



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

January 9, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday after Epiphany – The Baptism of Our Lord

First Lesson: [1 Samuel 16:1-13](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 2

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Titus 3:4-7](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 3:15-22](#)

### **Renewed Daily to Eternity**

Jesus saves you

The Holy Spirit chose you

To live in the Father's love and mercy to eternity

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:

We are about a week into the New Year, into 2022. How many of you made New Year's resolutions. I don't know how popular that still is. Why is it maybe not so popular? If you made New Year's resolutions, how are you doing on them? Are you sticking with them? Is there anything that you committed to doing every day, or to do several times a week? Something where you would say, "I'm going to really get to it this year. I'm going to really watch my diet this year. I'm going to watch my health. I'm going to start that project. I'm going to finish those projects." How are your resolutions going?

We started a Bible reading plan with married couples, a devotional. I encourage that couples read it every day. Some have said "Yes, we're reading it every day. It's been a little hard." Others have said "We're a little behind." That's okay. I encourage people to catch up whenever they can. But it's hard to stay committed. It gets exhausting. The number of people who join things and start things in the New Year is always huge. We always see that the numbers in gyms go up so much in the first few days of January. Then after that slowly, slowly, and sometimes quickly it declines. Why is that?

We get exhausted and filled with all the things that we have going on in our life. When we set a New Year's resolution, we are adding something. We are adding something to our list of things we need to do. It's really just another burden. It's another thing you have to do and most likely, if you're like a high percentage of people, something that you fail to keep doing. It's something that you don't meet your expectations on. That's kind of how things go. We're quite often not meeting expectations we set and the

expectations that others set. New Year's resolutions are just another example of how we fall short. That's why our text for today and the Baptism of our Lord and our baptisms are so important. As you think of resolutions and things you want to do every day, it's easy to be exhausted, but our baptisms remind us that we can be **Renewed Daily to Eternity.**

How does that happen? We need to look at what our baptism is but first, what our baptism points to. It points to Jesus. We need to see what Jesus does for us. In Verse 4 it says, ***But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*** That first line in there, ***when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared,*** this is so important because we are in that season of Epiphany. If you were here on Thursday night for our special Epiphany service, you heard exactly what Epiphany means. It means to be made known, to be shown to people. In one sense, it was that Jesus was shown, not just to the Jewish people but to the Gentiles. This happened when the Magi came, and also as we see in so many different ways as His Word is revealed to the world and Jesus is spread to all people. But today we see in a special way how He appeared and is made known; at His baptism as God the Father speaks over Him and says, ***"You are my Son, whom I love*** ([Mark 1:11](#))***..."*** Jesus maybe looked like a common man, but here a voice from heaven booms and says, "Here is my Son." He has made known to the people that this is something special. Not just a normal baptism, but something pretty unique.

As He is made known, as He goes down to be baptized, there is an interesting thing that is said in one of the other Gospels. John knows Jesus. He knows that He is the Promised Messiah. We heard him say that in our reading today. In one of the other Gospels John argues with Him and says, "No, Jesus, you should be baptizing me." But Jesus says, "No, you need to baptize me to fulfill all righteousness." ([Matthew 3:13-15](#).)

Did you see what else that first verse said? It said, ***when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy.*** Jesus came to fulfill all righteousness. That was part of what His baptism did. He fulfilled righteousness for us because it is clear that we are not saved because of righteous things we have done. Jesus saves us. You want a clear passage, a clear section of Scripture to remind yourself and to tell others we are not saved by what we do because we fall short. We don't meet our expectations, so how can we meet God's expectations. I can't live up to what God demands let alone what I think I could live up to. He demands perfection. God clearly says we are not saved by the righteous things we have done, but we are saved by Jesus and His mercy, His perfection, what He has done, how He lived in our place and accomplished all the things that we could not do and was faithful in the ways that we could not be. When He was persecuted and when He was given the wrath of God on the cross, He did that for us.

He lived and came to be among us to save us. His baptism is just a part of that, but Jesus saved us. His baptism and our baptisms are part of that, and we see how as it continues.

***He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior...*** We're saved by Jesus, but look how it says we are saved also ***through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.*** We are saved by Jesus but we are also saved by baptism. The Holy Spirit renews us daily. He washes us and cleanses us first at that baptism, where the Holy Spirit is poured out on us.

There are some people who do believe before they are baptized, through the work of the Word and other means of grace, but for many of us we received that Holy Spirit when we were baptized as a child. Even if you are baptized after you believe, you have that outpouring of the Holy Spirit that renews us and says "You are forgiven." Just like David and Jesus, who were anointed, God is choosing us and saying "You are my son. You are my daughter. You are loved and you are forgiven."

How does that renew us daily? I sin daily and I don't feel like I'm a child of God every day. When I look at the things that I do daily, it doesn't feel like I deserve to be a child of God. When I look in the mirror, when I see what I have done, I don't always feel redeemed and forgiven. Our emotions and how we feel and what we see about ourselves isn't the truth. That's why our baptisms are so important because baptism isn't something I do for God. It's what God does for me. He saves me. He washes me. He cleanses me. So no matter what I do, as I know I have failed and have fallen short and I'm exhausted, I look to my baptism and I can be renewed daily because I can see the Father's love as He has sent Jesus and He has washed me clean through the waters of baptism.

That is not how we always live though. We struggle with that. We struggle with seeing our baptism. We struggle with seeing how we're saved by Jesus in that washing. So how can we be renewed by the Holy Spirit and live in God's love and mercy? That's what it says. At the beginning of Verse 4 it says, ***when the kindness and of love of God our Savior appeared,*** but then later it says, ***whom he (the Holy Spirit) poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.*** How do we live in this? Life can be exhausting, as we said, with the New Year's resolutions and all the other stresses. We don't always live in that hope, do we? We don't always live in that love and mercy.

I think a way to help us think about that is if you are feeling stressed, if you are feeling overwhelmed, if you're feeling "I just don't see God's love all the time," maybe it's good to check how you are spending your time. What are you taking in? What are the things

that you hear? Are they gloom and doom? Are they things that don't really matter? Our lives now make it so easy to fill our lives with things that seem interesting and entertaining but in the end, what do they mean for me and for others and for my soul into eternity? We need to be refreshed by the Word and Sacrament, to be reminded of our forgiveness that we get from baptism and through the Lord's Supper, but also to be in the Word as we speak with other Christians as we're reminded. Maybe it means just turning off some of those other things that stress us out or even sometimes being away from some of those people who stress us out.

In God's Word, in the Holy Spirit, we can live in the Father's love and mercy into eternity. That love and mercy that He gives us is connected to that hope. That hope that we have that when the world thinks about hope, it's something like "I hope my team wins today. I hope this thing happens." It's something I want or I'd like to have. But the hope that we have in Christ, because of His love and mercy, is a certainty. It's something that we don't have to worry about. It's something that we know is true. We just don't have it all yet. It's a now but not yet. It's something we can rejoice in (this hope) that really the rest of the world cannot fathom. And as the rest of the world is looking for hope and answers, you do have hope. You have a peace and love and forgiveness that you can be reminded of daily; by what Jesus has done, by what our baptism means.

A pastor once said it this way. The rest of the world is still struggling for their validation or the verdict. When you think about those resolutions, that's kind of how it is. We want to meet our expectations or the expectations of the world to get that verdict of being a good person, not guilty, or good enough. Christianity is different though because it starts with the verdict that you're saved, you're forgiven, you're loved. That's what you're told now and then we're just asked to go and live in that grace and mercy, to love others because of it, and to point others to that love and mercy that they too can have this hope, not just today, but for now and into eternity. Amen.

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