



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

January 16, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

First Lesson: [Exodus 7:14-24](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 133-134

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Ephesians 3:14-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 2:1-11](#)

### **Jesus is Revealed by Unknowable Power & Love**

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 our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

I'll take January over December all the time. I enjoy January compared to December. I love January compared to December. It's not the snow. I hate it in any month. That's not why I like it. It's not the cold. I can't stand that either. I don't care if that's what winter is in Wisconsin, that doesn't mean I have to like it. I don't like it. It's not that new tax laws go into effect because I don't really care about that. The one thing that pushes me over the edge that I like January more than December is that when it comes to January, the Hallmark Channel quits showing Christmas movies around the clock every day of the week. December and July, worst months of the year for television on the Hallmark Channel.

I do enjoy the Hallmark Channel at times. I like the Hallmark Movies & Mysteries Channel. I enjoy that one. I find the old reruns of Monk entertaining. Diagnosis Murder is on sometimes in the morning when I'm working at the computer. It used to be on there. I find that entertaining. Some of the movies they do I enjoy because I enjoy mysteries of a sort, and those are mindless mysteries. You don't have to think real hard and you know that at the end it's going to reveal who did it and all that stuff. It's going to be all wrapped up in a nice little bow and it comes to a conclusion. That's enjoyable, mindless entertainment, especially if you like mysteries. I enjoy those shows. And it really bugs me when all they put on is Christmas being all about goofy stuff and not about Jesus! It drives me nuts in December.

I don't know if you ever thought about it, but the season of Epiphany is really about the mystery channel of the church year. The word "epiphany" means "to reveal or to make

known." In the Bible the word "mystery," which is used fairly often in the New Testament, is a word that means something that you would never know unless God reveals it to you, which is what the word "epiphany" means.

So during the season of Epiphany, all the things that God had pointed to through the prophets He tries to lay clear for everyone to see, although not everyone saw it, that Jesus is the fulfillment of all the promises of the Savior to come. This is what Paul was talking about right before what I read to you in Chapter 3. He was talking about Jesus revealing to him the mystery he would have never known except that God had told him that this Messiah was for all people. God had to reveal that. It wasn't just His chosen people, the Israelites. Jesus was the Promised Savior of all mankind. Jew and Gentile alike were on equal footing and together as a part of God's church, His body, which is all believers everywhere. This is what Ephesians is really about. Ephesians is a wonderful, wonderful short little letter to read because Paul is not addressing any problems that were in the congregation like when he writes to Corinth. He was really addressing a lot of problems in Corinth. He is writing to the Ephesians to encourage them and to expand their thinking about what God's kingdom is, what the church is, and what their role in it is.

He starts out in the beginning and talks about what the church is and how you come into it, probably through passages you know from [Ephesians 2](#). ***For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.*** ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#).) It's a beautiful passage about how we come to be a part of the church. Not us—it's all God. Then in [Chapter 3](#) he is talking about how Jew and Gentile alike are saved by that same grace. Now he is going to move into what the purpose is of the church, but before he does that in these words I read to you, he speaks this prayer. He says, "I kneel before God," which to us sounds like that's what you teach your kids. You kneel and say your prayers. The normal position for prayer in Paul's day was standing and lifting up your hands, like it says in [Psalm 91](#). So it shows this deep reverence, this deep concern. This is deeply on Paul's heart. "I kneel before God as I ask that God may help you to understand who you are; that you are a part of the church and this is not from you. The power of God has done this for you. The love of God has done this for you. He has made Jew and Gentile alike, you Jews and Gentiles there in Ephesus. You are alike and are on the same footing before God. It's all about Him. The life and death of Christ has taken away the guilt of your sins. The perfection He demands He gave to you in Jesus. And you are ALL a part of His church. I pray that you understand that, don't take it for granted and that God keeps pouring out His Spirit on you so that through His power you can know what surpasses knowledge; this love that God has for you."

"This love that surpasses knowledge" is a fascinating phrase. I know God's love for me in Christ. I know that if I drop dead right now and someone else has to come finish this sermon, I'm going to be in heaven and you guys are going to be worried about me. But

I won't be worried about me. I'm going to be in heaven. I know that love of God. So how can he say it surpasses knowledge? I think what he is telling us is it will never be fully known on this side of heaven. You and I will NEVER fully know the love of God. He is praying that God helps us to know it more and more and more; that we don't take it for granted; that we don't assume it; that we don't just say "Yeah, God loves me. I learned to sing that as a little kid. That's good enough," but that we keep exploring the depth, the width, the height, the riches of this love and what it has done for us. That means we also have to explore just how little we deserve it and see ourselves for what sinners we are. The more we do that, the more the Spirit is poured into our hearts through Word and Sacrament, and the more we grow in appreciation of all that.

Then he moves on into [Chapter 4](#) so that we can do the things we are called to do; to be the church in our daily lives, to live our faith; not just for an hour on a Sunday morning but in every relationship in our life. He goes through husbands and wives. He goes through parents and children. He goes through employees and employers of the day. He goes through all of this and he says, "Put your faith into practice. Live this incredible love in every area of your life."

If you're doing the [Marriage Devotional](#), go home and read this book and read [Ephesians 5](#) and see this beautiful section where he says what this love looks like when it's put into practice. What you are going to find out is even though you and I know the love of God, you and I don't always live the love of God. You and I often will stop short of contemplating the love of God and just focus more on the things that we can see, the things that we know, the things that we experience. The idea of trying to contemplate God's power and God's love, which is so far beyond my comprehension, can lead you to stop and focus on what you know. Don't do that. I think that's Paul's prayer for the Ephesians and for us. Don't do that.

Here's what I mean. I think the greatest gift the Lord has given me in my life (outside of faith in Jesus Christ) is my wife and children. To contemplate and know them and help them and serve them and live for them I find easy. But sometimes I stop there and don't connect that with this is how I show love for God. I can fall short of what does God want me to do and I can sometimes only focus on what is going to benefit my wife and my family and leave God out of that equation. I think it isn't something that I just do. I think all of us at times do those kinds of things because we focus on what we can see.

This love that God has shown to us, He tells us (as you keep reading Ephesians) is to be lived out in family life and in all of our relationships and things like that, not just because it makes life easier for us but because it glorifies God and it lives our faith so that others see it and want to say, "I want what you have." And then we get to share who Jesus is and why we do what we do. That's God's plan and I'm pretty convinced that's Scriptural.

Which then begs the question, when is the last time someone asked you why you do what you do as they've seen you live your faith? As they've seen you act in ways that others don't act? How have you been revealing this unknowable love in your life so that others want to know about it? I kind of look around and think, *they aren't asking me this as often as they probably should*. Maybe that means either they are scared of me because I'm big, or it means I'm not living it well enough. That I'm only focused on what I can see and I'm loving others the way everyone else loves others; that I'm not living it well enough and doing it as a part of my walk of faith in Christ.

God tells us today to keep focusing on this love that you'll never know fully and get to know it more. I think part of what He is telling us is that you know it more as you live in view of it every day of your life, in every area of your life, and you turn even the little mundane things we do in our daily life into an opportunity to do it in a way that shows our love for God. To do it with the attitude that is the attitude of Christ; to do it humbly; to do it without looking for recognition; to do it without looking for reward. But to do it just because we want to love like Christ has loved us. That means at times setting aside our own personal preferences.

Anybody here inwardly whine about the opening hymn? *I can't sing that hymn off the screen. I don't know that tune*. It's printed in the Service Folder. It's in the Hymnal. If you figured out in the first verse that you don't know the tune, open the Hymnal. The music is there. We can get wrapped up in what is about us and not what is about God. If you look at that hymn again, "Oh love, how deep, how..." it talks about this incredible love of God and it goes through everything He did for us. If you missed it because you were upset about a hymn tune, that's a YOU problem. That isn't a God problem. You missed out on a chance to get to know God's love and what He has done for you more because you were wrapped up in YOU.

I have learned I can't fix YOU problems. Paula can't fix ME problems. The only one that can fix ME problems is ME. So part of that means we have to start looking at how I can know my God better and how I can live that love by putting Him at the forefront of my thoughts, in all of these areas, not just the churchy ones. In all of these areas, I guarantee you God is going to put in front of you opportunities this coming week to show love to other people in a way that is either going to reflect your love for Jesus. Or, you could react the way the world would react and attack someone who is a jerk. Or you can love a jerk. It is going to be there in front of you. Look for it. Maybe you'll only see it in the review mirror when you see that you failed to love a jerk and you just treated the jerk like a jerk. If that's the case, then say "Lord, forgive me." And here is the incredible thing—our God forgives us because of His depth and His height and His width and His abundance of love for us in Christ.

Then as we move forward, we keep looking for more and more ways to reveal this mystery to others. As we go through our life, God has really called us to be a Hallmark

Mystery Movie Channel so that we reveal the love of God to other people in the way that we show love to them that reflects how God showed love to us. Amen.

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