



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

May 26, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

The Festival of the Ascension of Our Lord

First Lesson: [Exodus 14:21-31](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 47

Second Lesson: [Revelation 19:11-16](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 24:44-53](#)

### What a Parting Gift!

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 from God our Father, through our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

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

When I was a kid and I heard the words "parting gift" I thought of Johnny Olson announcing the parting gifts on the [Price is Right](#) to the contestants who didn't make it on stage; a year's supply of Beef-a-Roni or something like that. I don't remember what they all were, but that's what I always thought of as a "parting gift." Now I've come to realize there are other parting gifts that we get in life that are really kind of cool.

I think one of the neatest parting gifts that I've ever received is one I use weekly. I use it every Wednesday afternoon. I sit down in Confirmation Class and have a cup of coffee. It's this coffee cup. It has a parrot on it. I hate parrots. One of the students gave it to me. On the other side it says "Don't be a parrot." What I say to the kids all the time is, "Don't be a parrot. If you give me the answer and you don't know why it's the right answer or you can't explain why it's the right answer, you're just a parrot and then I should just start feeding you crackers and put newspaper under your chair. I don't want parrots. I want people that can handle the Word of God and know the Word of God." So a year ago one of the 8<sup>th</sup> graders gave me this as a parting gift after confirmation. Now every week I drink out of it and I think about that and I think *that's a pretty cool parting gift*. That kind of tells me that at least one student that I've taught in 20 years here listened.

But now I have a new favorite parting gift that I had given to someone else. Are you going to stand up and show everyone? Stand up, turn around, and let them all see how wonderful this is. Isn't that great? She buys this iced [Starbucks](#) stuff and calls it coffee

all the time, so I got her a nice sleeve to put on it because when she goes and continues her ministry, when Miss Holzhueter goes and continues her ministry in the shadow of hockey town, USA, now she can fit in because she's got a Redwing sleeve to put on that cup. That's just perfect! What a parting gift, huh? It's even better that she doesn't like the Redwings.

Parting gifts can be fun, maybe even semi-useful. I suppose she'll probably turn it inside out or something like that. But the parting gift that we want to focus on today is just absolutely incredible. It's a parting gift that's unlike any other than has ever been given to anyone anywhere. It was given to the disciples in the Upper Room on Easter. I think that's when the first part of what I read to you today took place. It actually continued on for all 40 days that He was with them after His ascension, when He appeared to them from time to time. Some think that the first part is Easter. Some think it's just a summary of everything He did because the last paragraph is obviously 40 days later, the ascension of Jesus. Both times He gives an incredible parting gift.

Right before our text, Jesus had appeared to the Emmaus disciples and given them a case of spiritual heartburn. Do you remember that? He didn't say "Hey, look! It's me, guys. I'm alive." He explained from Scripture how the Messiah had to suffer and die and that all these things had to happen. Then when He broke bread with them, it says they recognized that it was Jesus, and He immediately disappeared. They got back up and went back to Jerusalem to tell the other disciples that Jesus had arisen and they were all talking about it. It appears that right before this, Jesus comes and is talking to them, so this might be a continuation of that or it might be a summary of all 40 days. In either case, it doesn't really matter because the first parting gift He gave them was understanding; understanding that they didn't always have about what the Messiah had to do and why He had to do it.

He opened their minds so they could understand the Scripture. This was His parting gift—understanding of Scripture. All the things that had troubled them, all the things Peter had said "I'm never going to let this happen," Jesus' betrayal and death had to happen, because that's what Moses and the prophets and the psalms SAID would happen. This was God's plan from before the Creation of the world. And now they had seen it come to its culmination; Jesus' death, His resurrection, and they were about to see His ascension. So the first parting gift He gave was an understanding of Scripture.

Then He says, "Okay, you guys are going to be my witnesses." A witness tells what they know to be true. They don't tell everything about an event. They tell what they KNOW to be true about an event. They had more understanding now as He opened Scripture to them, but then He says, "But stay in the city until the gift from my Father comes and you are clothed with power from on high." That's 10 days after Ascension. It's Pentecost. That's what we'll celebrate in 10 days. June 5<sup>th</sup> is the Sunday where we'll celebrate the outpouring of the Holy Spirit so that these guys, who often stuck their foot

in their mouth and didn't always understand things; even when Jesus ascended into heaven, they still didn't get it quite completely and fully. They said "At this time are you going to establish your kingdom? He told them "but stay in the city until the Spirit comes to you from on high and gives you power that is beyond your own." Then on Pentecost they preached this incredible sermon, Peter does. They share the Gospel in languages they didn't know. And all those thousands of people were baptized and came to faith in Jesus. There started what Jesus said.

The Old Testament Scriptures had said that after the Messiah lived perfectly in our place, died in our place, rose again, that repentance for the forgiveness of sins would be preached to all nations beginning at Jerusalem. And it began at Jerusalem. But God has continued to pour out that gift of His Spirit on all of His people; not just the disciples of that day, in that room, or that mount of ascension.

He continues to pour out His power to give understanding through His Word, through His Sacraments, and He pours out the same, exact power that enabled those people to serve so faithfully on you and on me and on every Christian that makes faithful use of the means of grace. It's the exact same Spirit. It's the exact same power source. It's the exact same thing that allowed these guys of 120—some people to eventually become the Christianity, the body of Christ, as we know it today. It started in Jerusalem and it continues—this continual outpouring of the Spirit and sharing of the Gospel.

And today God says "You are my witnesses." He wants to give YOU that understanding. He wants YOU to be His vocal chords and His arms and the instrument of His peace to share this Gospel with other people; those who already know it, to build them up in their faith, to regain them when they have strayed, to comfort them when they struggle, to give them the peace that passes all understanding when their world is full of nothing but stress. The more understanding we have, the better witnesses we will be.

But I think sometimes, as Christians, we are right close to where we don't always necessarily get it. I think it was last week, maybe it was the week before, I can't remember time anymore. For a couple weeks in a row I kept trying to turn on the TV in the basement for the service so it could be seen in the basement. That TV would come on but the service wouldn't come on because it has to go through the TV that is over in the corner in the back room there. That one would come on but it wouldn't connect, so we figured there was something wrong and we couldn't figure it out. Finally, I think last week, Pastor Enderle just jiggled the back. The connection was a little bit loose. He plugged it all the way in and I saw it when I came through after taking the candle out. The service is on in the basement now again. Everything LOOKED like it was plugged in, but it was just pulled out a little bit so it wasn't getting that power.

I think sometimes, as Christians, we look like we're plugged into God and His Word. We come here and we're in worship. Do you ever find yourself not hearing a single word

the pastor said until he gets to that magic word that makes you stand up? You get daydreaming about this or that. *I wish I had a Redwing sleeve to put on my cup* and you didn't hear a thing after that from the sermon today. Or, you walk out the door and it's like it's "poof!" It's gone. It doesn't live in us and change us. It's just like we put it back on its shelf. It's almost like we take off our Sunday clothes, hang them on a hook and don't get them out again until the next Sunday. Or sometimes we pull ourselves up and say "You know what? I'm really struggling right now. I need to get closer to God." But we don't take out our Bible and read and think about what He is saying. Instead we say "I've been praying and praying and praying" which is good, but that's kind of a one-sided conversation, isn't it? If you want the strength and the comfort and the peace and the understanding that God gives, sometimes it's good to be quiet and just listen to Him.

One of the greatest things I've found in my life, I don't know if it would be a blessing to you or not but I would encourage you to try it sometime, is to open up your Bible to the Book of Psalms and just start paging through the Psalms and skim over them until you find one that sounds like David was living in your sandals that day. I'm amazed at how often that happens to me.

I did that last Thursday evening I think and I made a list of about four Psalms in a row that I want to write a series of articles on in our newsletter because they spoke so directly to what I see around me and in me, and I found it fascinating. It was just four of them, boom, boom, boom, right in a row. It's amazing.

Find what works for you. If it's the group Bible readings that Pastor Enderle has set up, do that. If it's watching Time of Grace videos, do that. If it's reading a book of the Bible, do that. But don't be the person that tries to watch a Packer game on a TV where the TV isn't plugged into the wall. You won't see anything. You have to be plugged into where God's power source is, and that's Word. That's the Gospel. That's the Word. That's the Sacrament. When we're plugged into that power source, what we're going to see is that our God forgives us for all those times when we've made ourselves the center of the universe instead of Him. He forgives us for all the times we've tried to handle everything on our own and only went to Him as a last resort. He does strengthen us. He does sustain us. Then He does equip us to be the instruments of His peace for one another and for those who don't yet know Christ.

Man, there are a lot of people out there that don't know Christ. We seem to assume that because we go to a church or we believe in Jesus, everyone we know believes in Jesus. I don't buy it for a minute. I can sit down at the Trading Post and sit on a bar stool and talk to someone that comes in and sits down next to me. If the conversation gets around to talking about grace, I find that 5 out of 7 don't understand grace. There are a lot of people around us going to hell.

God has said "You are my witnesses," beginning at Morrison because that's where He has put us, but then to the world. That's who we are. That's what we're called to be. If you are scared and intimidated and you say "I can't do it," you're forgetting that it isn't you. It's the Spirit. So let the Spirit live in you through your study of the Word and let the Spirit speak through you as you share what you know to be true about Jesus, because that's what your God has asked you to do. Amen.

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