



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

June 26, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

3rd Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [1 Kings 17:17-24](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 30

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Philippians 1:18b-26](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 7:11-17](#)

The Believer Has Faith... Faith: A Matter of Life and Gain

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, dear fellow redeemed:

This coming Wednesday I go in for surgery real early in the morning at Aurora BayCare Medical Center. About a month ago I met with the surgeon and he went through a long list of stuff. Three weeks ago from this last Thursday, I met with the surgeon's Physician Assistant. She went over a lot of the same things. One of the things I remember the surgeon saying to me was "This surgery should go well. It shouldn't be a problem at all, but the lawyers say I have to tell you all these things that can go wrong." So he starts listing them off. The Surgical Physician Assistant was doing it again three weeks ago this last Thursday. About halfway through it, I started wondering if pretty soon I was going to hear "Mr. Ott, we have to inform you, there is a chance Godzilla will come out of the Bay and destroy the hospital during your operation."

There are so many different things you never would think of, at least I wouldn't because I ain't that smart, but they have to tell you it. I understand that they have to tell you that when you're going through a surgery. There are a lot of things that can go wrong. Those things happen. It's understandable. But I guess it's a reminder that surgery, kind of like every day of our lives, can really become a matter of life and death and we all can say that, right? It isn't just in surgery that things can happen. We've had that in our area, in this community, when someone gets up in the morning and thinks it's a normal, regular day and tragedy strikes. It happens. I understand it. It's a matter of life and death. We often say that.

Today we look at how **The Believer Has Faith...** and how the believer's faith makes a difference in our day to day life. Faith is being sure of things hoped for and certain of what you can't see. [\(Hebrews 11:1\)](#) But when we start talking about death, none of us have ever seen past death, right? It's a matter of faith. It's a matter of belief in what our God has told us about it. So today as we think about these words from Paul and as we try to apply faith to our daily life, one of the things that we see is that **Faith is A Matter of Life and Gain. *For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*** [\(Philippians 1:21\)](#)

After having heard that from the Surgical Physician Assistant three weeks ago Thursday, the following Tuesday Leadership Team met. And here is why I love Hanz Herzog. I said to the Leadership Team, "You know, I might die on the table so I'm going to preach for 45 minutes on the Sunday before in case I never get to talk to you guys again." Hanz started laughing, looked at me and said, "You couldn't do it." He's probably right. But I enjoyed that perspective as I was talking smart. It's what faith enables us to do. Faith enables us to look at all kinds of things in life differently with this trust in who God is, what He has already done for us, and what He has promised to do for us as we go forward.

I think we see that in Paul. He said, ***"...what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance"*** in the second paragraph that I read to you. So what had happened to him? We believe when Paul writes the letter to the Philippians, he is in a Roman prison. He is under Roman custody after his journey to Rome, when he had made his appeal before Caesar. It's about 61-63 A.D. that he was in prison. He talks about his chains and how they served to advance the Gospel, from what I read to you. That's what it is. He was under house arrest. He could have people come and go. It was different than his second Roman imprisonment, which you read about in [2 Timothy](#), where things seem a lot bleaker. He says that as he was in prison here that as the palace guard was watching over him, many in the palace had gotten to hear about Jesus. The Gospel was being shared. Because Paul was boldly sharing the Gospel with all these different people he was coming in contact with during his imprisonment, it emboldened other Christians to share the Gospel as well.

He starts out by saying, ***"The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached."*** He did say right before this that some people were preaching Christ for selfish gain. Not because it was all about God but because they wanted it to be all about them. But they were still preaching the truth and so Paul says, "Even if they are doing it from wrong motives, what is important to me is Christ. What's important to me is getting more Jesus to more people more often." That's why he is rejoicing EVEN as he is in prison because his chains are serving to advance the Gospel of Christ. To Paul it was always and only all about Christ.

That's why he says, "I thank you all for your prayers. I really appreciate it. This is great, and the prayers of God's people for one another are a wonderful blessing and an

encouragement for God's people." But notice his prayer. His prayer wasn't "Hey, God. Get me out of these chains so I can go back on missionary journeys." His prayer is that even though he is confident this will turn out for his deliverance that, as always, Christ may be glorified in him. His prayer isn't for himself. His prayer is that Christ be glorified by how he deals with this adversity. For Paul, it's not about Paul. It's always about Jesus.

So he had said, "I'm sure this **will turn out for my deliverance.**" In that case I don't think he's talking about how he is going to be set free. I think he said that later in what I read to you, when he is convinced that God will release him and he'll go on these other mission journeys (which we believe he did), but notice at the start he says, "It **will turn out for my deliverance.**" "However I'm delivered, whether it's by life and being released or it's by death, may God be glorified in my body."

Boy, that's a powerful lesson isn't it? It's a reminder that no matter what we face, and especially as we're facing death, let's always remember it's still about Christ and how I can glorify Christ as I face these adversities. That's what our God is teaching us today. I think that's hard! It's a challenge! It's difficult! Paul himself once said, "**For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing.**" [\(Romans 7:19\)](#) We're sinners. We're saints—we are declared holy through faith in Christ, but we're still sinners and we struggle with some of these things where sometimes we rely too much on our sight.

In the time after I got the diagnosis and then the time before I met the surgeon, unfortunately I went online and looked at stuff online about this cancer I have. That was stupid! The first thing up in the corner is "life expectancy." I see the number there and I start doing quick math. "I'm going to miss this, this, and this about my grandkids if this is the case," and it shakes me. I thought about it a while longer and thought *okay, if I die, I'm going to be in heaven. Yes, I'll miss stuff, but it's not like what I'll be enjoying won't be better than what I'm missing.* We have this head knowledge that heaven is wonderful and it will be the greatest unending experience and yet, because we so often rely on what we see, we need the wisdom (like we talked about last week) to take the knowledge that we have and apply it at the right time. That's what makes it so challenging—to always live our faith and live this trust in God that glorifies God because we're still sinners and we're going to struggle because we're so focused on what we can see.

I firmly believe that's why God puts us together in communities of believers. Individualism is a cultural thing. I'm not so sure where it's a biblical thing. Certainly you can't believe for someone else, I understand that part, but faith is individual in that God gives that gift to individuals. But to those who have the gift of faith, He says all those "[one another](#)" passages through Scripture. Encourage one another. Teach one another.

Comfort one another. Speak God's truth to one another. Gently remind each other of God's promises when our faith is struggling to focus on them. That's why He puts us here.

And that's why Paul was writing to the Philippians because even though he was the one in chains, he was writing to encourage them because they were worried and concerned about him. Epaphroditus had brought the financial support for Paul during this time and he had brought the message of how they were so concerned about him, so one of the reasons he was writing was to encourage those people who were struggling because their father in the faith (the one who had started their mission) was in prison and could face death because it was a government decision. Who knows how those things are always going to go, as Paul says. "I could die. I could live."

He expresses his confidence, though, that he will live. ***"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Yet what shall I choose?"*** "Choose" there is not that it is in his control but "which would be better for me" is really what he is saying. "Which should I take?" He says to die is better by far because he would be with Jesus and he would be out of the effects of sin and he would live in everlasting glory, and yet he knows that if the Lord keeps him, it will mean fruitful labor for Him in sharing the Gospel and glorying Christ. More Jesus would be brought to more people more often. So he says, "I'm convinced that God will let this happen."

And from all we know, it did happen and that Paul went on other mission journeys and Paul did share the Gospel in many different places. He didn't just focus on the second part of the phrase, ***"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."*** He wasn't just focused on ***to die is gain***, but ***to live is Christ***. Faith means ***to live is Christ***. It's to glorify Christ. It's not about what we get out of it, what we avoid, or what we don't have to go through. It's about Christ. So fruitful labor for Paul didn't mean "This is great for me," it meant "I'll be able to share more Jesus with more people more often." God enabled him to do it.

To die is gain—I think if we're looking death in the face, I hope we have brothers and sisters in Christ that hold that in front of us. But don't forget to hold in front of each other ***to live is Christ***. We don't know when the end will come, but we know that until that time, you and I have the opportunity to share Christ. I don't care what laws get changed in our country. There is no single law that is going to change someone's heart to believe that Jesus Christ lived and died for them. That only comes from the Gospel. If you and I are going to live for Christ, that means we better doggone well be speaking about Christ and sharing this message of this incredible love that takes away the guilt of ALL of our sins; not just the ones we think aren't so bad.

Every last sin we have ever committed has been removed through the life and death of Christ. And that God-given faith that we can wake up with every single morning assures

us of this truth: This day is a new day to give glory to God, who has taken my sin away. ***To live is Christ.*** Don't wait until you're staring "***to die is gain***" in the face before you start living for Christ. Amen.

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