



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 18, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

15th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Proverbs 25:6, 7](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 119a

Second Lesson: [James 2:1-13](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 14:1, 7-14](#)

The Believer Hears Jesus' Warnings The First Will be Last... Humble Yourselves

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 to you from God our Father, through Jesus and the empowering work of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Twenty years ago I served in different synod positions and Paula and I would go around our church body giving presentations on ministering to people with dementia. Paula, as a Registered Nurse, at that time was a director of nursing in a nursing home and would talk about her experiences with the physical aspects of the disease. I would talk about ideas and ways to keep sharing Jesus with the people that are suffering from this disease.

One of the things that stuck with me in all the reading that we did and all the times we presented and all the times we talked was how people with dementia, because the cognitive issues are deteriorating, they pay a lot more attention to body language. You and I will sometimes tend to hide behind the words we say even though our body language is screaming a completely other message. We'll say "Yeah, but that's what I said," whereas someone with dementia pays a lot more attention to the body language.

One of the great things I remember reading in one place and that I still try to remind myself to do today (I don't always do it the best) is that if you're having one of those days where you are chasing your tail, you're running all around and it feels like you're going 60mph all the time in a 25mph zone, to sit and mentally move your speedometer from 60mph to about 20mph so that you don't appear rushed and you don't appear hurried because if you're all tense and fidgety, they are going to pick up on it and you're

not going to have a good visit. So it always struck me how sometimes there are two different messages with our body language and with the words we're saying.

I think today kind of the same thing is going on. There are two different messages that are being heard, not with body language or with spoken words but as we listen to what I read to you from Luke, I think there is a part of us that hears it one way and there is a part of us that hears it the way the Lord intends. Each and every one of us, as Christians, are sinner/saint. We're holy in the eyes of God. He has given us faith that Jesus lived and died in our place and took away our sins. There is a part of us that loves God, loves His Word and wants to do what that Word says. Then there is the part of us that thinks the whole world revolves around us, the sinful nature. The sinful nature hears some of these words from Jesus today and it doesn't get the message at all.

The sinful nature hears these words that Jesus spoke to a group of people that were at a Pharisee's house on a Sabbath for a meal and they think about them completely differently. Probably the way the Pharisee's would have thought about them.

Jesus had been invited there and the meal should have been prepared the night before because they weren't supposed to work on the Sabbath. They come and they have a special meal. Jesus and other people are invited. Jesus healed a man in between the verses that we didn't read. Then He notices after this has happened that they are about to sit down for the meal, and the Pharisees are kind of elbowing each other trying to get to places of honor.

That's kind of like Jesus' disciples did. They imitated the people they were seeing around them. Remember how many times you read in the Gospels that Jesus and the apostles of Jesus were arguing about who was going to be greatest in the kingdom of heaven? Even on Maundy Thursday when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper for them, a fight broke out over who was more important and who was the greatest in the kingdom. Maybe it was based on where they were sitting, by Jesus or farther away from Jesus. The sinful nature is just an ugly beast and it doesn't go away.

So Jesus sees that and tells them "Hey, don't take the place of honor. Humble yourselves. Don't live by exalting yourself because if you take that place of honor and someone else comes in and you're told to go away, you are going to be humiliated." I'm betting you're sinful nature is just like mine. It doesn't want to be humiliated. So this sounds like great advice from Jesus because then, when you take the least important seat and the guy who is throwing the banquet tells you "Oh, no, you get up and come up here," you can puff your chest out as you are walking out there and having everyone say "Look at them." Isn't that what your sinful nature thinks when it hears this? This is pretty good advice from Jesus. The sinful nature likes this stuff. "It's going to make me look better when it looks like I'm trying to be humble. This is a win/win for my sinful nature!"

That's not what Jesus is trying to tell us. He's trying to tell us to live in a state of being humble like He was humble; to love others like He loved others; to value others like He valued others. If I'm a Christian (that means "little Christ"), I'm supposed to imitate, not just in my outward actions but the desires of my heart, and love the way my Savior loved me.

Look at what your Savior did for you. Think of how He humbled himself. He is in heaven. From all eternity He said "Let there be" and there was. He has this almighty power, this almighty knowledge and all these things and mankind turns its back on Him, eats the fruit of the tree that He told them not to, and He still comes to earth to live perfectly because we can't. Then He dies on the cross to take away all of our sins. Why would He do it? Is heaven going to be any better because you or I are there? Our sinful nature says "Sure!" The part of you that knows God knows "No, it isn't. It was already perfect." If no one ever would have gone into heaven, it wouldn't be any better. But it's God's love that led Him to come to earth and put our interest ahead of His own and humbled Himself to become obedient to death, even death on the cross. He puts others interests ahead of Himself and doesn't worry how He is perceived. He knows that the path He is on is going to lead to a cross and He still does it because He humbles Himself so that you might be raised up and be forgiven and have eternity with Him in heaven, even though it doesn't make heaven any better.

The part of us that loves God wants to imitate that kind of love. The new self in us wants to love each other, even the people we don't like that much, the way God loved us; to humble ourselves and not exalt ourselves; not think it's all about us but see that we're here as instruments of God's love. We're here to share that love. We're here to speak that love. We're here to live that love and to do it humbly out of thankfulness for a God who has given us eternal life. It's not like we can give Him anything to pay for that. It's His grace, His love, His mercy. He's done it all, so humble yourself like He humbled Himself for you. That's hard! And we fail.

Sometimes we act humble just so we can get something out of someone else. Do you ever find yourself doing that? Isn't that kind of what Jesus addresses in the second paragraph in there about having a banquet? Don't just invite someone that can pay you back by inviting you back. Just invite the people without expectation of getting something back from them. But our sinful nature often wants to do something so we get something in return.

Tell me, have you ever invited someone over for a dinner or something or for a get-together or for a party and then they had one and they didn't invite you back and you got all torqued off about it? That's your sinful nature. "Hey, it's all about me. I did this for you. You owe me!"

If we're going to live in God's love, it's not about being owed something. It's just about showing love to others. That's the new self in us. That's what the new self in us wants to do. Our sinful nature wants to get paid back. Our sinful nature wants to get something out of someone else. Our sinful nature is so concerned about that because the sinful nature thinks the world revolves around us.

The new self in us knows the world revolves around God. It's His love that forgave us. It's His love that freely and without any strings attached just loved, forgave, and promised heaven to us. So now He tells us (without strings attached) "Just love other people." Quit counting paybacks and just love. If they don't love you back, so be it.

Next week we are going to hear about the cost of discipleship. If you look at the stuff they did to Jesus, do you expect everyone is going to pay us back with parades every time we do something for someone? That's not going to happen. As Christians we just love because our God loved us first. And yes, we're going to fail at that! We're still going to keep track. We're still going to get upset that we didn't get what we thought we had coming.

But this is the amazing thing about our God—He still loves and forgives us. Not because we promise to do better in the future. He loves and forgives us because He is loving, and in His grace, He took away our sin and then He urges us, in view of that forgiveness He pours out on us free, to love others. Humble yourself and live in humble love for others. Let others see that your love is genuine, not just by your actions but because they can see your heart is overflowing with the love that God has put into it. Amen.

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