



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 15, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

5th Sunday of Easter

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [1 Samuel 20:12-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 145

Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 13:1-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 13:31-35](#)

Christian Love in Action

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.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

In Christ, our risen and ruling Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

As Christians we talk about love an awful lot. We have different words from the Biblical languages for love. In Greek there is "charis" which we translate as "grace," which we talk about often as "undeserved love." I think that one is easy to understand. You love something that hasn't earned or deserved your love. Here is a way I think you guys could think of it. You all are Packer fans. "Oh, no, we didn't go to the Super Bowl!" That's your whine. Try being a Lions fan! That's love! That's undeserved love, if you're a Lions fan. Bucks—"Oh, no, we have game 7!" Try being a Pistons fan! It's the same thing—that takes love. It's easy to love a winner. It's a little harder to love a loser. Undeserved love—it hasn't been earned, it hasn't been deserved. That we talk about with grace a lot, so I think that you can understand.

But today we focus on another aspect of Christian love that comes from the Greek word "agape." It's the kind of love that God is talking about when He says ***"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son..."*** ([John 3:16](#)) It's the word for love that is used when He says ***"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."*** ([John 13:34-35](#)) This is a love that puts someone else's interest ahead of your own.

If you combine the two, this means as Christians we are going to put the interest of someone else, who doesn't deserve our love, ahead of our own interest at times. That's a challenge for our sinful nature because our sinful nature doesn't want to love that way. Our sinful nature wants us to believe that love has to be earned. "If they haven't earned

it, I'll tolerate them but I'm certainly not going to act and put their interest ahead of my own..." like Jesus did when He left heaven to live and die for you and for me and for the whole world. It did no benefit for Him. The benefit was all for us. It acts in a way that puts someone else's interest ahead of your own.

That's what we see in David and Jonathan today. We see Jonathan acting in a way that puts David's interest ahead of his own. David you probably remember from David and Goliath. He eventually became King David. At this time he was just General David, a general in King Saul's army. Saul was the first appointed king over all of the tribes of Israel. Before that, God Himself had been their Ruler. It was a theocracy. But the people said "We want a king like everyone else has." They didn't like how God was ruling them. So God gave them Saul.

Saul began as someone who ruled and wanted to serve the Lord and was humble, but the power of being king went to Saul's head. It became all about Saul. He started disobeying what the Lord had told him to do and he was making excuses for it. He acted like "I'm the king. I can do what I want." Kings are answerable to God. Saul was not a faithful shepherd or shepherd king of the people of Israel.

So God said the throne was going to go to David. He had David anointed by Samuel as the next king over Israel. But David still served Saul faithfully. He served him, and the people would sing songs. They would sing "Saul has killed his hundreds, but David has killed his thousands" when they would praise after Israel had won a victory. Saul didn't like that.

Saul ordered his men, including Jonathan, to kill David. Jonathan said "Why? What has he done? He served you faithfully in defeating the Philistine. He served you faithfully as a general." So Saul had said "As surely as the Lord lives, I won't kill him." A couple nights later at supper, an evil spirit came on him and he threw his spear at David across the supper table. That's kind of a change of heart.

David fled. When he fled he contacted Jonathan. David said to him, "As surely as the Lord lives, I'm only a step away from death. King Saul is trying to kill me. You have to help me." In what we read, Jonathan was taking an oath to agreeing to help David and asking David to take care of Jonathan and his family after the Lord had removed all of David's enemies; to continue to show Jonathan the same kind of loving kindness that God had shown to David. Jonathan acts out of this love for God, acknowledging that God had said "David will be the next king."

If you don't know the whole story, you might think Jonathan is doing this to butter him up so he can get a nice position in the kingdom of David. But do you remember who Jonathan was? Do you remember who his dad was? His dad was Saul, the king! Humanly speaking, Jonathan would be the next king if David is killed! But Jonathan puts

David's interest ahead of his own and says "I'll go talk to him. I'll find out and I'll let you know if he's going to try to kill you." David said "Jonathan, tell your dad that when I don't show up at the New Moon Festival," this feast they have at the start of the month, they were in a lunar month, "when I'm not there, tell him I had to go off for sacrifices in my hometown of Bethlehem because my brother said I had to be there. Tell him that and we'll see how he reacts. If he's not upset, then we'll know he's not going to kill me. If he's upset, we'll know he is going to kill me."

David wasn't there the first night of the feast. We're told King Saul thought "He must be ceremonially unclean. Surely that's why he is not here." The next night he wasn't there, so Saul asked Jonathan where he was. Jonathan tells him the story they had agreed to. Saul blows up at his son. "Don't you know you're going to lose your kingdom if you help that guy out and let him go?!" Then Jonathan also learned what it meant to dodge a javelin thrown by his father, because his dad threw a javelin at him.

This is Christian love, isn't it? Putting yourself on the line because you love God and you acknowledge God and you want to serve God and doing it even if it comes at a cost to you. Jonathan went to let David know and David fled. Eventually David ends up becoming king, but this love that existed between David and Jonathan is a love that is because Jonathan and David both had hearts for the Lord and they were seeking to serve the Lord. They were living in Christian love and were putting each other's interest ahead of their own.

To the best of my knowledge, none of you here today has a dad that is a king. So how do you put this kind of Christian love into practice in your life? The same principle applies. You love like Christ loved you. That means you love those who don't deserve it and who haven't earned it. That's grace. That means you love by putting their interest ahead of your own. Sometimes that means you do it at a risk to yourself. Not when someone is going to throw a spear at you, well, who knows? But you do it even if it costs you something because you're so concerned about that other person.

I think of this in connection at times with Christian discipline. When your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won him over. If not, take one or two others along. If he doesn't listen to them, then tell it to the church, and so on, from [Matthew 18](#). This kind of admonishment, this kind of work takes a deep and abiding love for the person you are admonishing. It's a lot easier to say "Well, you should know what God says. Someone else has already told you so I'm not going to say anything." It takes love that puts that person's interest ahead of your own because you might suffer blowback. You might lose a friend. You might have harsh words spoken about you because you are acting in love for that person by telling them what they are doing is wrong before God and it's going to separate them from God and they won't be in heaven with you and that's your greatest desire.

But here is where Christian love also becomes very, very hard for us because we have a sinful nature. It's pretty hard to love the way [1 Corinthians 13](#) described it, by being patient, kind, keeping no record of wrongs, always protecting, always hoping, always persevering because sometimes our love, even when we are admonishing someone, is more like "How in the world could you do something so terrible? What's wrong with you?" It's condescending. It's annoying. At times as Christians we've even been harsh as we have admonished someone else and not loving and patient and kind. When we do that, God hates that sin as much as He hates the sin that we are admonishing. You can't just say "Well, what I'm saying is right." God has called you, not to be right. He has called you to be loving and right. If you aren't going to speak in love, you are sinning against your God.

When you and I look at how hard it is to love and put someone else's interest ahead of our own, even in marriage—the times I meet with people and it's so hard for them to put their spouse's interest ahead of their own, and that's what they promised to do in marriage, to love as Christ loved the church. Which means you put your spouse's interest ahead of your own. This is a person we love more than anyone else in the world (we have said) and yet we still end up at times loving ourselves more than we love them.

It just highlights what sinful wretches we are and how amazing it is, how absolutely and completely amazing it is that Jesus left heaven and came and lived and died for us to take away our sins! That He gave us the gift of faith through the Holy Spirit. That He tells us every time after we have screwed up again and have been unkind, unloving, impatient, harsh, and we haven't acted where He has called us to act, He still says "In Christ, you are forgiven."

If that doesn't amaze you, you just aren't paying attention. You just don't understand your own sinfulness and you have found a way to think you aren't that bad. When you see how sinful we are and you see God's love, this is what moves us to love as He has loved us because we treasure that love. We want to live in that love. We want to drink deep from the well of that love every day of our lives. Not just for ourselves, so that we can live in that love to one another because that's what God has called us to do. It might not be dodging javelins and helping someone come to the throne that should have been yours, that's probably not our call. But our calling is to put our interest behind the interest of someone that we have the opportunity to serve and love and do it because God did that for us first.

Christian congregations, Christian families, Christian marriages, a Christian in a community all provide us with those kinds of opportunities. Today at the end of the service, Soup for Souls, one of our compassion ministries that seeks to put action behind the love of Christ, is going to share with everyone here two bags of little goodies. I don't know what is in them. I didn't get one Thursday night. But they'll give them all to

you guys. One for you and one for you to share as an act of Christian love with someone that is hurting, because that's what Soup for Souls ministry does. It has meals available to offer encouragement in a tangible expression of love to people at times when they need it because we all need to feel love.

We'll watch the WELS Connection shortly after I say "Amen," and that wasn't it. It's about Christian aid and relief and how a congregation in Atlanta is seeking to put God's love into action in tangible ways. We don't want to just talk about love. We want to act in love, like Jonathan did, like our Savior did. So God will put in front of you opportunities to do it. Keep your eyes open for them and seize them when the Spirit puts them in front of you. When you see that you have failed, know that in Christ you are His forgiven child and seek to see the opportunities in the future. Amen.

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