



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

January 1, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

1st Sunday after Christmas

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Hosea 11:1-7](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 2

Second Lesson: [Galatians 4:4-7](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23](#)

Realize Who Healed You

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 are yours from God our Father, through our Lord and Savior Jesus. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Our ability to think we know better than someone else is something that can't really be explained away always. I'm amazed as I visit people at times, people who are going through health issues, people who are going through difficulties, I'm pretty sure, maybe I'm wrong, but I'm pretty sure the vast majority of the people I visit do not have a medical doctor's degree. Yet I think about 9 out of 10 of them think they know better than the doctor when the doctor tells them to do something. It just seems to be what we do. We're told one thing and we hear it and say "Yeah, that makes sense," and then we go away and don't do it.

I spent a lot more time this last year thinking about my health than I probably have any other year. I thought I was doing what the doctor was telling me to do until I talked with my wife and found out I'm not. That just seems to be the way it goes.

We can know something but we don't always realize it in a sense of putting it into practice. Have you found that yourself? I think that's exactly what we see God talking about through the prophet Hosea today about His chosen people, the children of Israel, specifically the Northern Kingdom who Hosea was ministering to. But I think we can also see it in ourselves that sometimes we don't always realize who it is that has healed us. God says He wants them to realize it and I think He also wants us to realize exactly who it is who heals us and what kind of healing we need. We aren't talking about

physical healing. God wants us to realize why we need that healing, how we are healed, and then how God desires to heal others through us. That's really what our God has called us to do.

Hosea was a prophet in the Northern Kingdom. That was around 750 B.C. He was a prophet for about 30 years in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. He was a prophet that was warning the Northern Kingdom of Israel about God's coming punishment/discipline, whatever you want to call it, because they didn't listen to the prophets. They didn't repent and turn away from their sins.

God had made some things really clear. When He was on Mount Saini with Moses He said, "Here is how I want to be worshipped. Don't make graven images. I'll give you all the instructions for tabernacle and temple worship. I want you to carry these out because they point ahead to the Savior who is going to come. They are a shadow of the things to come. The reality will come when the Messiah comes. But this is what I want you to do." But when the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom split, the Northern Kingdom (for political reasons) built two golden calves, set them up and said "This is how you are to worship the Lord who called you out of Egypt;" the exact opposite of what God told them to do.

Many of their kings said "This is where we are worshipping the Lord who brought you out of Egypt," but they were doing it exactly opposite of how God told them to do it. They didn't realize who it was that had promised to heal them. They looked beyond that.

Not only did they do that, they started worshipping other gods. They prostituted themselves to other gods. That's one of the messages of Hosea. Hosea was told by God to marry Gomer, the prostitute, who was unfaithful to him. This was an everyday living picture for the people of the Northern Kingdom of how they had prostituted themselves by, **"...the more they were called, the more they went away from me. They sacrificed to the Baals and they burned incense to images."** That was Hosea's calling on how to serve the Lord—"Marry an unfaithful wife because that's what my people have done to me" God said. What a miserable calling, but Hosea carried it out. Hosea proclaimed His message faithfully and he recorded all of this for us. He records a lot of God's warnings. ([Hosea 1](#))

In this section he goes over how God had been gracious to His Son (the children of Israel). He had chosen them out of the nations, not because they were anything better than anyone else but because it was His choice of grace. He had this special relationship with them. They were in Egypt for 450 years and God called them out of Egypt. In love and mercy He had made them His own and they had turned their back on Him because they didn't realize the blessings were from God. They would attribute it to themselves, to other gods, to many things, and God finally says "Even though I treated them like

little kids, I picked them up and kissed them on the cheek" (that's the image that He is using), "I've done this for them over and over and over again and they are just like a petulant two-year-old that throws a fit."

So He says "Now the time is coming when I'm not going to keep doing it. They are going to go back to Egypt. Assyria is going to carry them off." In 722 B.C., that's exactly what happened. Assyria came. They conquered the Northern Kingdom and they never ever returned. They were settled in other lands. They were separated from their homeland. And they ceased to exist as a nation, exactly as God had warned them.

I wonder if they thought the same thing we think at times. That God is kind of like the doting grandfather that sits in a rocking chair on a porch and thinks it's cute when the grandkids break mom and dad's lamp. "Isn't that something; that little dickens." That God smiles and thinks it's amusing when His people turn their back on Him and sin against Him. If we see anything in this reading from Hosea, we see that is not our God. Our God hates sin! Completely and absolutely! He hated the Northern Kingdom of Israel's sin. They ceased to exist as a nation because they didn't listen to His warnings.

God is a patient God, but His patience comes to an end. That's what God is telling us today. That's why it's so important that we stay connected to the God who has healed us because just like the Israelites, we are petulant two-year-olds at times. God tells us "This is my will for your life. I'm telling you this not because it's going to be a burden on you or make your life difficult or be a pain to you. It's going to be a blessing to you." All of God's Laws are designed to be a blessing to us but we think we know better. God gives us these Commands because He is loving and gracious. But the devil gets us to believe He is just trying to keep us from the fun. So then one spouse chases after someone else and has an affair. They think this will bring more excitement and fun into their life but it tears apart their family. God knew what He was saying when He said "Don't commit adultery." And yet too often God's people say "I know better."

God has said, "You know what is going to be a real blessing for you? Let us not give up meeting together but let us encourage one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching." ([Hebrews 10:25](#)) Let's meet together around Word and Sacrament so that we can help each other grow because we have a responsibility to encourage one another. God's people say "It's none of your business. It's between me and God." I don't know how many times I've been told recently, "You don't have to worship to be saved." No kidding! No one has ever told you that you have to do something to be saved. Jesus did it all! That's the whole message of Scripture over and over and over! It's a gift of God. Not by works, so that no one can boast. ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) The question is, does God want me to do it and will God bless me when I do it? Realize that the answer is yes! But all too often, God's people say "Nah, I know better. That's cute God, but I'm a little brighter than you are."

God has said "You know what? You are going to be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, and Samaria and to the ends of the earth." ([Acts 1:8](#)) God has said to us in [1 Peter 3:15](#): ***Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...*** All too often God's people have said "Nah, not my job. That's someone else's job." We don't realize what God has put in front of us at times and we don't realize why we want to do it. It's because He loves us so incredibly.

We have failed God in ways just like the Israelites did. We've done it over and over. We are nothing more than spiritual two-year-olds quite often. And God keeps picking us up, kissing us on the cheek through His Word and Sacraments, and tells us He loves us. The patience and love of our God is always there. It's amazing to me that God is so gracious, loving and kind.

[Hosea 11:7](#), the last thing that I read to you: ***"My people are determined to turn from me. Even though they call me God Most High, I will by no means exalt them."*** That isn't the end of chapter. Go home and read the rest of [Hosea 11](#). God says "Even though my people don't exalt me, I will send my Salvation. I will be faithful to my promises." God never acts because of anything we do, like we have manipulated Him into loving us. His love is always there. Our response flows out of that love for us that leads us to love Him and love others and say "I realize who healed me and now I want to thank Him. I'm going to pay attention to what He tells me to do, not because He is going to save me but because it's how I thank Him. I know He has my best interest at heart." That's one of the marks of spiritual maturity. It moves us on from that petulant two-year-old to something that is more mature in the faith and lives because God loves and has loved us first. Amen.

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