



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

April 28, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

5th Sunday of Easter

First Lesson: [Acts 4:32-37](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 67

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [1 John 3:18-24](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 15:1-8](#)

Resurrection Reality The Living Lord Produces Active Faith Jesus Lives! So We Live Differently

1. Made _____ by Christ.
2. _____ to be _____ in the world.
3. Faith _____ into _____.
4. God is greater than our _____.

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:

How many of you, either now as you have kids or when you were growing up, had chores you had to do or to assign chores, assigning different paths to do? It is also talked about how at different ages you get different chores to do. At our house right now, we have a chore chart, but we call it our "star chart." I know a few months ago I talked about parenting. It's not the best to always use rewards. That's not the best way to train. But also, it's sometimes good because you are pointing out the good things.

When you do chores, maybe when you were growing up or as a parent if you have kids doing chores, you notice how they can be done in one of two different ways. Sometimes you can be really thankful that they did them and other times you can be really upset as they are doing them. What is the difference? Maybe they are emptying the dishwasher and they are stomping around saying, "Ugh!! I don't want to do this! This is so hard!!" When they feel forced to do it and when you have to coerce them and tell them to do it five times, are you even happy when they get it done? Not really. It's more of a pain that you had to ask that many times and they aren't really happy doing it. One of the reasons that we have the "star chart" is because we actually want to reward behavior when they aren't doing it for anything. When they just help out a

sibling or clean something up and are doing the things that we are trying to teach but are doing it naturally and not out of getting a reward.

The other day we had the kids clean up the table after dinner and Eli didn't clean up his food before I was coming over here to church. So I asked "Onycha, can you go and grab his plate and clean up his plate?" She goes, "Would I get a star then?" I was like, "No, I'm just asking you to do it." If she would have just done it, maybe I would have given her one, but when she is seeking that and when we are looking for it, what we really want to be teaching is just to do it naturally. That's part of chores because you want people to understand what is good and right to do.

So, as we look at our lives as Christians, what does God want us to do? How does God want us to live our life? God doesn't have us do things out of reward. God looks at us and because **Jesus lives**, He wants us to **live differently**. We see that in all our readings today, but we see the apostle John writing about this and how to live differently. We are going to see what this means, how we can live this out, and what this means for us in our hearts as well.

In the verses before our text, [Verse 16](#), he says: ***¹⁶This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters.*** In this section in [1 John 3](#), he has been writing and the people have kind of been fighting with each other. They don't know how to treat the brothers and sisters, so he is saying, "Love one another." Why can we love one another? It's because Jesus has loved us. Jesus laid His life down for us. Then later he talks about what the command is that God really wants us to do (in [Verse 23](#)) is to believe in the name of His Son, Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the Savior, the One who came to love us, to die for us, and to rise again. So because He did that, we have something. We have righteousness because of what Christ has done. We are *made righteous by Christ*. We have to understand that Christ has loved us and forgiven us and that is what changes everything.

When we look at this, it's important to understand that the Bible talks about two types of righteousness, and if you mix it all up, you get it all confused. If you see all of this as if the righteousness is all about what we do, that I have to fulfill God's righteousness because it's not done already, then there is always more, there is never enough. But if we understand that there are these two types of righteousness, the first thing is that I am made righteous by Christ because when He died, He said, ***"It is finished."*** ([John 19:30](#)) He is ***the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*** ([John 1:29](#)) It's enough! He did it. So I am made righteous. But then, what does he say? We ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters ([Verse 16](#)) and (in [Verse 23](#)) that we believe in Jesus and to love one another as He commands us. Even though we are made righteous, we are also *called to be righteous in the world*.

Again, if you mix it up and you think it's all about you being righteous that earns you the righteousness, how much stress, how much unknown because, can you ever be righteous enough. I don't think so. But we understand that God has made us righteous, so then we can go and love others, just as those in the [Book of Acts](#) did as they share everything. They have seen what Jesus has done for them, they knew what it meant to be forgiven and loved so they went and shared that. We are called to be different, so we live differently. That's kind of in two different ways. We live differently knowing we're already righteous.

There's a book we read on Sunday nights and it quotes that we already have the verdict. It's not like other religions where the performance then leads to the verdict. We have the verdict. We are forgiven. We are righteous. And that leads us to serve and to love others. So what does this then look like?

He says then, as we are to love others (in [Verse 17](#)), ***¹⁷If anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in that person? ¹⁸Dear children, let us not love with words or speech but with actions and in truth.*** What he is saying here is that our faith shouldn't just be words, good thoughts, but we should put our faith into action. He is saying *faith flows into action*. As I know what Jesus has done for me, I'm going to love others. I'm going to serve others and give of the blessings that I have so others can be blessed by God as well. How does that look? We saw that in the [Book of Acts](#). We see that as we can serve others, not just with words and speech but also with actions. How can we do that in our lives?

Think of opportunities all around you. Maybe you have a friend or family member who is having a difficult time and you can help them out. Maybe they need help with taking a kid from place to place. If they are busy or if someone is sick, maybe you could provide a meal for them. Or maybe, one of the most important things is giving time. Maybe they are struggling with what is happening in their life and you can be there and you can give spiritual hope and peace to them and you can comfort them. We can help with our time, our talents, our treasures, our money, but time sometimes is the most valuable. So whatever gifts you have been given, you can use them to help those around you, and you can do that just in your personal life but we also see how we can do that as a church.

How can our faith flow into action? We have different compassion ministries here at church. We have our [Soup for Souls](#) where you can bring meals to people who maybe are having health problems or have a loss of a loved one or the birth of a child and just need a little bit of help or just to hear that someone loves them. We have our [Food Pantry](#) where you can donate and be there. We serve almost 50 families a month! So we are able to help these people who are in need. Both of those things, just to remind

you, you can give your time. Also, those things we are not really putting in the budget. We are encouraging you to give to support those separately. So, as we say, we don't talk about money very much in church, but these are awesome ways to put our faith into action, both with time and talents and treasures, to serve others.

You can think of other ways that we, as a congregation, can serve people, love people, and we are always looking for new ways or ways that you can volunteer and help out, even, like we said, giving time. We have people now that we call a Visitation Team that, when people can't come to church, they go and are able to sit and talk with those people, read devotions with them, and encourage them. So it's not just "pastor" that does that. You can go and do that. It's a way that you can put your faith into action. There are all sorts of ways where you can do that, you on your own, but also together.

When we look at this, though, we say "Do I do that very well?" John writes about this and says, ²⁰***If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything.*** ²¹***Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God*** ²²***and receive from him anything we ask, because we keep his commands and do what pleases him.*** We can struggle with knowing if I serve and help and live out my faith enough. The truth is that we are not going to do it perfectly. We are going to fall short, so we need the reminder that *God is greater than our hearts*. When I see that I have failed, that I fall short of putting my faith into action, God is greater.

There are examples of where we, as Christians, might be considered hypocritical, or we say certain things but then we are accused of maybe not helping in other ways. One of the examples I have is this little sermon series on the back of the sermon notes that you can pick up and watch, but when we talk about "pro-life;" many Christians are pro-life, defending the unborn, and people say "They only care about the unborn and they speak a lot of things but they are unwilling to help the moms, the people who are struggling, and to make it so that they don't want an abortion." You can take that criticism how it is, but consider how we can help people more. How can we put our love into action and show that we care for all people? That sermon series has some great thoughts for us to think about of how we can serve and love others and continue to lift all people up.

In doing this, remember that we are not going to do it perfectly; our righteousness comes from God and I can only do this when I am connected to God. Our hearts have to be connected to God in order for me to do anything. This is kind of a reflection of the Gospel Lesson—the vine and the branches. I was thinking of this—as I often print things from my house, where I have my computer and I need to print them at school, sometimes it doesn't connect to the right Wi-Fi and it connects here at church instead of over at school. I can push "Print," but as many times as I push "Print," what happens? It doesn't work. You know that probably pretty well with your phone or your computer. If you go somewhere and your phone or computer isn't connected to the internet, what

happens? You can do all the things you want, you can push all the buttons to make everything work, but if you're not connected, it does no good.

That's how it is with us in our faith, in our actions, and Jesus. John writes that we will have fruits. If there is no fruit, he actually says they will be thrown into the fire, but we can't demand what type of fruit or how much. But if we are connected to God, just like the phone is connected to the internet/Wi-Fi, if we are connected, we will produce good fruit. We will live differently and we don't have to fear if we've done enough or if we are faithful enough because we are righteous. We are connected to Jesus. Therefore, we are made righteous. Therefore, I can then live differently. Living with a joy and a peace and loving and giving and serving in ways that others can't and can't understand. Not to earn anything. Not like my daughter. "Oh, can I get that star?" We know that we have been loved and we are forgiven and made righteous, so what do we want to do? We want to share that love so others may know Jesus and others may come to know that forgiveness and peace as well. Amen.

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