



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

October 16, 2022

Pastor Randy Ott

19<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Ecclesiastes 5:8-20](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 146

Second Lesson: [Revelation 2:8-11](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 16:19-31](#)

### **The Believer Grows in Christian Character Christians have a right relationship with worldly wealth Scripture or Séance?**

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:

I'd like you to meet Earl and Minnie Floud. This picture was taken I think when they were 18-19 years old, in about 1900. I never ever met Minnie. These are my mom's parents. Earl lived with us. His middle name was Ross. That's my middle name. I think it was after Earl. In fact, underneath this picture there is a picture of the baby "Ross" that died as an infant. He was named after his dad and I share that middle name now.

When I knew Earl, he had a lot less hair. He was up there in years. We finished off our garage, so we couldn't use the garage, because that was where Earl lived while I was growing up. I'd listen to Tiger games on the radio with grandpa. Can you imagine that, kids, listening to a radio for a sporting event? Isn't that Neolithic? But that's what I did.

Minnie, I never ever met. She died before I was born. I heard things about her. I never met her. Don't know her. But this morning what we heard in what I read to you is a guy saying that it would be better for you all if Minnie would come talk to you this morning than if I talked to you about what God says in His Word. You guys hear my voice over and over. I've told you my voice is just white noise to you and I can see the puddle of words going in one ear and dropping to the floor on the other. But if Minnie comes back from the dead, she has obviously been dead for a long time, pastor has never met her and now he sees her walking down the aisle, that's going to grab our attention! If she says "You better do this or that," we're going to sit up and pay attention. Does that

make sense to you? Humanly speaking a lot of people would probably say “Yes! You bet! That makes a lot of sense! I’d much rather listen to Minnie Floud than Pastor Ott.”

But think for a minute—the guy that gave you that advice, where was he again? He was in hell. And the one who said to listen to Moses and the prophets (God’s Word—they only had the Old Testament), where was he? He was in heaven. So wouldn’t it make a little more sense for us, as Christians, to listen to the person who is in heaven and listen to what Jesus is trying to teach us about the importance of Scripture? Don’t wait for a séance and Minnie Floud to come talk to you. Go to Scripture if you want this confidence and you want to discover true heavenly wealth. It’s in the promises of our God. It’s not in waiting for something unique and supernatural and something that would demand our attention.

But as sinners we’re often more excited by something that would be unusual, and the everyday Word of God to us can become mundane because we are sinful human beings. That’s why our God has to shape our Christian character and help us to see where true wealth is. It’s not in the things in this world. It’s not in the dead coming back to talk to us. It’s not in that séance. It’s in the holy writings or holy Scripture. That’s what we want to focus on today. That’s what we want to see, how Jesus teaches this.

Jesus earlier in the chapter in Luke’s Gospel had the whole discussion about how you can’t serve both God and money. That was the Gospel last week. Then we’re told that after that the Pharisees were pretty ticked at Him because they loved wealth and they were looked up to and they had wealth and they thought that meant they were blessed and now “You’re telling us that doesn’t mean we’re blessed? We don’t like you that much to begin with anyhow, Jesus,” so they were mad at Him. It says they were muttering about Him, attacking Him, sneering at Him because “How could someone say such a foolish thing?”

So shortly after that Jesus talks about the rich man and Lazarus. If you’re one of the Pharisees listening to this, can’t you see exactly what Jesus is saying to you? There was this rich guy who lived in purple and fine linen. Do you think they looked at what they were wearing? He lived in luxury every day. To the outside world, this was the influencer of 1<sup>st</sup> Century Jerusalem. This is the guy that had it all. This is the one that everyone looked up to. We aren’t told he was a Pharisee but the comparison is there. He lived in that luxury every day. We’re told he lived the high life and everyone (I’m assuming) would think this guy has got it made. God must love him because this guy set his heart on worldly wealth and worked for it and achieved it. We’re told that there was the beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate every day.

I was reading the Study Bible about this account again this morning, and it struck me. Later on when the rich man says “Send Lazarus back to my five brothers,” it says (in the Study Bible) “it was the first time he showed any interest in anyone besides himself.”

How do you know that?! If they brought Lazarus to this gate every day, maybe the rich man was kind and loving and shared what fell from his table, since Lazarus said he longed to eat it. Maybe he longed to because that's the food he had. We don't know if this rich man was evil, wicked and terrible to everyone else. For all we know, he was a kind loving man. But when he died, he went to Hades, or hell, why? Because in the context of what Jesus had said, earthly wealth had choked out the heavenly wealth of the message of Moses and the prophets. The promise of a Savior to come, the One who would be our righteousness, the One who would be pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. "Yeah, yeah, that's nice for poor people, but I got it made. I don't need someone to be pierced for my transgressions. God must think I'm doing okay because He is blessing me with wealth." Evidently that's the kind of thing you might think the rich man thought. He went to hell, not because he was rich, because who did he talk to...Abraham. Abraham was a pretty wealthy man. Read the Old Testament. Abraham was really wealthy. It isn't like he went to hell because he was rich. He went to hell because he didn't believe in the promise of the Savior to come. He didn't have time for Moses and the prophets. Whereas Lazarus, who was living in suffering, isn't that how it goes for us at times? Do you find that yourself, too?

When suffering comes, that's when we turn to the Lord more readily. When things are going well, we throw out our shoulder patting ourselves on the back. When things are going badly we say "Lord, help" and then maybe that's when we turn to His promises.

Lazarus was living in that kind of suffering every day and evidently he was very focused on God's promises of a Savior to come and the blessings of paradise. When he died he was taken to Abraham's side and it's a picture of heaven.

A couple of things to take away from what we see here. (1) When the rich man says "Send Lazarus to dip his finger and give me a drop of water," we see that in hell there is great suffering. (2) We see you don't get a second chance. If you die in faith, you're with the Lord. If you die in unbelief, you're in hell and agony and there is a great chasm between the two. You don't get a weekend pass. You can't go AWOL. This is it, which speaks volumes to how important it is that we turn to the Scriptures in the here and now, not sometime in the future because we don't know when the Lord is going to call us out of this world.

One of the other things I find incredibly interesting here is where it says the rich man says to send Lazarus back, what we talked about, he wants a séance. He wants Grandma Minnie to come and talk to everyone so that they'll listen. I find Abraham's response to be very insightful and it should be instructive for those Christians who want to grow in Christian character. "Let them listen to Moses and the prophets." "They aren't going to do it. They never have done it. They have more important things to do than Moses and the prophets. There are all kinds of things that are pressing them for their time. You don't understand, Abraham. You don't understand. They spent money on..." Maybe

they had cabins they had to get to all summer long, so they didn't have time for God's Word. Maybe they had season tickets to the Jerusalem Packers and they couldn't get to the church or have time for God's Word because they spent that money on those tickets. "You don't understand, Abraham. They aren't going to listen to Moses and the prophets. They've got more important things to do."

I wonder what the look in Jesus' eye was as He was speaking to these Pharisees and says to them "They aren't going to listen even if someone comes back from the dead if they don't listen to Moses and the prophets." If you don't listen to the Word, you aren't going to listen if someone comes back from the dead because Jesus, according to His divine nature, would have known that He is going to raise another guy named Lazarus from the dead. When He did that some of the leaders of the Jews were there because it was close to Jerusalem. And what was their reaction? "Oh, no, we've been wrong! Jesus is the promised Messiah"? Nope—"We have to kill Him now because if we don't kill Him and He keeps raising people from the dead, everyone is going to listen to Him and not to us." They didn't listen because they hadn't listened to Moses and the prophets. Their own position and their own teaching of the rabbinic law was more important to them than what Moses and the prophets actually said and it warped their view so they couldn't see the Messiah in Scripture. They could only see a path for them to get to heaven by their good works, and they thought they were nailing it. So a "Messiah—don't need Him. We've got it covered."

Then I suppose you could say Jesus raised someone else from the dead. What was the reaction of the leaders of the Jews? When they heard the tomb was empty and they knew Jesus had said He was going to rise on the third day, they bribed some Roman soldiers to say "Yeah, we fell asleep." They didn't listen when someone rose from the dead.

I wonder what the look was in Jesus' eyes as He said this to these people who didn't listen to Moses and the prophets and wouldn't listen when Lazarus was raised from the dead or when Jesus rose from the dead.

Then my thought immediately goes to, how does Jesus look at me? Have you ever thought about how Jesus looks at you? How much time do you make for Moses and the prophets?

Moses and the prophets is just the Old Testament. We think of getting to know Jesus better as the New Testament. If I handed out pieces of paper right now and said "What is Nahum about, one of those Old Testament Minor Prophets," is anyone going to give me an answer? Do we listen to Moses and the prophets all that well? If we aren't listening to them, we might as well just rip those pages out of our Bible because they're not in our Bible.

I think about the time I make personally for digging into God's Word. I make a lot of time professionally to be in the Word. I know the Word. I have studied the Word. But personally, do I do as much as I really should? I find in my own life (do you find the same) that I don't until something happens where I need God's help more. When the doctor whispers "cancer" in your ear, all of a sudden I can find time to study the Psalms a little more. Doesn't that just highlight what sinners we are and how we fail our God?

We can come up with all the excuses. I bet you we're better at coming up with excuses than those guys Jesus was talking to. We don't have time. I hear that constantly that we don't have time. I find a lot of time to do a lot of stuff I don't need to do, do you? So maybe it's just a matter of me saying I'm going to make more time and not just count my professional work as my personal work.

So how do you do that? I think one of the things you could do—if you came through our school, you probably were given a Bible that looked something like this. It's just a straightforward Bible. It has everything in it. There are no study helps or anything like that, just God's Word; page after page of God's Word. If you got one of those, get it out and start reading through it. Take five minutes a day reading through it. When you get to that page where there is a big drool puddle where you fell asleep in class, dig in a little more because you might have missed something really good there. It's just a simple Bible and you can do that. That will work.

Maybe you say "I want something more that gives me more guidance or more help or more things to think about and look through." We did this in our Sunday night Book Study a number of years ago now. It's the Today's Light Bible, through the Bible in two years. It divides up the whole Bible into readings of two years. What it has is like a paragraph to "get the big picture." It tells you about what you are going to read about. So it gives you things to think about and look at. Then after you get done with a reading, it has 3-4 paragraphs of applying it to your life. So it gives you a little more of how this fits in with your daily life, some guidance, some directions and things to think about. Then it even says "If time is short today, read these verses if you don't have the time to read the whole thing." It's a great thing. There are resources that go with it. It's a great tool. Get something like that.

The other thing you could do is get one of these great, big, fancy Study Bibles. It has all kinds of resources and all kinds of notes. This is what I was talking about was in the notes at the bottom of the page where it says "It's the first time the rich man actually showed interest in anyone else." So sometimes the notes at the bottom aren't the best. They aren't God's Word. God's Word is up here. But there are all kinds of tools and resources we use. This is what I read before I preach a sermon so it sounds like I know Scripture before I talk to you guys. You could do it ahead of time and you'd know as much as I know. You could dig through these resources.

Then, if that doesn't work for you, those of you that have one of these kinds of things (cell phone), you can get Bible apps. You can buy them. You can get them free. You can take five minutes off of TikTok in your daily life or Instagram or something and you can even have it read to you if it's too much trouble to move your eyeballs. You can do that when you're brushing your teeth in the morning. Brush a little longer and listen a little more to God's Word. There are ways you can do it!

It's just a matter of us saying "I'm not going to wait around for God to say 'Tonight at 6 o'clock I'm going to speak to you what is on my mind'" because He isn't going to do it! He already has! It's there in the Bible. If He said that to you, would you make time even if it was 3:48 in the morning? Would you turn on your TV because God said He was going to talk to you? Probably, but He isn't going to do it! He said "It's right there. Anytime you want to listen to what is on my mind, pick up your Bible." It's the love letter God wrote to you.

If we want heavenly wealth, God gives it to us. We don't do any of the work to grow in faith on our own. He gives us the growth. It's the work of the Spirit. But we play a role in making time for the Spirit to work in our hearts by making use of Scripture on our own or at one of our many Bible studies. If you prefer studying with other Christians, and ***as iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another***, [\(Proverbs 27:17\)](#) come to our Bible studies. They aren't that intimidating. I don't think I ever call on anyone unless it's to pick on them to have fun, and that's usually the people I know that can take it, usually not the person that shows up the first time, right Abby? That's what we do.

But if you're a person that says "I don't want to do that. I want to do it on my own," you have resources. Use them. Go to our library. Get the [People's Bibles](#). Use some of these resources.

The thing to remember is that you and I, every single one of us who love our Savior and know that He died to take away our sins, we have failed our God in looking to other things besides Scripture for comfort or for what is more important to us. We have failed. We have sinned against our God. Yet God's unfailing love (that we talked about when we confessed our sins today—but I trust in your unfailing love) says to us "Christ lived perfectly in your place. Christ died in your place. You are my forgiven child. My Spirit gave you the gift of faith in Jesus." Because God loves us so unconditionally, without us deserving it or meriting it or earning it by paying attention to a sermon or reading the Bible, we don't earn His love, He loves us because of who He is. The more we get to understand that and the more we know that, the more we want to, not have to—this isn't a have to. This is a want to. If I want worldly wealth, I'm going to want to spend more time with my God. I don't have to do that to be saved. I want to because I AM saved. Amen.

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