



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 29, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

7th Sunday of Easter

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Acts 16:6-10](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 14

Second Lesson: [Romans 15:14-20](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 17:20-26](#)

Draw the Right Conclusion

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, dear fellow redeemed:

When we study the Seventh Commandment and Luther's Explanation of it, he talked about taking other's words and actions in the kindest possible way. I think that's how the kids learn it now. I learned it as putting the best construction on everything. Every year when I teach that, for 30-some years now, I think I've used the same story to illustrate how sometimes we jump to the wrong conclusions. We are quick to take people's actions and words in not the kindest possible way. I do it for two reasons: (1) it's a great example, and (2) I can say it's a drinking fountain and it isn't a bubbler. It brings me great joy to say that to the kids every year.

The story takes place at a drinking fountain. You are there and getting a drink of water and you're in school (I'm telling the kids this). You're not supposed to run in the hallways. That's one of the rules in the school. Someone runs by you and into you, your mouth bumps into something metal on the drinking fountain and it chips your tooth. They don't even stop to say "I'm sorry." They just run down the hallway and out the door and they're gone. They're gone the rest of the day. They're not at school anymore. What are you going to say about that kid the rest of the day in school? You're probably going to tell your friends "What a jerk! Look at what is going on in my mouth! That person didn't even say good-bye or anything! They just did this! They didn't say they are sorry! They just hit me, hurt me, and kept going! What a jerk!"

Then I ask the kids, "How would you feel if you found out the next day that student just found out that their parents died in a car accident and someone was there to pick them up and they were running by? You'd kind of feel pretty bad for running them down the

whole day, wouldn't you?" That's the story I always use to teach—take other's words and actions in the kindest possible way. Put the best construction on everything because you don't always know everything. And even if you're wrong, it's okay.

Today what we're looking at is how our God, sometimes with the task He has given us, you and I at times I think draw the wrong conclusions. We jump to conclusions about our task of doing what He told us to do at His ascension. Do you remember at His ascension He said "You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea and to the ends of the earth"? We heard it in the High Priestly Prayer on praying "for those who will come to faith through the message spread by my disciples. And I'm praying that they would keep on revealing you, the Father, to others."

In our Psalm of the Day, did you notice that we sang, we cried out in a prayer to God? "Oh, that salvation for Israel would come out of Zion!" That was after we talked about how everyone is sinful and separated from God.

One of the things we see at the ascension is that we are the answer to that prayer. So what we want to see today is we want to learn from Paul and **Draw the Right Conclusion** about this task that God has given to His church. It's not about someone else. Each individual Christian can say "This is the task that was given to ME. It's not the pastor's job, the teacher's job, the leaders in the church's job. My God looked me in the eye and said 'you are going to be my witness. You are going to tell what you know to be true about the way to heaven.'" Let's see how Paul did that as we look at this from [Acts 16](#).

If you remember Paul, he had not always been Paul. He was known as Saul. He was a Pharisee among Pharisees. He was zealous for the Lord. He wanted to know the Lord more and more and more. He had come to the conclusion the best way he could serve the Lord was by attacking Christians and seeking to separate Christians from their faith that Jesus was the promised Messiah. That all changed for Saul when God struck him blind and he became Paul. He became the missionary to the Gentiles, as we heard in our Second Lesson. God said "You're going to go to the non-Jews. That's what a Gentile is. And you're going to take my Gospel to them so that the Gospel continues to be spread throughout the world because that's one of the ways I'm going to make myself known to people—it's through you, Paul."

So Paul had been on his first missionary journey. He went into Lystra, Iconium, Derbe, the city in Antioch and all these places and he had come back. Then there was a council at Jerusalem because the question had arisen, "Do you have to be circumcised to be saved?" Some were saying yes and some were saying no. So they got together and talked about it. One of the things they came to the conclusion of is that's a work of the Law and you aren't saved by the works of the Law. You are saved by the life and death of Jesus Christ alone. Then they had directions to take out to these growing churches

that were where Paul had been on his first missionary journey. Paul was going to go but he and Barnabas disagreed about who should go with them. Barnabas wanted to take John Mark along. Paul didn't because John Mark had deserted him on their first missionary journey. They ended up splitting up. Barnabas went to Cyprus, and Paul went back with Silas and then Timothy joined them. They went back to the cities they had been at before and brought news of the council in Jerusalem.

Then they wanted to go to new places, as you heard Paul say in his letter to the Romans. "I've always wanted to go where Christ hasn't been proclaimed before." They wanted to go (it sounds like) in the province of Asia, which would have been a lot of those churches that we looked at in Lent this year, the Seven Letters to the Seven Churches (a lot of them down in Southeast Asia Minor), but we are told he was kept from doing so. But we aren't told how. We aren't told if it was a vision. Did his sandal blow a tire? We aren't told what kept him from going in that direction. It's just that they concluded God didn't want them to go there.

Then they were thinking about going to the east and to the north, farther off in that direction. God, the Spirit of Jesus, prevented them from going in that direction. Then we're told they went down to Troas, which was on the coast on the western part of Asia Minor, and there they had this vision of a man in Macedonia (which would be Greece for us today) saying, "Come and help us," begging. So they concluded that's where God wanted them to go and preach the Gospel. And they went on to Philippi, Colossi and all the other churches; the towns of the churches that we hear the letters that Paul wrote to quite often in worship. That's when they were on his second missionary journey. Then as he came back, he eventually went to those churches in Asia that he had wanted to go to earlier but the Lord kept him from going there.

I think the one thing that I see when I look in this is that I read it and want to go "Okay, how did God let him know?" Did He appear to them? Was it a vision? We are told Troas was a vision and they concluded it was from God, but we aren't told those first couple of times when they took left turns instead of going right. So how did they draw that conclusion? I don't know, but we're told that Paul was confident that this was the way that God wanted them to go. So then they faithfully set their faces in that direction and faithfully went.

It's not a matter of how God got them there. It's that they trusted God got them there and while they are there, they are going to do all they can to talk about Jesus with whoever they can so they can bring more Jesus to more people more often. You and I sit here at times and we worry about how they knew. It seems like Paul and his companions were much more worried about just talking about Jesus. I think there are probably lessons for us in that.

I don't think you can debate with me whether or not God has called YOU to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ because I can show you in Scripture over and over where He has. *Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have.* [\(1 Peter 3:15\)](#) *You will be my witnesses.* [\(Acts 1:8\)](#) *Speak the Word. Preach the Word in season and out of season. Correct, rebuke, teach and admonish.* [\(2 Timothy 4:2\)](#) He's told us this over and over through the apostles in the New Testament. There is just no debating. We might deny it and we might not do it because we're sinners, but you can't say "It's not my task."

But I do think at times we can draw the wrong conclusion about talking about Jesus. How do we do that? I think sometimes we tell ourselves even before we open our mouths, "It will do no good. They aren't going to listen to me. They'll never believe." So we come to this conclusion that we shouldn't even talk about Jesus because THAT person will never believe.

Think about that conclusion you might come to if that's what you've ever thought in your life? You've just made your God pretty powerless, haven't you? And you've really come to the conclusion that there is something special about YOU, because you believe. You of course would believe, "but that person, that's a jerk and an idiot at work. I don't want him in heaven with me. He wouldn't ever listen to me." Your God is powerful enough. It isn't you! Don't draw the conclusion that it's up to you and it's your power.

It's God's power! It's His message. It's His Gospel. And He already prayed for you and told you that He is going to work through you as you speak His Gospel. The person may or may not come to faith, but don't kid yourself into thinking that it's YOUR ability or what YOU do or something in the other person you're speaking to that is going to bring this person to the glory of heaven someday. It's all about Jesus!

So **Draw the Right Conclusion** that just like God worked in YOUR heart and YOU are a sinner and all have sinned, as we heard in Psalm 14 (there is no one who does good), that includes you and me (not even one) and yet God has turned us completely around from unbelief to faith. He can do that for others also. In His amazing grace and mercy, He has chosen to do it through people like you and me; people who are not always the most eloquent speakers.

Think about it for a minute. If it took great grammar to have God bring people into heaven, I'm pretty much useless, ain't I? It's not the way it's going to be. It's about God. It's not about us. So I don't care if you think *I couldn't answer every question*. So what? A witness tells what they know to be true. What do YOU know to be true about Jesus? If you don't know that much to be true about Jesus, why aren't you learning more? He has called you to **grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** [\(2 Peter 3:18\)](#) Grow and keep on growing in this. Then you just live your faith in such a way that you earn the right to be heard.

Now, there may be times when you might have to draw this conclusion—there may be times when God brings people into your life and you share Jesus but they don't respond right then and there. You might draw the wrong conclusion and say they never will. Or I think you can **Draw the Right Conclusion** and say "I've planted the seed. Perhaps the Lord will have someone else come along and water it or maybe later on that person will come back and I'll get a chance to talk to them about Jesus again. My job right now is just to continue to love them as God has loved me. That means unconditionally, even if at times they are annoying, just like I am annoying to God and He still loves me."

Draw the Right Conclusion. Sometimes the right conclusion is that's enough for now. Don't be obnoxious and pushy. That's okay. But just keep loving and living your faith so that people see it so that when they ARE ready to ask more, they come to you because they know it's important to you. I've seen that happen, I don't know how many different times, where I've shared Christ with people and it was met with not even lukewarm, let's just say a cold reaction. And that's okay. Then you just keep loving and being patient with that person. I've seen it where they come back later on. I had people that kicked me out of their house. They told me to leave. This is when I was younger and more annoying than I am now. But they knew that I was concerned and wanted them in heaven with me. Then later they faced some challenges in life and we were able to get back together and talk. I ended up being able to do that person's funeral and say "I believe this person is with their Savior in heaven." It didn't happen immediately. That's okay.

Draw the Right Conclusion that God is going to work in His time and in His way and on His schedule, not on yours. He has just called us to continually be loving and patient and kind. You and I will fail at it. You and I will be annoying. You and I will not always be patient or loving. That's why we ourselves need to stay close to Jesus so that we know that just as Christ died for the person that we want to believe in Jesus, He has also died for our sins. He has died for our failings. He has died for our drawing the wrong conclusions.

That love and that forgiveness is what moves us to open our eyes to see, if God didn't want me to go that way, where does He want me to go now? Who is He bringing into my life that I can share Jesus with? Who is He putting in my life that I can encourage, who already knows Jesus? Who is He having in my life that I can share Jesus with, to support them in the midst of difficulty or struggles or hardships? He's always going to give us the opportunities to be the arms of His love and the voice of His love. Our job is just to get better at drawing the right conclusion to share that love at the times He gives us. And by the grace and by the power of God, that's exactly what we want 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.