



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 23, 2022

Pastor James Enderle

20th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [1 Chronicles 29:1-2, 10-18](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 27

Second Lesson: [Romans 6:15-23](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 17:1-10](#)

The Believer Grows in Christian Character A Faith That Works

1. Sins are all around and abounding
2. Forgiveness is not an option
3. A Faith that works
 - a. Forgive because we are forgiven
 - b. Dutiful because it's done
 - c. With thanks because we are unworthy

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:

You might have a few sections of Scripture you turn to for certain topics and some places where in a short little while it shares so much. One of the ones you can think of is [John 3:16](#), the one we always call the Gospel in a nutshell. I think of [Colossians 3](#) where it talks about what it means to be part of a body of Christ and what it means to be a Christian. You might turn to [Psalm 23](#) for the comfort that God gives to us at all times and how He is always with us, now and in eternity. Maybe we look at [1 Corinthians 13](#) for the love that God has for us and how He showers that upon us; that love that we hold so dear.

When we look at what it means to serve and to be a Christian serving, I think [Luke 17](#) is such a good section. It's filled with a lot of things in a short little section. The heading in the old NIV (New International Version) was "Sin, Faith and Duty." I love this so much because all of these things are necessary to talk about when it talks about serving and being a Christian and serving God and others. I liked to use this when I was serving in China with all the lay workers when they would start the year there because when you're thinking about leaving your home and serving God in another place, it's good to think about why we serve and how we can serve.

So as we look at this, it's important to see how we can serve as Christians and why. Why can we serve faithfully and thankfully and with joy? What I think we are going to see is it is because we have **A Faith That Works**.

What does that mean? It's not that we have a faith that saves us because of our work, in that we are working our salvation out, but it's a faith that works. It gives us things. It gives us salvation and hope and peace and then that faith also works in us. It changes us to want to work. The biggest part in all of this though is to look first at who we are and our situation and that sin and that faith in our lives.

When Jesus starts out discussing with His disciples, He says these words: ***"Things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble. So watch yourselves."*** He starts out here talking about sin. Sin is prevalent in our lives and sins that cause you to stumble are going to be all around. *Sins are all around and abounding.* That's what He is saying here. He knows that we are going to be confronted by sin. We are going to be tempted. He is saying, "Be careful. Don't tempt others. Don't lead others into sin."

It's the world we live in. We live in this broken world. But how much are we surprised by that when sin enters our lives, when we suffer because of sin? There is this battle raging behind the scenes. Then we are surprised when things in this world are hard. The devil is trying to get you and others to fall away and he is continually tempting this world to follow sinful things. So there is going to be suffering and challenges. But when difficulty comes into your life, are you shocked? Are you surprised? Are you crying out, "How could this happen?! Why could this happen?!" We know that we sin and there are consequences for our sin and others are going to sin against us and cause pain and suffering in our life and we live in this broken world where people and things fall apart. Sin is all around and abounding, which makes suffering real. That's one of the most important things—we really talk about suffering and pain. We don't minimize it and say, "Well, just don't think about it" or "Just wait. It will be over in a little while." Sin is real. The pain and difficulty that is caused are real. We have to be prepared for that and understand what sin does in our life and not be surprised when sin and difficulty enters in. When that happens though, how do we react and what does our faith do for us?

As He is talking about being tempted and tempting others, Jesus then goes on to say this: ***"If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them. Even if they sin against you seven times in a day and seven times come back to you saying 'I repent,' you must forgive them."*** Here He is saying there is sin all around, so how do we handle it? When we see someone sinning, we need to call them out and say that's sin. Rebuke them and call them to repentance; and when

we sin, to repent. But do you see what He focuses on the most here? He focuses on forgiving people who sin against you. He says even if someone sins against you seven times in a day and seven times they come and repent, you must forgive them. He is telling you that *forgiveness is not an option* when someone repents. When someone comes to you and says "I'm sorry," you need to forgive them. Why is this key instead of talking about repentance? It is important for us as Christians to repent and to call others to repentance.

Think about yourself and how you interact with people. Do you more often call people to repentance and rebuke them, or is it harder for you to forgive someone? Especially when they repeatedly sinned against you? Think about that. His example is pretty amazing. When someone sins against you seven times and comes back to you each time, even seven times in a day, forgive them. You think of someone who does something once or twice and you say "I'll forgive you," and then three and four, "Come on! You should know better! Change! I can't forgive that anymore. Now you're just doing that on purpose." We struggle with forgiving others and we think they don't deserve it. "They don't deserve my forgiveness. What they have done is too great. They hurt me too much! They can't make up for this pain." What do we do even as Christians? We hold onto that resentment and we say "I'm sorry, but..." in our hearts, do we really forgive? God is telling us it's not an option, so forgive those who come and repent. I would even say there is a bigger point to this as well.

The apostles say to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" What is this saying? They know this is hard. It's hard for them and He's telling us He knows it's hard for us. So the disciples say ***"Increase our faith!"*** This is hard! So what does God point us to? In Verse 6 he says: ***"If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you."*** He is saying you're faith is enough even though you might say "Increase my faith! Give me stronger faith!" The disciples are saying "We don't have strong enough faith. We can't do this." He's saying "Even if you have this tiny faith, you can do this." Why? We have a faith that actually works. We have a faith that means something and it isn't just inspirational and something that says "Just believe in something." We have a faith that works. How is that?

Remember when we talked about forgiving others and how hard it is when someone sins against us over and over again? It's true, but think about our relationship with God. When it talks about someone who sins against someone seven times in a day and comes back and repents, we say "What kind of person does that? Who would sin against someone seven times over and over again?" Then we see ourselves and God and we probably have to raise our hand and say "Oh, that's me! That's what I do to God over and over again because I keep on doing the things I know I don't want to do and sin over and over again against Him. Then I come back and say 'Forgive me.'" And what does He do? He doesn't say "Oh, you've reached your limit!" He forgives. So we can

forgive because we are forgiven. This is such an important part to our faith and our service and who we are and how we can forgive others, because we have been forgiven.

We can't lose sight of the fact that God loves us so much that He sent Jesus to forgive us; to forgive us when we hurt Him over and over again. Jesus died on the cross to forgive the sins that we've done in the past and the sins that we are going to commit today and the sins that everyone has committed through the whole world. That's how much God loves you! God has worked and loved you so much to forgive you, to forgive you so that our faith isn't just words. It's not just something that we hold onto for hope. It's something that's real because God has really forgiven you, which means you can really forgive others, even when it hurts, even when you feel like you don't want to, even at times when people don't know they've hurt you. When we struggle to forgive, we need to forgive because God has forgiven us and loves us and redeems us. When we see that forgiveness, it changes us. It changes who we are and how we can serve and love God and others.

To finish off, Jesus says these words: ***"Suppose one of you has a servant plowing or looking after the sheep. Will he say to the servant when he comes in from the field, 'Come along now and sit down to eat'? Won't he rather say, 'Prepare my supper, get yourself ready and wait on me while I eat and drink; after that you may eat and drink'? Will he thank the servant because he did what he was told to do? So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.'"*** This is not the easiest section to think about or talk about when it comes to our works. Here is a servant and the picture He draws is pretty easy. If you're a servant, you don't get to come in from working and then the master comes and feeds you a great big meal and says "Relax! Let me serve you." The servant serves and then he serves and he does all the things that he's supposed to do.

As Christians it's easy for us to have that checklist and maybe do the bare minimum. "They'll notice these things." "With my spouse or my parents, this is what they really need done, but that other stuff doesn't matter too much." That's not what Jesus is saying here. He is saying we want to do EVERYTHING we are told, and knowing that when we've done all this, we've only done our duty. We want to be *dutiful because* we know *it's* already *done*. What does that mean? We can serve and do all these things, more than expected, because we're not actually earning anything from all of this. Jesus did it all! That's so important when it comes to our work and how we serve others because if I'm putting all these things up in front of God and say "Hey, look! Look what I've done! Now you need to pay me back," is that a good way to serve? Is that what it means to be faithful and to be thankful for the forgiveness we've been given if we then say "Hey, God, look at how good I am and how much I'm serving and loving"? We know that what we do doesn't earn us anything, and that's actually a really good thing because how often are we doing everything out of pure motive? So knowing that it's all

done helps us to serve and know that God takes all of our good works and makes them holy. He helps us see that all we are doing is done in His service and He is smiling down upon us. We can serve and love knowing that Jesus served in our place perfectly. I don't have to compare. I don't have to worry what God thinks about my service. I can do so willingly knowing that He is smiling upon it and seeking for me to do more because He has done so much. But how does my attitude affect this all and how can I do this with the right attitude?

Notice in the last sentence it says this: ***"We are unworthy servants..."*** When we understand we are unworthy, we might feel that sounds like a negative thing. But David talked about this. Knowing that everything we have comes from Him, it actually fills us with joy to know that He is going to give us everything we need. So we can serve with thanks because we are unworthy. We can be filled with this joy and thanks knowing that He is giving us everything we need and He has blessed us to serve. If we didn't have the blessings from God, what would we have?

Think about your talents, your family, your job, your house, your home, your money, all these things; you don't deserve them. That's one of the most abused words in the world. "You **deserve** this." We are unworthy. Yet God gives us and blesses us with so much. So with thanks and joy we can serve knowing He loves us and will provide.

I want us to think of three practical ways of how we can serve with joy and thanks.

1. The first one is to think of how you can serve. Maybe you are thinking "This sounds great, but right now I'm not doing things that I want to be doing" or "I could be serving more." Ask someone from church. Ask your pastors or look for ways where you can serve God at church, at home, or at school. Serve those around you in joy. But that's the other part...
2. How can I serve with more thanks? I know there are many of you that are serving in lots of ways. When I say to think about how you can serve, there are many of you that are probably saying "I'm serving a lot." That's good! Think of how you can serve with maybe a little more joy and thanks. Maybe that involves thinking about how other people serve—that's the third thing to think about.
3. How can I encourage others to serve or encourage others in their service? That's another thing that the devil will do—either in my service or the service of others, we'll find things to pick at or to be upset about in the ways that others have served or given. So we have to look and say, "How can I encourage the people who are serving and say 'Thank you, you're doing a great job'?" "How can I help more?" "How can I encourage the young people of our church to serve now?" "How can I encourage the older people or people of any age to serve in ways

they can?" "How can I help them to see that they are serving and we're thankful so that they can serve in joy?"

Think about that today. Think of how we can serve our Lord, serve others in the home, and serve others in the world. Why? So that they can see their Savior and we can get more Jesus to more people, so that we can help others have this faith that works. A faith that isn't about our service but actually what God has done for us. Yes, it involves us serving and sharing that Word but only because He has blessed us to be able to be a part of it.

What a joy it is to serve. What a joy it is to have this faith that looks at things in a real way, knows we're going to have difficulties, and knows that people are going to sin against us, but we are able to forgive and build people up and mend relationships. We can encourage people to love and serve and not look at ourselves but look to our Savior—the one who binds it all together and the one that gives us faith—a faith that He has worked and a faith that gives us salvation, peace and joy. Amen.

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