



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

April 3, 2022
5th Sunday in Lent

Pastor James Enderle

First Lesson: [Isaiah 43:16-24](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 73

Second Lesson: [Romans 11:11-21](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 20:9-19](#)

Marks of the Messiah: Persistent Call to Return to God

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:

There are some that say that there is never really any bad question. Teachers might say this in your classroom. They want you to ask any questions that you can. I think if you have lived long enough, and I think teachers know, there certainly are bad questions. If you are a team captain and you are trying to build the morale of your team and build people up, to ask another teammate "Why are you so bad?" probably wouldn't be a very good question. You could even think about in marriage, when you are having a disagreement about something, there are probably a few questions that you could ask that wouldn't come off the right way. They might be considered bad questions.

When we look into how the people treated Jesus and how Jesus was as a teacher, He was asked many questions. I find it very interesting how Jesus always answered the questions He was asked. How often does He directly answer the question? Almost never, right? He is always trying to get to the heart of the question. Why is that question being asked?

In the section for our Sermon today (that comes from [Luke 20](#)), we are right in the middle of a section during Holy Week. If you think about the time of the year, we are actually only one week away from the start of Holy Week. We haven't done those Passion readings, so maybe it's kind of sneaking up on you, Easter and Palm Sunday, but we're getting there. So this section that we look at is right as we are getting close to Jesus' death and His trial during Holy Week. In this section, He is getting bombarded by the religious leaders. He is teaching the people and they come and ask Him several different questions.

Right before our section, it says ***“Tell us by what authority you are doing these things,” they said. “Who gave you this authority?”***^(Luke 20:2) That’s an interesting question. Then Jesus answers in an interesting way, by asking a question. ***He replied, “I will also ask you a question. Tell me: John’s baptism—was it from heaven, or of human origin?”***^(Luke 20:3-4) Of course they couldn’t really answer that question. If they answer that it’s from heaven, then they would be approving of Jesus’ teaching. If they answer it’s not, then the people would get upset because the people liked John the Baptist’s teachings.

They go on to ask a few other questions that are pretty famous. The question about whether you should pay taxes or not. Jesus answers that one in a great way of course. Then they ask Him questions about marriage and when you’re in heaven. Who will you be married to in heaven if a spouse dies and you have to remarry? They are asking these questions not to really get the answer but to try to stump Jesus and to oppose Him. They have heard His Word and His teachings and what He has to say, and what have they done? They rejected Him and His Word. Sinful man rejects God and His Word. That’s what we naturally do. This is what had happened to those teachers of the Law, the Pharisees (the religious leaders). They had heard His teachings and what He had to say and they wanted nothing to do with Him. They hated Him for it. They had shown this over and over again and they were showing this with all their questions. He knew their hearts. He knew what they really wanted. He knew what they were planning. So He tells this parable.

He says, ***“A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out.”*** This picture that He draws is clearly a picture of God sending prophets to the people of Israel. God sent His Word, but the people continually rejected it. This was God’s continuous call for the people to return. Sending His Word, sending people and saying “Turn back! Turn back!” And what did the people do; they continued to reject His Word. We saw that over and over again in the Old Testament. Why is that?

God’s ways work a little bit different than our ways and we don’t always like what God says. We don’t like when He comes with the Law and points out our failings. The Israelites didn’t like that. When they knew that they were falling away or they were turning to other things and God would point it out, they didn’t want to hear it. God does things and has plans that we don’t always appreciate either. So when He gives us things or has plans that we don’t really like, sometimes we want nothing to do with Him.

But what does God do in the face of our rejection? The parable is quite interesting. It says, ***“Then the owner of the vineyard said, ‘What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.’”*** If you were this vineyard owner and you sent three men and they beat them and it seemed like the way that they were treating them continued to get worse, would you say “My son, whom I love, I’m going to send him to the people”? I don’t think so. That’s not what I would do. I’m not going to send someone who I love and I’m really concerned about to these people who are violent and haven’t shown that they care. In fact even at the beginning this vineyard owner, the way that he treats the men, he says that he just asked for a part of the harvest; he’s so loving and kind to the workers (the tenants).

But then, what do they do? This shows here that God rejects the way of men. He has this love and this compassion for us and His ways are so much different than ours even though man doesn’t act the same way. ***“But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. ‘This is the heir,’ they said. ‘Let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.’ So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him.”*** God’s ways certainly aren’t our ways. God showed love and compassion to the people of Israel, and He was showing it by this parable about how God had sent prophet after prophet and now He is sending His Son. He was there with them. And how did the people treat Him and what did they think of God and His ways? They wanted nothing to do with Him.

God also rejects our ways. We see this later. ***Jesus looked directly at them and asked, “Then what is the meaning of that which is written: ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone’?*** The ways of man are not the ways of God. The thing that people reject, it became the capstone. We can see this was the clear picture of Jesus and the people knew it. It says that in different ways because when He talks about the end of the story, He says what the owner of the vineyard will do then. ***“He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others.”*** ***When the people heard this, they said, “God forbid!”*** Later we see: ***The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them.*** They knew exactly what Jesus was saying; that He represented this son and they knew that they were rejecting Him and His ways.

God still did it. He didn’t have to send Jesus. He worked in those different ways, and that’s why the people struggled so much. The Pharisees (the teachers of the Law) were so set in their laws and their ways, and they were comfortable being the leaders and having everyone follow them. They had their nice path to follow righteousness. But Jesus came and He challenged all of them. Then what happened? We see the result, the rejection of the people. When, in the parable, the son comes, they killed him. We see exactly what the Israelites planned to do.

One of the most interesting pictures and items of Jesus' life is after He raises Lazarus from the dead. It shows this great power and this great miracle and this great love, and what do they do? They plan to kill Jesus because He is gaining too much popularity. He knew their hearts. This was seen in this parable. The people had rejected God's love. God gives His love but people often don't want anything to do with Him. Why is that?

Why don't people want anything to do with God's love? This is a good question to ask in our world today. As we preach and as we go out into the world, what do we want to give people? We're not out there to try to make everyone think we're the best people in the world. That's not the mission of the church, the Christian church. We aren't going out to make people perfect by action or to condemn people. We want to share the love of Jesus; to share the Gospel.

But why do some reject that love? I think it's connected to that Second Lesson that we read. Notice at the end He talks about (when Paul writes to the Romans) humility. He says "Don't be so proud that you have been chosen; that you have faith." It's all by grace. But many reject this grace because they don't want to humble themselves. They don't want to admit when they have done wrong. When Jesus confronts the teachers of the Law (the Pharisees), do they say, "Yeah, we see where we have fallen short. We see where we have led people astray. We see where our hearts have gone astray"? Are they thanking Jesus for His teaching? No. They have this pride in who they are, in their traditions and thinking that they know what is best.

I think as we look at the world and even ourselves, sometimes we have to see where we are too prideful. Where are we too prideful to look at God's Word and see His love, to see that His love comes to us both in Law and Gospel? Yes, it's all about Him sending His Son to die for us. We see that in the parable. But His love comes to us in Law in saying "What you're doing is not good. It's not good for you. It's not good for others. It's not good for your soul." So we examine our own hearts and say, where are we falling short? Where have I become too prideful to listen to God's Word, to reject His loving correction, and that I don't want to hear His loving Gospel, and to think about those around us that we want to get them that Gospel but maybe they are stuck on some part of God's Word? Maybe they are stuck on some teaching or something that they have confused or they don't see that God is loving. They have put themselves (what you could say) in the place of God. Saying they know what is better and when they see things, "This doesn't look good. This doesn't look loving. How could God be loving if the Bible says this or if God does this?" We see that God's love is there for us over and over again by the way He continues to come to us, even though we reject Him, even though our hearts are hard. That's the whole story of the Old Testament.

We read all those stories and see life was hard for those people. How could they be so foolish? God came to them and gave them prophets and teachers. After they made mistakes over and over again, He still came and showed love to them. That's exactly

what the parable is that Jesus tells. But we know what is most important about all of this is that God continues to show His love. God's love is greater than our ways. We struggle with God's ways. We want our ways. But what is most important to see is that God's love is so much greater.

He shows that by sending that Son He loves to the people and to us. He shows that in those words where He says, ***"The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone."*** He sent Jesus to be that foundation, to be that solid rock. There are some that turn away from it and stumble. ***"Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."*** This means those who struggle with this grace and forgiveness, because there is no other way. But He continues to bring this grace and forgiveness that tells you that nothing you have done is too great. His love is greater than our ways.

If you've strayed or if there is some sin that you cannot forgive yourself of, or if you have a friend who thinks God could never love them, God could never forgive them, what God is saying is that He sends His Son that He loves to show His love for us, amongst the rejection of the people. When we were still sinners, God died for us. God loved us so much that He redeemed us, and it was nothing out of what we have done. We were hostile to Him. By nature we are born in this sin and we are enemies to God. But God comes and gives us faith and forgiveness and grace. This is a hope and a peace and a love that we want to share with others and we want to give to others that are struggling with God and struggling with their sins.

There are a lot of people in the world that have questions. Some might question why God has done something. Some might question why things are said the way they are in the Bible. Some questions are very good. Some people are just trying to challenge and nitpick. But we want to be able to give answers; to give answers and give a reason for the hope that we have because God loves us. He loves us so unconditionally that He is greater than our hard hearts. Our hard hearts that continually struggle with Him, but because of faith, we have been redeemed and forgiven and given a new self that clings to Him. Cling to Him like the words of the Psalm say, *I have nothing in heaven but you and I yearn for you, Lord. I cling to you.* And in the midst of whatever struggles and troubles we may face in this world of bodily harm, of illness, of loneliness, of difficulties, of whatever else we have, we know that God loves us. We know that God is always with us and that He has a plan for us. Most of all, He has forgiven our sins and He wants to bring you to be with Him forever.

There is a lot in the world to struggle with at times. But be convinced of God's love for you. That will never waiver. And that love remains true 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.