



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

January 30, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

4th Sunday after Epiphany

First Lesson: [1 Kings 17:7-16](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 78

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 4:20-32](#)

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Romans 10:18-11:6](#)

JESUS IS REVEALED AMIDST REJECTION

Pride is revealed

Rejection is revealed

Grace is revealed

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:

Have you ever thought *If I just got everything I wanted, then things would be okay? Things would be right if I could just get all that I wanted; all the things, all the desires and everything would go my way.* If you're a two-year-old, a three-year-old, a five-year-old, that's kind of how you are always thinking. Your parents are always telling you, "No! Don't do this." *I want to eat now. I want to eat this. I want to watch this. I want to do that.* The whole job of a parent is to teach kids what is right and wrong and that they can't always get their way.

There are a couple of famous movies that make me think of this. I don't agree with all the theology in this movie, but do you remember the movie Bruce Almighty with Jim Carrey? He wishes that things would go his way and that he could be like God. So God gives him His abilities, His gifts. He actually starts making everything go his way and grants all the prayers and makes all the things go the way that everyone wants. What happens? Things start falling apart.

A little bit of an older movie but a good classic with Tom Hanks, Big, where Tom Hanks at first is a young child and he wishes that he could grow up, that he could be big. So his wish is granted. It is going well for a while but then in the end he wishes to go back to the way it was.

A lot of times we think we know what we want. We want things to go the way we want. Or we think we know what is best. That's really how it goes so often. There are times

though when God does allow those things to happen, just like in that movie, Bruce Almighty, or even with your kids. Sometimes they say "I want to do this. I want to eat all the chocolate." What do you do? Maybe you let them do it and they get to experience the consequences and maybe learn a little bit.

Where we pick this up in Romans, it kind of picks it up at an interesting spot. Paul says, ***But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did.*** The section before this we are actually going to look at next week. He is talking about how people come to faith. He's saying people come to faith by hearing the message. You need preachers. You need to share God's Word in order for people to believe. Then the natural question is, as he is kind of talking about Israel and how Israel hasn't believed, he says "Did Israel hear?" Did they hear the message? He says, "Well of course. The voice has gone out to all the earth, the words to the ends of the world." So he has certainly shared with them the plan and they knew about the Messiah and they've known about Jesus now. Then he uses this example. All those lessons from Elijah and the example that Jesus gave is the next part. He says, ***"I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."*** He's saying God showed that Israel was unbelieving and even though they were hearing the message, he would go to other people.

So what is the issue? The Israelites were hearing the message, but they wanted things to go their way. They wanted to be saved by what they thought was best. Their pride is really revealed because they thought "Hey, we're the children of Abraham. We are God's chosen people. So just by who we are, that's what matters. And we have God's Law! And you know what? We're really good at keeping it. We're so good at keeping the Law that we're going to add more. We're going to have hundreds and hundreds of laws and we're going to walk around and dress in ways and show everyone how much we follow God's Law, because that's what is important; keeping God's Law." They had so much pride in who they were and what they thought was the way to be saved. Their pride was revealed in everything that they did and said.

In Romans, Paul writes about how those who sought to be saved or be found righteous by the Law found that they did not find righteousness. Why? Because we can't be saved by works. But we're so prideful, aren't we? We think that "I know what is best." The Israelites thought they knew what was best. We often think we know what is best and we're prideful. So what happens is we look down on those who don't follow God's Law. "How could I love THESE people who have done THESE things?" We can become boastful. "Hey, I go to church every Sunday. I've been faithful. Maybe it's not that I'm going to be saved by this, but maybe I deserve something from God because I am faithful, so God should make the things that I want to happen." We often fall into that where we just think things should go the way that we want. We're prideful.

That pride can lead us to reject; reject what is actually best for us. We can reject God's plan, His love and His mercy. This is exactly what happened for Israel. He goes on to say, ***"I was found by those who did not seek me; I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me." But concerning Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people." I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means!"*** God didn't reject His people. But yet there is a rejection happening.

So what happened? The Israelites rejected God. How did they reject God? As Jesus is revealed, as His love is revealed, they wanted nothing to do with that because they said "It is by what I've done. It is by who we are." They continually did this. He said, ***"All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and obstinate people."*** But they continued to reject Jesus. As he is looking over Jerusalem, what does he do? He weeps! He said, "I wish to gather your children, like a hen gathers her chicks ([Luke 13:34](#); [Matthew 23:37](#))." They didn't want it. They rejected Jesus.

What it's really about is choosing works over grace. There are so many things that one can choose to live their life by and you know what we default to? We default to the idea that it's all about me being good. That's what Israel did. It's what so many in the world do today. They look at Jesus and many of them say "Hey, Jesus is a great guy." But what is He all about? "He's a great model. He shows us how to live." What are they doing? They are rejecting God's grace. They are saying, "Yes, He is great but He doesn't save me. He teaches me how to be good." So this rejection is revealed through our pride in thinking we know how to be saved.

You can think of Israel and a couple different people in the world. It's not that there are all these people really far away that are struggling with this. There are. But there are people in our own community who are rejecting Jesus; those who just outright reject Him and say "I want nothing to do with God and religion." They have all the reasons for it. "The church is hypocritical. That stuff is all made up. You can believe whatever you want."

But then there is another type of person that is rejecting Jesus and His grace. It's the person who, through slow and day-by-day decisions, grows farther and farther away from God. Slowly and slowly they take on the ideas of this world and those sinful ideas that come from the heart. Where do you hear about grace and forgiveness? Only in God's Word and my guess is that many of them aren't hearing God's Word at home. Day after day they continue to drift further and further and in essence, they are rejecting Jesus and His grace.

Why is this important? What happens if you reject Jesus and His grace when you die? It's not something we like to talk about, but if you reject Jesus and His grace, you are saying "God, judge me on who I am. Give me what I want. Judge me on what type of

person I am." How is that going to go? It's not our place to say for sure where someone is, but what is interesting is if you think about it this way. If someone during their whole life is saying "God, I want nothing to do with you. I don't want to hear about your loving grace," then when they die we are supposed to say "Yes, God is going to bring them to be with Him in heaven forever"? To be with HIM; does that sound like a loving thing for someone who doesn't want anything to do with God?

Again, it's not our place to say where someone goes, but what comfort do we have when a Christian dies? When they have confessed with their words and their mouth what is in their heart? We're going to look at that next week.

So how do we go forward with those who continue to reject God? I think one of the best examples of this is that great parable of the Prodigal Son and looking at grace, because that's what this really is all about. It's focusing on rejecting and the pride that Israel had but notice how Paul ends. He talks about Elijah and how he thought he was the only one, but God said there were many left; a remnant that will continue to be a remnant left. How? By grace and NOT by works; ***if it were, grace would no longer be grace.*** It's all about grace. So even amongst all this, grace is revealed.

How is that shown in the Prodigal Son? That first son you could consider to be like the Gentiles, or like us, who think we know what is best. He says to his father, "Give me the money that you would give me when you're dead." "I really wish you were dead" is actually what he's saying. He thinks *I know what is best. I'm going to go live my life.* What happens? He lives his life. He does a lot of things he's not supposed to do and he realizes "this isn't great." He comes home rehearsing the words that he is going to say. "I'm sorry! Forgive me!" What is the father doing? He is sitting there waiting, watching for his son to return. Just as Paul writes about God, waiting with open arms for this obstinate people. The son returns and what does he do? Does he say "Now you must do this; do this; do this; do this"? No! He welcomes him with grace and forgiveness and puts a ring on him and throws a party and rejoices that his son had returned. He brings him home with grace and forgiveness. ([Luke 15:11-32.](#))

What's interesting about this story is there is another person involved. There is an older son. When the younger son returns home, how does the older son react? He is not happy. "That son of yours!" he says. He is not going to come in and he is so angry because he's been there all the time. He has served. He has done the right things. But he doesn't feel God's love. The father goes out and he is pleased with him, "Come in! I've always loved you. Everything I have is yours."

You know what this story is really about? It's not the younger son so much. You could say it's really about the father and his love. But the story was told to Israel, who are represented in that older son, the older son who is standing outside and is angry and jealous and doesn't want to come in. Yet, God is standing there with grace and says,

“Come in! I have loved you!” There is still a remnant. There is still a hope but the story ends with him outside. We don’t know what happens. That’s really what Paul is saying here about Israel. We don’t know. There is a remnant. And it’s by grace and not by works.

This is the joy that we have. Yes, people reject and people are filled with pride, but we have grace to give. We get to be a part of that. Yes, there are people who are struggling and wondering and rejecting Jesus, but you get to be a voice of love and hope in their life. If you’re struggling, if you don’t know what to say, there are so many resources. We want to help you be able to share the love of Jesus. That’s what matters. It’s eternity. It’s knowing that they will be in heaven with God forever. That’s what we want. That’s what we want for you and for all your loved ones. This is what God gives us the joy to be a part of; to share about the love of Jesus so that HE is revealed, so that His grace is made known. Amen.

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