



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 25, 2021

Pastor James Enderle

Thanksgiving

First Lesson: [Isaiah 12:1-6](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 100

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Psalm 136:1](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 17:11-19](#)

GIVE THANKS BY PROCLAIMING GOD'S LOVE

Things aren't always good, but God is always good.

So many things around us are temporary, but His love endures forever.

Give thanks by how you live and what you say.

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:

Today is Thanksgiving and by all measures we definitely entered the holiday season. You might say we've been in the holiday season since Halloween because the day after Halloween, they put out all the Christmas candy and Christmas decorations. Today is not exactly the start of the holiday season, but it's really when you start feeling it because now you're with family. Some people have different opportunities where they live. Even when they are older and have their own kids, they live just down the street or a few miles from their family. There are always a lot of blessings with that. Maybe sometimes some challenges. Other people, for me for about eight years I was a 14-hour plane flight away from my family so we didn't get to spend a lot of holidays together. Depending on your circumstances, holidays can be really special because you don't really get to see family that much. You get together on Thanksgiving and Christmas and you get that time as a family. We know holidays can be a lot of fun, but sometimes they can be challenging as discussions happen or things are brought up that haven't been discussed. It's not always laughs and smiles on holidays, but we hope they are.

I think the point of that is what happens or how things are during the holidays isn't just because of what is said and done on that day. What do I mean by that? Probably how your family is feeling depends a little bit on how things have been in the last year or how you've been communicating. If you talk every week or you have these connections, then it's easier to be together on the holidays. So what happens on that day sometimes is more of a reflection of how things were in the past.

Why is that important? As we look at giving thanks to God and how we give thanks to God today, maybe it's also a reflection not just of today but of how things have been going in the past. We want to thank God by proclaiming His love, but as we look at that, it's good to look at the situation around us, and us, and most of all, who God is and why we can be thankful and why it is hard for us to be thankful at times.

The Sermon text is pretty short. ***"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good. His love endures forever."*** Even though it's short, I think we could spend a lot of time looking at just those few short words. First I want to look at the idea that God is good. It says, ***"Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good."*** Why is it important to remember that God is good? I think it's important to remember that God is good because so many things around us aren't always good. But God is always good.

What does that mean that things aren't always good? I say that and I think you can think about examples, right? In the world that we live in that is thoroughly infected with sin, things aren't always good. Sometimes that comes from you. Sometimes you look at yourself and you know you've made huge mistakes. *I've fallen short and I'm to blame for this situation.* Sometimes we have to confess and say "I'm sorry." Other times things aren't good, not because of what I've done but because of the sin of others and just the sin in the world. We live in this messy, difficult place. If you turn on the news, if you read anything, if you study history at all, you know that things aren't always good. We know that. We can see that. But the second part is really important. That God IS always good.

Why is that important? When things aren't good around us, we still know that God is good. God has a plan. God loves us and He keeps on loving us even in the midst of difficulty. God isn't the one causing the sin but yet He can take a difficult situation and make good out of it. He can work through horrible things and bring good. We also know that anything good we have, as James says, every good and perfect gift comes from above ([James 1:17](#)), comes from God. So as we think about Thanksgiving, ALL the good, ALL the good things that you think about on Thanksgiving of why we can be thankful, those things come from God.

As we think about those good things, it's also important to remember something about those good things, and even the bad things. So many things around us are temporary, but ***His love endures forever***. Think about some of the temporary things and if you combine that with the things that aren't always good, sometimes there is great tragedy. We saw that just this week here in Wisconsin. Where tragedy strikes, where things and relationships we probably thought were going to go on for a long time, loved ones can be called home at any time. Relationships, even the greatest, longest relationships, marriages of 50 years, are temporary. In the long scheme of heaven and eternity, and you think of smaller relationships and things that we deal with; work relationships or friendships, sometimes you have great friendships that are so strong and then a couple

years later they aren't there. They're gone. School is temporary. You go to high school, you go to college, you go to the next thing and it's just temporary. Jobs can be temporary. Some of you maybe have been blessed to have long jobs and have been with the same company for 20 years. Maybe others of you are struggling where you find this job and then you have to switch to another job. They don't last forever. Finally, we retire. Our work is often temporary.

Sometimes knowing things are temporary is really good because pain is also temporary. Sicknesses may last for a time. Pain may last for a time but they are also temporary. In the midst of ALL of this though, all these temporary things, God's love endures forever. Why is that important? As you look to a lot of those things which are temporary, some of those things we hold so dear, relationships and jobs, the problem can be when we take these temporary things and we seek to get all of our joy, all of our happiness, all of our hope from these things that are temporary. Only God can give us that true love and hope and peace. Why? Because all those other things are from people and are temporary and are also sinful. So I can't expect them to be like God; to give me the love and the satisfaction that really only God can give.

When we look and see that ***His love endures forever***, this is so important because it speaks about the past, and now, and more importantly, the future. As I look and I know of my sinfulness and the times I have failed, God's love endures forever. His love is so much greater than my sin. That means that the future which is so easy to question or so easy to have doubts about, or when we do have sicknesses, when we do have troubles and we don't have answers, it's easy to fear. But knowing that God is good and He has a plan and ***His love endures forever***, we have hope. We have strength and we know whatever we are in the midst of, God is with us and He will NEVER leave us or forsake us ([Hebrews 13:5](#)). These are so important.

Think of some of the readings that we read and it reminds us of how things are temporary and how things aren't always good. The lepers, they weren't in a good situation. Look at Isaiah, who we read today, and other prophets, like Jeremiah, who had one of the most difficult ministries. He was beaten and oppressed and the people in the church and the king, they all hated him because he spoke God's Word. Even though He sometimes was happy and sometimes sad, he still praised God. Then in the midst of the most difficult time for the Israelites, as they were being carried into captivity into Babylon, Jeremiah spoke the words that God has plans for them, to prosper them; those words that we often speak that say God is with us. But at that time, things were really hard. Things were not good for them but he was telling them "This is temporary, but God's love, His plan for you, is good, and His love endures forever." As we look at our lives and see that and know that life isn't easy but God is good, ***His love endures forever*** helps us be thankful. How then do we give thanks to God?

I want to step back again to the picture of family. As we talked about the holidays and we think about giving gifts to family, what do you think is an easy way or the best way to show thanks to parents? I know some of you are younger, some of you are older, maybe some of your parents have been called to heaven already, so if your parents are in heaven, you can think of how it was when they were here, or you can think about other loved ones, but how do you show thanks? During the holidays it's easy to give gifts. A great gift, that's the way to show thanks, right? But what do you think your parents appreciate more, a gift or the time in between the holidays? If you aren't communicating often with your parents, do you think that gift means as much? Even what maybe makes them the most proud and most thankful is not a gift but knowing how you are living, seeing your life as they have raised you and tried to teach you morality and say, "These are good things for you to do as you grow up," to know that some of the things they said have seeped in. I think that is a way to actually show thanks to your parents as they show that they are proud of how you live. That can vary from whatever age you are, when you're young, you're old, or when you have kids of your own and you are raising your kids, their grandkids.

Why is that important? Why use that example. Talking often to parents, I know my mom likes to call once a week on Sundays and she loves talking to all of us kids. Now think about your relationship with God the Father. How often are you talking with your God? How often are you listening to His Word? Do you only talk during the holidays? Or is it something that happens more often? Are you able to be in worship wherever you are? Are you able to be in Bible studies and grow with other Christians? Are you able to be in devotions and read your Bible at home, because that is where you are growing your relationship with God; the God who loves you and is good; then, talking with your God, praying. It might not seem like a big deal but think about the example of your family. And then think about with God. If we're not talking with God, if we're not letting Him talk to us, what is our relationship with Him like?

Then think about the example of how we live. We want to give thanks to God by how you live and what you say. We can give gifts to God. We can give offerings to God. But what God really wants and is thankful for is when we are living our life as a Christian, as disciples, as following Him, not just on Sunday, not just for an hour but in our daily life.

These aren't burdensome laws, are they? When God gives us His Word, He's not trying to keep us from fun. He's saying these are the things that will give you a good life and will help you know what is right and wrong. It will help you love others, to love your family, to love your co-workers, to love your friends. So how we live our life is a great way to give thanks. More than that, what we say. Think about your parents and we can give gifts, but how we speak of our parents is really important. Or you parents, how you speak of your kids or other loved ones. Not just to them but to others. When I show respect and love to my family members when they're not present is really important.

Think about that with God and your relationship with Him and how we can give thanks to Him. We can give thanks by speaking of the great things that He has done. That He has loved us. That He has forgiven us. That ***His love endures forever***. Why is that important? Because not everyone knows the things that you know about God. But they are in the same situation. They know that the world isn't always good, that things are temporary, that they might be suffering because of sadness and loss of hope and confusion of the things that are going on, or just life. But if they don't know God is good and if they don't know ***His love endures forever***, what hope do they have? Where do they look for salvation, for peace, for forgiveness? You have this great message to share with those around you. That's one of the greatest ways to give thanks. Part of it though is to know that we're not going to be perfect in that. We fail in the way that we live. We don't always speak the words that we know we want to speak. That again is why it is so important to look to God who is good, but to look to Jesus also who is good.

Jesus came down from heaven. Do you know what He said so often about why He came? He came to do His Father's will. Think about that. He came to do what His Father wanted. How did He do it? He did it perfectly. He was perfect in our place and for the times that we have failed Him. How did He speak about God and how did He share the message? He was always after the hearts of others.

If you didn't get a chance to listen to Pastor Ott's Sermon last week about Jesus speaking to Pilate, I encourage you to do that. Jesus, even on the last day of His life, as He knew death was approaching, was still speaking the Gospel and seeking after the hearts of others. We won't do this perfectly, but that's how and why we know that God is good, because Jesus was perfect for us. That's all the more reason for us to be thankful.

We know that things aren't always good. It's easy to see. But we can know that God is always good and ***His love endures forever***. So today, on Thanksgiving, and every day, remember we can give thanks in the way that we live and by the things that we say. Proclaim God's love to others. Amen.

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