



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 31, 2021

Pastor Randy Ott

New Year's Eve

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 90

Reading: [Isaiah 51:1-6](#)

Reading: [Luke 13:6-9](#)

Sermon Text: [1 Peter 1:22-25](#)

God's Word Stands Firm Forever

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.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

It's kind of an arbitrary thing that we mark this day as the end of a year and tomorrow is the start of a new one, but other cultures have New Year's at a different time. In a sense it's kind of arbitrary, but I suppose there is a value for us to stop and mark the passage of time and remind ourselves that while time is fleeting, the one thing that continues forever is what God tells us tonight, to hold onto that Word of His that endures because there are so many things that are trying to keep us from holding onto it.

As you look back over the past year, you think about things that have gone on in the past. I think the one thing I'd say as I look back over 2021 is the one phrase I probably heard more than I heard any other time in my life, maybe all of the first 50-some years of my life put together, is "supply chain delays." You hear people talking about that all the time. Supply chain delays; you can't get this part. You can't get that part because there are supply chain delays because of the pandemic, because of reduction, because somebody thought it was fast and furious so they decided to slide a tanker through the Suez Canal and jammed it up for a few days. Supply chain delays; it's been all around us.

It isn't really a new thing. I think there have always been supply chain delays. Ever since God spoke to people, there have always been supply chain delays. There have been supply chain interruptions. There have been people that jump out of the supply chain because our God has told us over and over and over that "These words I speak to you, they are life. Hold fast to them." Hold tight to His Word, His Gospel. It's what supplies eternal life to us.

And then there have been interruptions. There have been interruptions in my life. I'm sure there have been interruptions in your life, where hanging tight to that Word hasn't been as important as other things. So as we come together tonight, I suppose in a very real sense our God is telling us to keep the supply chain of salvation open. Hold on tight to His Word. Hold on tight to it because no matter how much things change, no matter how much things are different from one year to the next, one day to the next, one week to the next, one month to the next, no matter how much things seem to change, His love for us, His unfailing love is what satisfies us every morning (as Moses told us in the Psalm). And it gives us a heart of wisdom that I think is why God is telling us to teach our days aright (in that Psalm) and He's telling us in this reading, now that we know this truth of our God and how much He loves us, hang on tight to His Word because everything else is going to pass away.

But did you notice this holding on tight to God's Word isn't just digging a hole in the ground and burying it or just holding onto it tight for yourself? He was very specific in what I read to you on what it looks like when God's people stand firm in His Word and hold on tight to that Word of His salvation. Look at what He says there in the beginning. What does it look like? Now that you have this salvation that comes through faith in God, hold onto it tightly, but ***love one another deeply, from the heart***. This is a heart of wisdom in practice and this is a challenge for you and me.

Here is what I mean. Wisdom is taking the knowledge you have and applying it in the right way at the right time. Take the Psalm where it says: ***Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom*** ([Psalm 90:12](#)). Then look at what God says in these other readings about holding on tight to God's Word. Holding on tight means you are holding onto it so that you know it and you have the knowledge of what it says and who our God is and who you are, but then you act on that knowledge. You don't just sit on it like a bump on a log. You act on it. The way He is telling us to act on it is to ***love one another deeply, from the heart***.

What does Christian love do? It's all over the pages of Scripture. Christian love acts. It doesn't just sit back and go *tsk tsk, isn't that too bad what is happening to that brother or sister in Christ and how they have drifted away or they have gone in this different direction or they are not connected to Jesus anymore*. If you love each other deeply, from the heart, Christian love acts. It realizes that this isn't someone else's job. If you hold on tight to the Word, you know this is the task God has given to you; to each and every believer in Jesus Christ. We are all members of His Body, the Church, and each supporting ligament has to do its part or else the Church is going to limp around and it's not going to get the Gospel message to the people it could. So ***love one another deeply, from the heart***. Have the wisdom to apply what you know and act on it.

It's kind of easy when we sit here. We sing hymns, we hear readings, and we talk about loving other people. That's kind of easy. The hard part is taking the knowledge that

maybe we get here and living it next Tuesday. Next Tuesday I'll be in a hurry to go someplace because I start late (like normal) and some idiot is driving way too slow or pulls out in front of me as I have to turn into some other place, but do I have the wisdom to be patient, loving and kind to that person that pulled out in front of me? I know I'm supposed to be. Or do I flirt with road rage and figure out a way to let them have it somehow in my deepest, darkest fantasies of how I can pay that person back? We can sit here and say "O yeah, we as Christians love each other Pastor. Sure we do." If that's all we do is sit here and say it and we don't live it next Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and so on, that's just knowledge. That isn't wisdom.

What we want God to give us is His body and blood for the times this past year we didn't live in wisdom, that we knew better and we still did what God said not to, but He comes to us and says "Hey, here it is; I love you this much. This is my unfailing love that satisfies you in the morning and tonight it satisfies you after the sun goes down because it forgives all your sins in Christ for all the times you had the knowledge but not the wisdom." Then we say "Lord, help me to hang on tight to your Word so that in the coming year, in 2022, I'm not a supply chain interruption. As you want this Gospel brought to other people, help me so I'm not the one that delays in bringing it to them because I'm too afraid to speak of the love of Jesus Christ or I am unwilling to live the love of Christ." Say "Lord, help me so I don't just focus on the things I like and I want and complain about it when they aren't happening in congregational life. Help me to see how in wisdom I can bring more Jesus to more people more often." Love each other deeply from the heart does not mean "They are all here to love me." It means "I'm here to love them." We forget that. It's real easy to just sit back and say "How come we aren't doing this or that because that's what I like."

It's all about God. It's about this love and this forgiveness and this salvation He left heaven to win for us. It's about this salvation, the only message that saves is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and He has entrusted it to you to share with others.

We just went over this Wednesday night in confirmation class with the kids that were there. We are all parts of the body and we're all ministers. We all have a ministry to perform. All too often I still hear from people "Well pastor, that's your job. You should be doing that." If you look at [Ephesians 4](#), it spells out what your pastors' jobs are supposed to be. *It was He who gave some to be pastors or teachers to prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up. Then we'll no longer be infants tossed back and forth by every wave and by the craftiness and cunning teachings. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into Him who is the head, that is, Christ, as each supporting ligament does its part.* I didn't quote it exactly but I'd encourage you to go home and see that I'm pretty close. Take a look at [Ephesians 4](#) and see what God says and then say, "Okay, Lord, help me to see in wisdom my role. Help me to see how I can take the knowledge you have given me of your love and your forgiveness and in wisdom how I can share it with others. And Lord, forgive

me for the times I've thought it's all about me. Forgive me for all the times I've moaned and complained instead of rejoicing your forgiveness and I found it easier to complain about hymns we sing. Lord, forgive me for all my shortcomings." This is the greatest gift of our God. He has, He does, and He will forgive you. He says just keep holding tight to this Word of salvation, and then live it in wisdom. Amen.

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