



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

March 13, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

Lent 2

First Lesson: [Jeremiah 26:8-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 42-43

Second Lesson: [Philippians 3:17-4:1](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 13:31-35](#)

Marks of the Messiah: Resolute in the Face of Rejection

The heart is drawn to pleasure and ease
God's Word brings persecution and the cross
God's love has determination and compassion

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: Amen.

There was a TV show years ago, maybe you remember it. It was called Kids Say the Darndest Things. If you remember it, they would show a lot of things that kids did and said. It was always kind of funny because kids are pretty truthful sometimes, for most of them. They can learn how to lie pretty quickly, but sometimes they don't really have a filter or they are going to tell you what they are thinking. They will tell you how it is, or how they feel, or what they see. I think this goes for a lot of what is inside the heart as well. Sometimes when working with my kids, you ask "Why did you do that? Why did you do this kind of silly thing? Why did you do this thing you knew you weren't supposed to do?" The answer was "I wanted to. That's what I want." That's kind of how it goes. There is this natural inclination in our hearts to do what we want, to do what we have inside and for that to lead us.

That's what our hearts want. Our hearts want what we want. We're drawn to pleasure and to ease. When we look at our hearts and the world, we can see that this is quite true. We're going to see this in the Scripture that we look at, not so much in the actions of Jesus but in the fact that Jesus does the opposite. We're going to see what Jesus does, but we're going to see how He, in the face of persecution, is resolute; doing maybe not what He wants, what is easy and what brings Him pleasure, but doing what is most important.

We know our hearts. We know what the world says. This is shown to us in that Second Lesson, in Philippians. It says that those who live as enemies of their cross, ***their destiny***

is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Think about the world that we live in today and think about those words. ***...their glory is in their shame.*** Isn't that what we see, where the shameful things of this world are now celebrated? Whatever I'm feeling in my heart, we're told, is what we're supposed to go and do. We can see this in our text with Herod. The Pharisees come to Jesus and they are saying ***"Herod wants to kill you."*** There are some interesting things about this. Why are the Pharisees telling Jesus this? Maybe they are trying to protect Him. Or maybe they are trying to pass off some of the blame on what they want. These might be Pharisees that are against Him, and they want to get Him out. They don't like Jesus. But do you remember who this Herod was? Remember what happened to Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist? John was speaking out against Herod and all of the horrible things he had done of marrying and taking people's wives that he should not have. Herod makes this promise after this dance and says "I will give you whatever you want"; the pleasures of her heart. She asks for the head of John on a platter. Herod is a great example of someone who is after his own desires.

We see how our hearts and the world lead us to say "Just go and do what you want. Whatever comes out of your heart, if it's coming from your heart, it must be good. How can you deny your desires? How can you deny the things that make up you?" If we know ourselves and we know that there is sin that lives inside of us, then we do need to deny ourselves. We do need to question where those things are coming from.

We see Jesus, though, resolute. He is not doing these things. We find Him at a place where He is being told to leave. Herod wants to kill Him. Jesus replies and says, ***"Go tell that fox, 'I will keep on driving out demons and healing people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' In any case, I must press on today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"*** Jesus pressed on. Jesus was resolute and He did not follow His heart. Instead He continued to preach the Word. What did that bring Him? God's Word brings persecution and the cross.

We can see that over and over again, how it brings persecution. We saw it in Jesus' life as He spoke God's Word. Yes, He gained crowds of people. He performed miracles. But then as He continued to speak God's Word, people didn't always like the words He had to say. Yet Jesus continued to preach. That was the most important thing to Him, to share that the kingdom of God was coming and to preach repentance. Even when His disciples spoke up when He spoke about the cross and going to Jerusalem, He spoke against them and He knew where that was coming from; from enemies of God, from the devil. The devil will persecute us and say "God's Word is foolishness. How could you follow these things?" We see the persecution that Jesus goes through. We see the persecution that the prophets went through.

Jesus says that He will go on to Jerusalem because surely no prophet could die outside Jerusalem. That's the story of the Old Testament of how God sent prophet after prophet to Jerusalem, to His people, and they continued to reject Him. God's Word brings this persecution and it also brings the cross. Jesus says He is going to go on to die.

What does it mean for us that we will face persecution and the cross? I think it's interesting to see the three levels that Jesus has in this, in persecution. He has persecution, what it seems like, from the Pharisees, the religious people, the Herodians, the politicians, the people in power, and then even Jerusalem at the end where He longs, in Verse 34, ***"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."*** The people of Jerusalem even, the common people, want nothing to do with Him. We see He has persecution from the religious, from the powerful, and from the masses.

I think it's a picture of what we can expect when we're in God's Word. When we're sharing God's Word with others, when we're living out God's Word, it's not just persecution or opposition from one side. Persecution can come from any place and come in any form. That persecution then might be so severe where it's a cross. For Jesus, this cross is one that He was going to literally carry and go and die on. But we need to be reminded, as Christians, that there is a cross for us as well.

We're starting these Partnering in the Gospel classes, a seminar on Saturdays, where we review what it means to be a Christian, what it means to be a member, a disciple. We go through five marks of discipleship. The first mark is this: to be a Christian means you carry a cross. So what does it mean for us as a Christian to carry a cross? We've seen that picture but we actually think about what that means as a Christian, to carry a cross. There are kind of two parts to this.

1. That God's Word is sometimes going to bring trouble into our lives. This is not something that I choose. This is really important. A cross is not something that I go out and find and say "this is my cross." The cross is something that is given to us because we are following God's Word or we're sharing God's Word. It might be something that because we're a Christian and we follow these principles and these ways that maybe there is a hardship in work or family or these other things because we're a Christian.
2. The other part of carrying the cross comes when Jesus says you must carry your cross and deny yourself. Do you think about that? One of the first parts of being a Christian is to deny yourself, to not follow the desires of your heart? Are you getting up and when you're doing your devotions or thinking about "What does it mean to be a Christian? It means today I'm going to deny myself"? I don't think so. When it comes to being a part of the church and being a member of

this church, do we say "You know what? I'm going to deny myself. I'm going to say whatever anyone else needs, I'm going to put everyone else first and I'm going to say 'My desires, my pleasures, they come last'?" Is that what we do as Christians?

I hope so. I hope that's what the Spirit creates in our lives, but we know that at the same time we're saints and sinners. We have that new self and we have that old self, and we continually need to keep telling ourselves to deny ourselves. We need to hear God's Word because that selfishness, that lack of humility and that desire to get what "I want" comes through over and over again in almost every aspect of our life. In marriage, in work, in the church, just name it. We want what we want and we like to put ourselves first. But God says to take up your cross, to deny yourself.

For Jesus, this meant denying Himself of what He could have; having this earthly kingdom or power without death. Jesus was going to go and be mocked and persecuted and whipped and beaten and spit on. This was the physical, emotional and horribleness that He was going to go through. Not only that, He was going to go to the cross and die for each and every one of our sins. Not just the people of that time, not just the pain of that time, but the pain and sorrow and affliction of all of our sins. All the times that we are selfish are on Him. He took up the cross to redeem us and to forgive us and to love us and to wash us from all of those sins. We see that in His Words. We see God's love. He says, ***"Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were not willing."***

As Jesus set out for the cross and for Jerusalem, we see a great glimpse of His love. We see in God's love this determination and this compassion. These are the people who rejected Him. If you think about it, not just in Jesus' life in that time and those Israelites who rejected Him, think about all of that time of how God's people had rejected Him over and over again and then hear Him yearning out for Jerusalem and saying, "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how I wish to gather you!" He continues to go after them over and over and over again. He is determined. He is so filled with compassion even though they kill His prophets, even though they think they know what is best and they say, "Surely this will never happen. Surely we're fine." And they continue to reject. God comes to them in great compassion and determination.

What does that look like in your lives? It's to know that God does that with us. That though our hearts are often stubborn and we like to reject and go on our ways, God is determined and is compassionate with us and loving and forgiving us. But then when we know of His love and compassion, there is so much we can do for others. We know that God is continuing to do this yet today. These are His Words to His Jerusalem now. To His people who continue to reject or who just through apathy don't think it's important.

How do we continue to go out with determination and compassion? It's important to have both. If I'm determined but I don't have compassion, how do I sound? I'll probably have all Law. "You must do this and the way to be with God looks exactly like this." You maybe don't stop to listen. When I come with compassion also, maybe I learn what someone's hurting heart is going through and learn what hurts they have or what questions they have. But if I don't come with determination, what happens? I go out and "Okay, God loves you," and I stop. What does this all sound like? We've heard it a few times, but this sounds just like our Barnabas ministry.

We're seeking to be determined and to have compassion for those around us. What does that look like? That looks so different in different circumstances but it's for us to know and for others to know that we care about them. Not just once but over and over again; to be determined to show that this is important. Because our hearts are hard and the world is telling you "This is fine" or "Go and follow this." We have seen and know of God's love and we say "This is what is so important." That fills our heart to be determined and to be compassionate for others. To go after the straying and show them God's love.

What might happen when we do that? We might face persecution. We might be rejected. We might carry our cross. This is what happened to Jesus. This is what can happen to us. But when that happens, do we turn around and give up? I think we continue to pray for them and continue to show our love and compassion for them.

Our God and our Savior, our Lord is so compassionate and cares about you. He goes resolutely to the cross in the face of knowing exactly what is going to happen. When we go out into the world, when we talk to brothers and sisters and talk about really difficult things, it may not be easy, but the rewards are so important. When we talk to kids and they say sometimes the reason why they did it is because "That's what I want," it's been said that denying oneself is maybe the most important thing to learn in life. To have self-control and to learn that short-term pleasure isn't always the best thing. For us, we know that is so true because the sins of this world, whenever we go and deny God's Word and continue to live in sin, what happens? It hurts our hearts. It hurts our faith. And the results are never good. While the short-term pleasures of doing what I want might feel good, there are eternal results on the line.

Denying ourselves and following God and knowing of His love and facing persecution, denying ourselves and sharing God's Word, we know that the results are eternal. When we know of His love and forgiveness and can share that with others, we might not always see the results now. Know that as we go out and we share with others, the results might not be here, there, this week, next week, but we're searching for those eternal results; the results that God will see.

So as we go out in this world, as you know that you will face persecution and difficulty, go out determined and with compassion knowing that you are loved and forgiven, and that's the love and forgiveness and peace we want to share with 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.