



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 17, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

6th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Jonah 3:3-4:4](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 62

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [2 Corinthians 11:21b-30](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 9:51-62](#)

The Believer Follows Christ: Following Christ Calls for Total Commitment Live for Him, He Lived for You

1. Be bold in the Lord
2. Know your weaknesses
— Know your true strength
3. I know, but...
— Busy, burdens, and blessings
4. Live for Jesus in all your life

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 and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

Have you ever seen or heard someone boast in something somewhat strange? Maybe it's a friend with kind of a weird talent. I was looking and I thought of one of the most interesting things that someone might boast in are some of the world records that are out there. I looked just in Wisconsin at some of the world records. Wisconsin has the record for the largest ice cream scoop, the largest talking loon, and the largest talking cow. They also have the largest letter M. Maybe some of you know where that is. I've seen that driving through Wisconsin, I think in Platteville, Wisconsin. There are some really strange things too. Just in the last couple days a man in Wisconsin broke a record he had previously but someone beat him, having 10 aluminum cans suctioned to his head. Another one is the fastest time to drink a liter of gravy. These are weird things to boast in.

I think when we look at what Paul writes in 2 Corinthians, you might say these are some strange things to boast in. Even as he writes it, he says those words. He talks about "I am out of my mind. I'm crazy to be speaking this way." As he does this and as we look at this, we are going to see why he does this. We are going to see that we want to **live for Christ because He lived for us**. That's what Paul is really talking about. He gave

everything. He wanted to live for Christ because Christ lived for him. But why did he have to go into this whole message? Why was he talking about all the things that he faced?

When you look at Corinth and the letters he wrote, we find that technically 2 Corinthians is actually the third letter he wrote. He wrote one letter, and we don't really have that one. Then we have 1 Corinthians. Now we have 2 Corinthians. He had written to them and encouraged them, but after what we have as 1 Corinthians comes back, there are a lot of people that are beginning to question Paul and his motives. There are these other people in Corinth, they call them the super apostles, and they have the right message. So Paul starts to defend himself and he defends himself in two ways.

He first begins by speaking about who he was and his lineage. If people want to boast about who they are, he says "I am a Hebrew of Hebrews." He was an Israelite, from Abraham's descendants and a servant of Christ. In another section Paul speaks about how precisely he followed the Scriptures before. He was the Pharisee of Pharisees, so he could boast in those things if he wanted to, but notice he doesn't want to be boasting in this, but he is because other people are challenging him, saying he's out for his own motives.

Then he goes on to talk about all the things that he had faced; how he had been imprisoned and beaten. I think the part that really shows it the most is when he talks about being in danger. ***"I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers."*** He had nothing to gain from all this and he was showing everything he had faced, not for his own gain but to show Christ. He was trying to live his life to show what the Gospel meant and what it was all about.

If we look at our life, we want to show and look and see who Paul was. He was bold. He did all of these things and he didn't care what he faced because he wanted to be bold in sharing the Gospel, in telling others, and it didn't matter what he faced. Even now, when he is defending himself, he is kind of speaking in ways that he wasn't super comfortable with but he knew it was important to defend the Gospel and to point not so much to him but to the message; that this was so important and he wasn't out for his own gain. He wasn't changing how he spoke to earn anything from any other people or to be deceptive. He is laying it all out there. He has been bold in his life and he is being bold again with the people. I think he is encouraging us to do the same; to be bold in the Lord, to follow Christ, to live for Christ, because He lived for us and whatever that may look like.

But there is an interesting thing that follows. It is the last part that he talks about. He says, ***"If I must boast, I will boast of the things that show my weakness."*** He is

saying that he himself knows his weaknesses and he wants you to know your weaknesses. Why? He is not boasting in the things he talked about at first. He is sharing all of this, but even though he is kind of defending himself, he's not trying to boast in all the suffering that he has faced. He is boasting in his weaknesses because he knows it's not about him. It's about something much more important.

When you go on and start to boast in yourself, it's easy to forget what it's all about. When we ignore our weaknesses and get puffed up in our relationships, in our marriage, at work, then we start seeing and thinking that we're much better than others, much like Jonah did in thinking he was better than those in Nineveh. Also like James and John. They didn't see their own weaknesses and had some pretty interesting thoughts about the other people. They didn't deserve God's love. We need to see our own weaknesses so that we can trust in and know our true strength.

If I don't know where I have fallen short, if I think I can do it on my own, then I don't think I need a Savior. Then I don't think I need Jesus to forgive those things. And even if I'm really trusting on my own self, what happens when things get tough? What happens when we meet difficult points in life that we can't handle? Do we know where our strength is? Are we ready to go to that Savior and to our God? We need to continue to see Him and to put our weaknesses in sight so that we can go to God and trust Him when things are good and when things are hard. He calls us to follow, to know our strengths and our weaknesses to go, but it's not always easy to do so; to give our life for Him because He has given His life for us.

In all of our readings today, we see that little problem that happens. We have our own reasons and excuses. For Jonah it was, "I know God's love, but I have a pretty good excuse not to go. I don't really like those people." There are a lot of things in our life where God is calling us to serve Him, to spend time in His Word, to love others, and we say, "I know, but..." "I know, but there is something else. There is something else that gives me a pretty good reason not to really do what you are asking me to do." There are a lot of reasons to say "This is more important" or "I can't be totally committed to what you are asking for." We think of all of those different excuses.

There are a few things I'm going to share in our sermon. A couple people here went to the Youth Rally this year. Someone who comes to church here somewhat often, Jon Bare, his wife is Kim (Lemke), she grew up here, but he shared a little bit about a few people and about this idea of following God and serving God. He shared about this man. His name is a little bit hard to say. Pirojpur; he's in an Islamic country and he couldn't really even say what country he is in, but he is 18-years-old. He is a Christian. There are people that are persecuting Christians and arresting Christians all around him. They are even killing Christians. He is 18-years-old and this is what he says about his goals and what he would like to do. He says "Please pray for me—I have only one desire in life before I die—I want to bring 10 people into God's Kingdom before I die." He is

18-years-old and he probably has all the excuses in the world, kind of like Paul, and faces all these difficulties. Paul could have just walked away. And here is this 18-year-old who says "My life is on the line, but I'm not going to make any excuses. I just want to save 10 people."

At that same time, Professor Jon Bare surveyed some of the Youth Group students as they were on their way to the Youth Rally. He asked, "What are some of the difficulties? Why is it hard for you to serve God?" Here are some of their answers. They said, "I'll do it later." "Maybe it just won't matter." "I'm too young." "I'm not good enough." "There are a lot of distractions." "Others can do it." These are probably things that we might say but the number one answer was this: "No time; too busy." These are Youth Group kids, so it's about ages 14-18/19; so freshmen in high school to people that are becoming freshmen in college.

What do you know about life after high school? Do you have more time after high school, or are you busier after high school? Think about it. And think about in the summer right now if I walk up to anyone and say, "How is it going? How are you doing?" What is probably the first answer? "Busy." It's summer time. We're relaxing. We're going on vacations and we're doing things and we are staying "busy." We're busy and kids at this age say "I'm too busy to serve God, to share about Him, to be in the Word, to share the Gospel." We see one of the biggest problems is being busy, but I think there are a few other things that really fill that excuse label. I know I want to serve God. I know I should be committed, but... I think it's being busy and then there are burdens, the sin and difficulty we face. And then there are also blessings. We'll look at each of these.

Burdens: As we see the difficulties in our life, we know it's hard. We know it's hard to serve and love God, especially when things get harder. It can push us away, but we want to get closer to Him to know that He can help and serve us. Let's also look at these other things—being busy and the blessings.

I have three little things up here on the screen. A few of these things come from this new book that I've been reading from Pastor Mike Novotny where he did some research into this. It's a book that talks about the parable of the Sower and the Seed. He looks at a lot of the reasons why faith struggles to grow. One of the biggest things he looked at is blessings. What are the things that God gives us (blessings) that we put a lot of time into that aren't sinful but maybe they are hindering our faith a little bit?

On the far right of the screen there is that picture of the TV. We joke about with our kids that we used to sit down or if you were sick from school, what did you watch? *The Price is Right* and other morning shows. Now we can stream whatever we want all the time. He said to think about some of those shows you watch, which aren't sinful, it's not sinful to watch a show or to watch some of your favorite shows, but if you add up all the

time of binge watching those shows or every week being in those things—an example is the TV Show *The Office*. If you watch every episode of *The Office*, that's 72 hours of time. It's not sinful, but how much time are you spending in that?

At the top of the screen we have little league or sports for kids. A very good thing to have your kids be social and to be active. But think about in a week you maybe spend 5 hours—practices and games; so in a month, maybe about 20 hours. Add that up for the year. Again, not a sinful thing, but maybe you are less than that, maybe more, or maybe your kids are in more than one sport.

Then the last one on the screen—the Packers; the Packers have 17 games, some preseason games and they maybe get into the Playoffs, but if you are big Packers' fans, do you just watch the games? Do you watch the draft information in the summer and listen to the radio or watch the sports talks when they are talking about the game, the pregame and the postgame? Or if you go tailgating all the time, think of all the time spent there and all the discussion in between the games. Pastor Novotny added up the time in a year and he said you could spend easily about 276 hours. Think about just a 3-hour game and the time before and after over and over again. Again, I'm not going to say the Packers are the Gates of Hades—someone else says that. It's not bad to be a sports fan, but the point is to think about this and to say, "What are the blessings I have and how much time am I spending in those?" You can add up all of those different things and you can look and say, "How much time in a day and a month and a year? How am I spending my time?"

We are doing this *Barnabas Ministry*. We start to contact people if they haven't been in church after four weeks, so it's like once a month. If you think about it, that's 12 hours in a year if you are here once a month. Then we have other people that move on to week 8 and 12 and so forth; week 18 soon. If you are about 18 weeks, or 12 weeks, you come to church once every 3-4 months and you're spending about 4 hours at church. I know you can spend time in God's Word at home. I know you can come to Bible studies and watch online and I hope people make use of those. It's just asking you to say, "What ARE the things I'm spending my time on and how am I spending my time with God and loving others?"

It's easy to look at that and to really look and say, "Here is my time and here is God's time." It isn't a whole lot of God time all the time. We look and our big excuse is often "I'm busy." We hear the stories that Paul shares or the story of the young 18-year-old and the things that they face, and they are totally committed to God. What is the excuse that we give? "We're busy." And it's because we have all these blessings and we have all this good stuff. It's not sinful. It's not wrong. But how are we putting it in priority?

As Jesus talked with each of those men, he was asking them to prioritize things and see what is most important. So what is most important in our lives? We want to look at that and as we look at that, I want you to think of four practical things to see how you can bring God into your life more, to be a little bit more committed to God.

The first is to look at that schedule—the hours, the days, the months and the years—and to look at the blessings that God has given you. #1—if we are thankful and we see that all of these things come from God, it may change things a little bit too. It's not just me or the things that I have, but they are God's things and I can be thankful I can see what He has given me and maybe be a little bit more thankful with the people around me as well.

Then the next thing is to take one of those things and to trim one of them down. Novotny's good example was to pick one. Sometimes on a weekend with the Packers, it's easy to sit down and watch a game on Saturday, watch a game on Sunday, watch a game on Monday, now Thursday and all the nights, he said pick the best one. Limit your time a little bit in one of those blessings or even take a bigger step and say, "What is one of those blessings I could trim out?" Why you want to trim out one of those blessings is because it gives you the opportunity to spend time in God's Word, to show love to someone else, to show God's love to another person close to you—maybe a family member—to serve in the church or to serve in the community. It happens easily for volunteering—too busy. But think about one of those ways to serve because we can add up all those times and think *how much time am I really spending talking about Jesus with friends and family?*

That's the next point—to bring Jesus into your life a little bit more. There are a lot of different ways you can do this. We're such a mobile society and we have so many opportunities to bring the Word in, maybe it's something like on our church website. If you scroll down on the website home page, you can see all of our sermons on there and you can click and you can watch them. But you can also listen to them. If you're driving around or working in the yard, you can click there and you can listen to a sermon while you're doing something else.

If you've already heard the sermon from this week, there are all sorts of other good Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) and Christian material. There is *Time of Grace*. They have longer sermons and they have the five minute sermons. You can even do something like listening to a Christian book. If you're not so techy, that's okay. Maybe get a *Devotion* and read that first and be intentional about thinking about it throughout your day. When you are driving with friends and family, talk about God's Word. Maybe say a prayer together at different times. You don't have to save that for nighttime and morning and for meals. As you are going about your day, bring God's Word in and maybe bring prayer in a little bit more.

The last point here is as we bring God into our life a little bit more, think about things a little bit differently—live for Jesus because He has lived for us, but live for Jesus in all your life and for your whole life. What do I mean by that? What does that look like?

When Pastor Jon Bare asked the Youth Group if they could serve God right now, they gave different answers. He surveyed about 150 people. I thought this was one of the greatest sections. One of them said, "I can't serve God right now because I'm on a bus." True, but another person said, "I can serve God right now by being a good example on the bus on the way to Knoxville." What do you notice? People are in the same situation, but they are seeing things a little bit differently. One is saying "I'm on a bus, but..." or "I could serve God, but I'm on a bus. I can't serve Him right now." The other one is saying, "I'm on a bus. I can serve God." Instead of looking for the excuse, the but..., and saying "This is the way I serve God in this spiritual way" or "This is the time I spend time with God," we could maybe look at our lives a little bit differently.

Instead of having that picture of my life and God's time there, we see our whole life as God's and then continually look for those opportunities to serve in all our different vocations, in all our different jobs—as a husband, a wife, a child, a student, an employee—all these different things. It's not that this is the time to serve God, but I can serve God in EVERYTHING I do. When you think about it that way, do we really have any excuse not to serve God, to not be fully committed to God?

In all of this, as we serve Him, what binds this all together? What allows this to really happen? As I look and say "My whole life is God's," it is only possible because Jesus was fully committed to me. The Gospel Lesson—you maybe hear me talk about this often as one of the most important things about Jesus. It starts out talking about how He ***resolutely set out for Jerusalem***. He knew what was ahead, but He faced it. He was committed to go and to suffer for YOU and for the world. He was totally committed and He did it perfectly. He didn't waiver. He didn't wonder if He should. He knew what was ahead and He served and suffered for you—facing the most painful thing; facing hell on the cross. Facing hell on the cross and taking the sins upon Him for the times that we say "But..." and make up excuses, see all the blessings we have, and prioritize things wrong. He forgives all of those things because He has loved you and died for you and is so committed to you.

Yes, God asks us to be committed to Him, to serve Him, but it means nothing without understanding that Jesus did it perfectly for us. He was committed for us and He makes all of that work that we do holy and spotless; forgiving our failings and helping us to serve Him and to love one another.

There are a lot of things to boast about in this world. There are a lot of strange things that people have—world records and so forth—but think about the things that YOU want to boast in, but boast in serving Christ. Boast in putting Him first and maybe

saying no to some of the things that the rest of the world thinks are so important. Why? Because He loves you, He has redeemed you, and the reward in heaven is so much greater. Amen.

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