



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 3, 2022

Pastor Jim Aderman

4th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Acts 1:7-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 45

Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 7:36-50](#)

The Believer Has Faith... Don't Just Stand There

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 to you and peace from God our Father, from our Lord and Savior Jesus, and from the Spirit that they sent us.

Don't Just Stand There. Whenever I hear those words and I think of those words, it transports me back a number of decades to when I was a kid in grade school and in high school. My dad would say that to me. "Jim, don't just stand there." My dad was a carpenter by trade. He worked in the Kimberly Clark Paper Mill 40 hours a week or so. But then on the side he would do carpentry jobs in the community. Since I was the oldest in the family, I was usually the one that he would tap on the shoulder (sometimes grab by the nap of the neck) and say "Jim, come along with me. I need some help today." Well, I'm a kid, so I'm there on the job with dad and my mind starts wandering and sometimes I wander and then I'd hear dad say "Jim, Jim, don't just stand there. Don't you see I need a hammer? Don't you see I need help holding this 2x4? Don't just stand there."

Today we are all going to hear our Father in heaven say to us, **don't just stand there.** But He's not chiding us. He is encouraging us. He is inviting us to be part of His heart's desire—that absolutely everybody in the world gets to know His love and forgiveness in Jesus. "**Don't just stand there**" He says to us. In order to hear our Father say that, we are going to transport ourselves this morning to the Mount of Olives, to the east side of the Mount of Olives, southeast side of the Mount of Olives, near the town that Mary Martha and Lazarus lived in near Bethany.

Jesus is at the very, very, very end of His ministry here on earth. Forty-three days before this, He was on the cross and all the hell that should have come down on us because of our sins came down on Jesus instead, and He finished His ministry there of saving the

world from their sins. This is 40 days after Jesus' resurrection, where He guarantees that because **"I live, you also will live."** ^(John 14:19) During those intervening 40 days, He has kind of popped in and out of His disciples' lives. He has some odds and ends to tie together before He can go back to heaven. But now everything has been tied up. He doesn't have anything more to do, so He is about to go back to heaven and assume His rightful place as the Son of God, next to His Father, ruling the universe, not just as the Son of God but as Jesus of Nazareth as well. A human being rules the universe. Isn't that something—a human being, who knows what it's like to be a human being, who knows what it's like to live here, who knows the worst of life on this planet. As bad as our lives can be sometimes, Jesus knows even worse than that, and He knows what to do for us and how to do it and when to do it. Now He is the one who is ruling the universe.

But before He goes back to heaven, He has one more thing to say to His disciples. You heard it before as we read from [Acts 1](#). He says to them: **"...you will be my witnesses...** That's who you are now. You are my witnesses." And for us too, you see as He is talking here to His disciples, He's not just talking to a few disciples. He is talking basically to the entire Christian church on earth. So He is talking to us yet today when He says **"...you will be my witnesses...** No matter what it is I've created you to do, no matter what your job is, whether you work for a living yet or you're retired, whether you're a student, whether you're an artist or a farmer or whatever, that's what you do." But who you are (me too), you are witnesses. That's who you are. **"...you will be my witnesses...**

If you've ever had to go to court to be a witness, you know you don't need a degree in witnessing. You don't need any special training. All you do is tell what you saw, what you heard, what you experienced. Your job is not to convince the jury. You just tell the truth. Jesus calls us to be witnesses day after day. To witness to what He has done for us, who He is, what He means to us, what the Scriptures say about Him. We are His witnesses is what He says.

Where? Jesus says "Over the top of the hill here. Over the Mount of Olives, on the west side, that's Jerusalem. Start there. And then go on to the state (if you will) that Jerusalem was in—Judea. Then just keep going, to the ends of the earth." If Jesus were talking to us here at Zion, He would say "Start in Morrison. Start in Greenleaf. Then go to Two Rivers and Manitowoc and Green Bay and the Fox River Valley and the whole State of Wisconsin, the Upper Midwest, the whole of the United States, and then just keep going."

He also talked about going to Samaria, didn't He? What is that about? Samaria? Samaria was the next state or country right next to Judea (between Judea and Galilee in the north). The Jews and the Samaritans did not get along very well. In fact, they didn't get along any better than the Jews and the Palestinians do today. A good Jew would

not have walked through Samaria. He would walk all the way around it. If he was going north to south, he would walk all the way around Samaria. They wouldn't even want the shadow of a Samaritan to fall on them. And Jesus says to His disciples, "I want you to go and tell those people too. They are people of a different culture, people of a different religion, but that doesn't make any difference. You have history that's not very good between the two of you, but don't let that stop you!" If Jesus were here today and was repeating this same command, He would be saying to us, "Don't let the fact that people who are living around you have different skin color or speak a different language or have a different religion or eat different foods. Don't let that stop you from sharing" Jesus with them, from being a witness to them too. Don't let any of that stop you.

"...you will be my witnesses..." After Jesus says this to His disciples, He begins to rise up off the ground. He gets higher and higher into the sky. He finally gets high enough so a cloud covers Him up and they don't see Him anymore. At that point Jesus is back in heaven. There is a big celebration there. Here on earth, not so much! Jesus' disciples are gazing up at the clouds and they are wondering, *"Where did He go? Is He coming back? Did He really leave us for good? That doesn't sound very safe. How could He do this to us?"* Luke doesn't tell us exactly what they were talking about except that they were looking up into the clouds and wondering.

But apparently that doesn't last very long because Jesus' Father sends two angels to say to the disciples, "Guys, **don't just stand there.** You've heard what Jesus said to you. From here on out, you are His witnesses, so get going! ***Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? What is going on? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.***" They apparently (at least among some of Jesus' disciples) were thinking, *"Wow, maybe what we should do is just stay here. Jesus has to come back one of these days, right? We'll just camp out here until He comes back."* The Father is saying, "No, that's not what this is about. Jesus has sent you to the ends of the earth, so get at it. **Don't just stand there.**"

The rest of the [Book of Acts](#) is about how the 1st Century church did exactly that. Especially through the apostle Paul, we learned how the Gospel made its way through modern-day Turkey, modern-day Greece and Italy, and got as far as Spain. From church history we know that in that 1st Century the Gospel made its way across northern Africa and then it went east into modern-day Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, and China—all in the 1st Century. As God's people took Jesus' commissioning seriously and wherever they went, they were witnesses.

That is one of the reasons why I am so thankful to God that I could be part of 316NOW. 316NOW is a WELS organization. All of us Wisconsin Synod people, Evangelical Lutheran Synod people, with this mission from the Spirit to share the Gospel across China with as many of those 1.4-billion people as we can. It's a volunteer organization.

Outside of a couple of people that we pay who are very limited part-time, everybody else is a volunteer—myself, your pastor. We volunteer our time so the Gospel can get to more people in China. What we do to get the Gospel to more people in China is to help raise up Christian leaders in China—Christian leaders who, even if they graduated from a seminary, have very, very poor understanding of the Scriptures. Most of them, if you are a house church leader, you have very little understanding of Scripture. Probably, if you graduated from confirmation class here, certainly one of the area Lutheran high schools, you have a lot more education than a good many of those pastors who we stand with them and through the internet and for free. We have WELS pastors and ELS pastors who are teaching courses in theology, in books of the Bible, in practical theology. Things like how to preach a sermon that is going to be God pleasing, lead a Bible study and how to counsel God's people when they are hurt.

Our job is to raise up Christian leaders in China and now, also recognizing that there are 50-million Chinese who don't live in China and probably about 10% of them are going to be Christians. So under your pastor's leadership, we are beginning a strategy to reach out to those Chinese Christians, ex-patriot Christians, who are living somewhere in the world and inviting them to be part of 316NOW's training program as well. It's a training program that is not just the books of the Bible and theology. It's standing alongside them, mentoring them, helping them to form congregations and then consulting with those congregations.

I'd really like to say to you this morning, "Why don't you get involved in 316NOW? That would be great!" I would guess you all have some gifts and abilities that we could make use of. I would love for you to take me aside after worship today or call me up or email me and say "Pastor Aderman, I would really like to get involved in 316NOW. Tell me what I can do." I would love for each of you to put 316NOW on your prayer lists and pray for us day after day for the Gospel in China, to the Christians that are there, often under what certainly as Americans we would consider to be severe persecution. And I would really love for you to support us financially. 316NOW, like the area Lutheran high schools here, is not part of the Synod's budget. We are all supported by the generosity of God's people, folks just like you. We'd love for you to pray for us, to contribute to our ministry, to step up and say "I want to get involved." Actually, I would love to say, "You know what? That's the only way you could be witnesses," but that would be a lie.

The fact of the matter is that you get to be witnesses where you are in your day-to-day life. Wherever you live, whatever you do for a living, God has put you there to be a witness. Probably for most of you, maybe for all of you, that would be people in your own family. I know I have folks in my family that are not Christian. Probably a neighbor, somebody you go to school with, somebody you work with, somebody you go out to coffee with on Tuesday morning. God has put those people in your life. He has put YOU in their lives so you can be witnesses, so you can tell them what Jesus has done for

you and what He means to you. You don't have to convince them. Remember, you're a witness. You just tell what you know to be true.

"...you will be my witnesses..." So **don't just stand there.** Why? It's hard to open our mouths and talk about Jesus, isn't it? I graduated from seminary in 1975, so I've been at this pastor thing for quite a few years, and I have to tell you that it can be hard for me to open my mouth like Jesus calls me to do. It's probably the same for you. Why should we do it? Why should we fight against that temptation to keep our mouths closed?

Our text gives us at least three reasons. Here is one: Because Jesus tells us to. It's kind of like an Eleventh Commandment. **"...you will be my witnesses..."** So even if we don't want to do it, we don't feel qualified to do it, there are all sorts of obstacles in the way of our doing it, we still do it because our Savior calls us to do it. He commands us to do it.

Here's another reason: Jesus sends us to the ends of the world. Why? Because there are so many people there who do not know the Gospel. In China, there are 1.4-billion people; about 1.2-billion or so are not Christian. In the world today, there are 7-billion people; 7-billion! That's a huge number! I don't know how anybody can get their head around 7-billion, 7-billion people in the world today and growing! Five Billion are not Christian; 5-billion! If Jesus were to come back today, those 5-billion people would not be in heaven with us. The need is so great! So we share our faith because we get involved in organizations like 316NOW, or certainly through the work of our Synod, but also as we work to share Jesus with those people that God has already put into our lives, and He has put us in their lives.

Here's the third reason. This is the best reason of all. It's our Savior, Jesus, who invites us to make disciples. He lived for us so we could be children of God. He died for us so that all of our sins have been taken away. No matter what they are, no matter how ugly and horrible and embarrassing those sins are, He wiped away all in Jesus. Remember that reading from [1st Corinthians](#): you used to be swindlers and alcoholics and what not. Jesus has changed all of that. And because He has changed all of that, you and I want to share that message with others. That's what drives us. That's what compels us.

Remember St. Paul when he wrote to the Corinthians the second time, [Chapter 5](#), when he talks about how "the love of Christ compels me to share the Gospel. It compels me." Not "compel" in the sense that He's twisting my arm behind my back and if I don't do this, it's going to be painful, but "compels" me in that He loves me so much, how could I NOT do this?

A few days ago, my dear wife of almost 50 years, just a couple of days away from 50 years, was looking out the front window of the house and she said, "We should trim

that tree, that maple tree in the front yard." "We" should do that. Ladies, you know what that means. When the wife says "we" should do it, she is saying "Honey, get out there and trim the tree." Isn't that the way that works? Sharon said, "We should trim that tree." So just a little bit later, I was out there trimming that tree. Why? Because I was afraid that my wife wouldn't love me anymore if I didn't do it or maybe she wouldn't make lunch for me or do the wash or whatever? No, it was because she loves me more than I deserve to be loved. She has been a wonderful wife for 50 years; that's why I was out there trimming that tree and climbing higher into a tree than a 73-year-old man should be climbing.

Oh, by the way, my wife is here today and if you figure out who she is, don't say something to her like "Boy, you've got the most wonderful husband in the world. You ask him to do something and he always does it," because you know what? I don't always do it like I should. But that day I did! So don't mess up my illustration by knowing that I don't always do it that way.

Christ's love compels us because He went to the cross for us. That's why we share the Gospel. **Don't just stand there.** We've got work to do brothers and sisters. We have a world that needs to know about Jesus, and it starts in your homes, in your back yards, in your communities, wherever you work, wherever you shop. **Don't just stand there.** Be witnesses. Amen.

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