching out with this because He wants them to cross over from the spiritual death to spiritual life.

Then again He says **"Very truly I tell you..."** "Listen to this guys; this is all about that. It's crossing over from death to life. If you think that's something, the day is going to come when I'm going to come back to this world and all who are in the grave are going to come out."

Then He says something that after Reformation Sunday last week might sound like fingernails on a chalkboard to our ears. **"...those who have done what is good will rise to live, and those who have done what is evil will rise to be condemned."**

I thought we said last week that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, Scripture alone as the authority. Doesn't Paul say in Ephesians, **"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast (Ephesians 2:8-9)."** So what in the world does He mean when He says those who have done good will rise to be saved?

Well, you have to ask yourself, and answer from Scripture, not from your own mind, what does God consider good? Is it doing the works of the Law? Is it obeying what He said? Is that what is good? Didn't Jesus just get done telling these guys, who were so meticulous about how they were keeping the Sabbath Law, that they were spiritually dead? Didn't it say in the Old Testament, all of your righteous acts are like filthy rags ([Isaiah 64:6](#)) if they aren't done out of love for God? And that even the good things you do according to the Law, if it's not done out of faith in Jesus, it's not good in God's eyes. In the New Testament doesn't He say, without faith it is impossible to please God ([Hebrews 11:6](#))? The only thing that is good in God's eyes are things that are done out of love for Him, according to His will, and only believers can do anything good then in God's eyes.

So those who have done good will rise to live is just saying, those who believe in Jesus. And those who have done evil (all the socially, civically good things someone might do are evil if they aren't done out of love for God according to God) evil will rise to be condemned.

Jesus lays it all out that it's all about Him. He tells them that He is going to be the one that is going to be prepared to do the judging because the Father had given it all to Him. He really is saying all judgment is based on what your relationship is to Him. But what amazes me and what I think we should think a little bit about today is how He reaches out to people who, you would think, there is no way in the world they are going to listen. And yet He still lovingly tries to bring them the Gospel so that they might believe.

I think we have to ask ourselves this question: when you believe in Christ, you have ***crossed over from death to life***. That was in there. That's one of the key points in this whole section. Is that a one-way door? Or is it possible, after you have crossed over to life, to go back to death and lose the faith that God has given you?

In the Bible it says, ***“And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption”*** ([Ephesians 4:30](#)). It says don't put out the Spirit's fire ([1 Thessalonians 5](#)). The Spirit's fire is not a pumpkin-scented candle. The Spirit's fire is faith that lives in your heart. Don't put out the Spirit's fire is saying, watch out because you don't know the day that He is coming ([Matthew 25:13](#)). Watch out and make sure that you stay connected by faith to Jesus. Feed your faith. Grow your faith. Live your faith. You can't come to faith on your own but once you are a believer you can make use of Word and Sacrament so that you stay in the faith. AND, you can do exactly what Jesus did. Confidence received from Jesus that when I stand before Him on the Day of Judgment, I am not worried about being sent to hell. That confidence is confidence that He has given us and that's the confidence He gives us to share. We share it with

everyone, not just with those we like or are comfortable with and not just those who we THINK might listen to us. We share it with everyone, lovingly, kindly, patiently, like Jesus did.

This morning after the sermon, Lord willing, we'll watch the WELS Connection for this month. The WELS Connection for this month is going to talk about Home Missional things; goals they had set at the last Synod convection for Home Mission openings. Home Mission openings are wonderful. It's great to go to new places to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But DO NOT EVER make the mistake of thinking mission work is only done in a congregation where it says "Home Mission."

The average-sized church in our country is right around 100. That's the average-sized church in the United States throughout all denominations, protestant denominations. As a congregation, we are just under 750, 747-748, something like that. Between online worship and in-person worship we are averaging about 250-255 a week in worship. That means we have five congregations, five churches that aren't in worship weekly. Confidence received is confidence to share and that can well be our mission field to say "Stay connected to Jesus. Be close to Him. We want you in heaven with us." You can tell me, "Pastor, that isn't my job. That's your job. That's why we pay you so you can go do that." I would tell you "Bull." God has said to all Christians, "Teach, admonish, correct, rebuke and encourage one another ([2 Timothy 3:10-17](#))."

Being a part of the Body of Christ is not about your membership having benefits. It's not about what you receive from God or from His church. God has given you this gift of faith and now membership has responsibilities. He has called you to be your brothers' keeper. He has called you to speak this confidence and share it with others. He has called you to be concerned about those who seem to be drifting away from Jesus. He has called you to be concerned about those who have never heard about Jesus. This is what He has entrusted to your care.

As we see this confidence we have, it gives us confidence to speak in love, patiently, kindly and gently, because the day is coming and on that day it's either heaven or hell. You have the key that unlocks heaven for people. It's the Gospel of Jesus Christ. God has called and equipped all of us, as Christians, to share 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.