



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 25, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

16th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Genesis 12:1-8](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 19

Second Lesson: [Philippians 3:4b-11](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 14:25-33](#)

The Believer Hears Jesus' Warnings Count the Cost of Following Jesus

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 our Lord and Savior Jesus: Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

You might be more familiar with it (many of you) from the movie Miracle starring Kurt Russell, but back in 1980 in the winter Olympics, the United States men's hockey team beat the Russians and then Sweden to win the Gold Medal. It was called the "Miracle on Ice" in Al Michaels' column, Do you believe in miracles that still echoes all the time on sports television. It was an interesting thing. I remember it. One of the things that has always stuck with me was the Gold Medal presentation. After they handed out all the medals to the teams, they had the raising of the flags and the National Anthem was played. Mike Eruzione was the captain of the team, so the captains of the three teams were on the podium. But then after the Anthem was done, Eruzione bumped his fists in the air and then he called the rest of the team to come up on the podium with him. That was kind of neat because it was a team effort. It was kind of fun. But when I watched it again this week, what I thought was kind of interesting is that they couldn't all fit on the podium. They kept falling off. As one would jump on, someone on the other side would fall off. There just wasn't enough room on the podium for all of them. That was kind of fun to watch. It was an interesting event. It was a fun event.

Do you ever think about how sometimes you and I try to put too many things on the podium that only Jesus belongs on? When it comes to who wins the victory, sometimes, like Paul, we think our righteousness will be enough and we'll be faultless. So it's kind of God AND us that has won the gold medal of eternal life. Or, we can look at it the same way when Jesus tells us to count the cost of discipleship today. He tells us also that He

is the only one that really belongs on the podium. Sometimes you and I want to replace Him with other people, ourselves or other things. He says when you do that, you're an idiot. Knock that stuff off. Count the cost of discipleship. It's all about God. He has done it all and He demands first place in our life. When we don't give Him first place in our life, it's sin. That's what He tells us. It's straightforward.

We're told Jesus was walking with large crowds. It gives you the impression they are on their way to Jerusalem for one of the festival celebrations where large groups would travel together. It seemed a lot of people were interested in following Him, being one of His disciples, being taught by Jesus because He was a renowned teacher. He stops and tells them, "You guys have to understand what discipleship" (following Him as Lord and Savior) "means." He speaks in severe hyperbole about hating father and mother, son, daughter, brother, sister and all that. He quite clearly in other places tells us to love your neighbor as yourself and all these other things and to honor your father and mother and He quotes the Commandments. But what He is saying in this hyperbole, stretching it to the limit to make the point, is He needs to be first in your life. You can't let anything else be as important as Him. So in essence, anyone who knew the Commandments (and they all did), it's like Jesus is saying, "Remember the First Commandment, 'You shall love no other Gods'? ([1st Commandment](#)) That applies to me too. I'm God become flesh, who has come to this world to live and die for the sins of the world." That's why He deserves first place in our lives. We can come back to that in a little bit.

He tells these two parables, these two stories about building a tower and about going to war with a king against another king that has twice as many soldiers. What I think He is really trying to tell us is there are certain things we just won't be able to do. We can't overcome an army that is twice as big as we are. We can't pay for our own sins. We're born in sin. Once we are born, we commit sins. The wages of sin is death. God has made that pretty clear. It's just nothing we can accomplish. It has to be something that Jesus did. That's why Paul considered all of the things he had done before to be garbage now, something to be burned on the dung pile is literally what he is talking about, because it's only Christ. He is the only one that could pay for all of our sins because God not only says sin has to be paid for, He also says you and I have to be perfect. You and I can't even see perfect from where we live every day of our lives. We're sinners! We sin! We do what we are and because we sin, we'll never be perfect no matter how hard we try going forward.

I remember as a kid once I got punished by dad. I don't remember what it was about. But I remember tears were running down my cheek and I was standing in a corner. I remember thinking to myself "Okay, that's it. I'm never disobeying dad again. This ain't worth it." How do you think that went for me? Of course I disobeyed dad again. I'm a sinner and sinners sin! We aren't going to be perfect. We can't conquer the enemy of sin. We can't build the tower that reaches to heaven so that we can say "God, you owe

me. You have to let me in." So count the cost of discipleship and remember it's always and only all about God.

He promised the Savior to Adam and Eve, to Abraham and throughout the Old Testament. He sent the Savior that John the Baptist pointed to and said **"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"** ([John 1:29](#)) Christ stretched out His arms on the cross after living perfectly IN OUR PLACE and died as the punished for OUR SINS. It's only Jesus. Don't ever start thinking that God is lucky to have you. We have nothing we can offer God that pays for a single one of our sins. Jesus is alone on that podium of winning salvation. Don't try to jump on with Him. It's not about you. It's not about me.

But once we know that, once the Spirit has given us this trust that Jesus was perfect in our place and died in our place, Jesus also reminds us "Hey, don't love anything as much as you love me." You and I are inclined to do just that. You and I are inclined to say "Yeah, but..."

When you talk to people about how important Jesus is, I don't know how many times people have told me "Yep. Yep, pastor, Jesus is the most important thing in my life." These same people are the people I never see in worship. I never see them even register for online worship. I see them maybe every year at Christmas Eve. If Jesus is the most important thing in their life, you think you would see them honoring Jesus a little more often.

I talk to other people that tell me, "Well, you know, pastor, we spent a lot of money on that cabin, so we have to get up there every weekend. We can't make worship on Sunday." How about Thursday? How about online? It's there every day of the week! Every single day; if you wake up in the middle of the night and you can't sleep, put on one of my sermons. Maybe they'll help you sleep, or it will feed faith, one of the two. Just try it out. Just make use of it. We have opportunities to be close to Jesus and we say we're too busy?

Look at what He did for us. Why wouldn't you want to know Him better? Why wouldn't you want to be close to Him? Why would we let other things or other people—I've had people look me in the eyes and say "Pastor, I have to do stuff with grandkids on the weekend. I can't get to worship."

Look at all the things that you and I try to put on the podium as just as important as Jesus. Every time you and I do it, it's sin. Count the cost of discipleship. See what you are as a disciple of Christ. You and I are sinners who fail our God who has loved us so desperately as to live and die for us. We fail Him again and again.

One of the other things I often hear when these points come up in sermons or in Bible studies is "Oh, yeah pastor, that's a great message but the people that needed to hear it weren't there." Okay, maybe so, but don't you and I need to hear it? How many times during the week don't I jump on top of the podium and kind of shove Jesus off the side and say "Yeah Jesus, I know you said you want me to do this, this and this, but Randy would rather not, so just go away for a while because I'm not going to do it." Or "Randy wants to do this, which you said is wrong." Haven't I just shoved Christ off the podium and said "I'm more important and what I want is more important than Christ"? Tell me, which of us here doesn't do that! So yes, we need to remember that when we do that, we are sinners.

But the other thing is I know a lot of the people that need to hear this are here. I keep my eyes open when I preach. Aren't they your relatives, your neighbors, your friends? Hasn't God called YOU to remind them that Jesus is the most important thing in their lives and to stay close to Jesus so that they'll be in heaven with you? This is what He has called us to do. Do it in love. Do it patiently. Do it kindly. Don't do it out of arrogance of "Why aren't you more like me," because the Lord already has enough sinners. He doesn't need more sinners like us. He needs people that are connected to Jesus. That's what we encourage one another to do.

Here's the other thing to remember—you and I are not going to keep Jesus alone at the center of the podium. We're going to jump on there with Him. We're going to put other things or people on there with Him. But the love our God has for us conquers that sin as well. Jesus forgives us. He doesn't say "Oh, you screwed up now. I'm never going to let you into my heaven." He says "I lived and died for that sin and that foolishness just as well as all the other ones you've ever committed or ever will commit." And today He gives us His very body and blood so that we can be sure He's serious about this and He says "This forgives your sins."

Once again, as we see this incredible love that our Savior has for us, it's not about we "have" to put Him at the center of our life, up on the pedestal alone. It's about we "want" to. We want to thank Him for this gift of forgiving me, even though I've failed Him again. It's about you wanting to put Him at the center because He has forgiven you, even though you have failed Him again. This is the love our God has for us and this is why it's so important to stay close to Him, because it can be lost. So encourage one another. Keep Jesus at the center. And keep feeding your faith with this beautiful message of forgiveness in 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.