



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 7, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

7th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Ezekiel 2:1-7](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 143 CW

Second Lesson: [2 Timothy 2:1-13](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 6:1-6](#)

Meaningful Ministry Not Glee and Gratitude, but Rejection and Resentment AMAZED AND OFFENDED

1. Jesus is _____ to _____
2. The _____ is offensive
3. The _____ is offensive
4. _____ the offense but don't take _____

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 do you feel about high school reunions? I am at the age now where I am just passed my 20-year high school reunion. I mentioned this on Thursday that it's getting far away because it's been 20 years. I saw a lot of people out there laughing at me saying 20 years for my high school reunion is a long time and they thought "Ha-ha, yeah, right." But I think if you are a little bit younger and you think about high school reunions when you are older, they are kind of fun. You get to see people that you haven't seen in ages if you're up to your 30-year reunion or your 40-year reunion. But those earlier reunions, those 5-year reunions and 10-year reunions; aren't they kind of weird? You are just out of college and in the 10-year you may be married, or maybe you're not married, and then you're going back and you're seeing people and it's almost like a competition. Or you are seeing people who you maybe had crushes on in high school or you dated or you knew all these things about and now you're a little bit older and haven't seen them in a while. So those 5-year reunions or 10-year reunions are somewhat awkward because you know them from high school, and what is high school like?

We just spent a week in Colorado with the Youth Rally, which had over 2,000 teenagers/high school students. High school students have a different life. Our kids, we actually got a lot of compliments on how they behaved. We had to stay at hotels. Our bus drivers gave a lot of compliments to our high school students on how they acted. But in truth, high school kids don't always make the best decisions, if you remember that from your high school years of how you are trying to impress people and trying to find out who you are. So when you go back to your home town or see high school friends, it's kind of awkward.

It's the same thing of why don't we call pastors and teachers to their home congregations, as Jesus talks about that—a prophet doesn't have honor in their home town—because when you go back to your home church, especially if you are a pastor or teacher, you come back and they knew you as a little kid. They knew you as you were growing up, maybe doing some foolish things in high school. So it's maybe not always the best thing to return to your home town because the people knew you so well in your growing up years. That familiarity can be uncomfortable.

This is what Jesus finds as He returns home. But Jesus is in a unique situation because in His high school years and growing up, He didn't sin. So it's not that Jesus was known to do the kind of the things they did or that they kind of would look down on Him because He was this foolish child. Instead, we are going to find it a little bit different with their comfortability. And as we look at how they react to Jesus, I think it reflects on how we react to God's Word and the world reacts to God's Word. We are going to see first of all that they were **amazed and offended**. It's kind of interesting how those two can go together, but we see that right away in the text.

It says, ***Jesus left there and went to his hometown, accompanied by his disciples. When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?"***—amazement, right? Look at the next verse. ***"Isn't this the carpenter? Isn't this Mary's son and the brother of James, Joseph, Judas and Simon? Aren't his sisters here with us?" And they took offense at him.*** Notice how quickly it shifts. They are amazed and right after, they are offended by Jesus. How could this be?

We look and see that the people in his hometown were offended by Jesus. I think the truth is, though, that in some ways *Jesus is offensive to everyone*. Why is this true? Why is Jesus offensive to everyone? He was doing miracles. He had this wisdom. But that maybe wasn't so much what they were offended by. Maybe it had a little bit to do with what He was teaching and what He was saying. If you look in the Gospel of Mark, it doesn't tell us what He was teaching because Mark is this guy who wants to get through everything quickly. He is kind of an excited writer—immediately, and then, and then—

and he moves on pretty quickly. But in the Gospel of Luke, Luke tells us what Jesus taught and preached in Nazareth. In [Luke 4, beginning at Verse 16](#), Luke writes: ***He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:***

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” This is what Jesus was preaching.

He was reading from the Book of Isaiah the prophecy about the Messiah. He was talking about how, in the future, someone would come and do miracles and preach and proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor—speaking about that year of forgiveness, where (in the Old Testament) the people were supposed to forgive all the debts. What this was picturing was God’s true forgiveness—that God would come and forgive His people, forgive all sins, and here, Jesus is saying it was prophesied that one would do miracles and preach and would be the Messiah. Then He sits down and says, “Here I am. I am fulfilling this prophecy.” So what they were most likely offended by was that He was saying He is the Messiah, the Savior.

How do you think they felt? They said they grew up with this guy. They knew Him and now He was coming and saying He is the Messiah? The idea that this man from Nazareth is a Savior of the world; isn’t that a little offensive to everyone, each and every one of us? Even if He has wisdom and power and miracles, we’re like “I don’t know about that.” Why is that? What He is preaching and teaching is this Gospel message, and the truth is, *the Gospel is offensive* because He is preaching and saying “I have come to forgive and to save,” and there is a problem inside each and every one of us.

As the Gospel comes to us, this free and full forgiveness, there are one or two things that we do and often, both have to do with pride.

1. *I can do it. I don’t need a Savior. I’m good enough on my own, so why do I need this guy, this thing sent from God, to save me?* Born sinfully, our hearts are in contrast to God and His will and we don’t like that idea. We want to do it ourselves. We think we can. We have a much higher opinion of ourselves than we should. The next is kind of related to this one.

2. *If there is a Gospel message and a Savior, what does that mean?* It means you fall short. You can't do it and you have sinned. We have to admit and repent. That's the other message He was going to share—repentance, calling people to repent of their sins. When we are prideful, when we don't like to think about our wrongs or admit our wrongs to God and to others, that's offensive.

In order to first be filled up with the Gospel, we have to see the truth of who we are—that we can't fulfill God's Law, that we're not good enough, and that we fall short so often and we need a Savior. We need Jesus. So in the same way that this was offensive to the people of Nazareth, it's offensive to our sinful nature and to so many in the world that they say, "There is no need for the Savior. I can do it!" Or "I'm not so bad. I'm not as bad as all those other people." And whoever you want to say and compare yourself to. We are offended by Jesus. We are offended by the Gospel because we want to do it on our own.

The other part that is interesting with Jesus, and especially here in Nazareth, is that they say He has wisdom. They even see His miracles. But then what offends them? They say "Isn't this that carpenter guy? Isn't this Mary's son? We have his brother's here and his sisters here. He is from Nazareth. He is one of us." Do you remember what happened as Jesus was calling His disciples and Nathanael says, "What good can come from Nazareth?" ([John 1:46](#)) Do you think the people of Nazareth themselves thought that way, too? "We're just this small, dinky town, Nazareth. How could the Messiah come from here? Even if he has wisdom and power and miracles, he's just one of us. That can't be." So what were they were offended by? I think *the ordinary is offensive*. For them, they saw that He was just one of them. He grew up among them. How can He be the Messiah?

I think we struggle with that today. Our world struggles with that. The Gospel seems very ordinary. The way that it is delivered can seem very ordinary—that God would use us to share a simple message; that this book (Bible) that we have has been passed on from generation and generation and we say "It's different! It comes from God," and people say "Ah, that's just ordinary. It's just like every other book." Or think of how God works in the means of grace. The simple waters of baptism, do you think that is offensive to people? That you can bring a baby, who can't even speak, and you can baptize them? And we say "God works faith in the heart of that little child." It looks so ordinary but the Gospel does amazing things. So people can look at that and say "That's silly! You need to be baptized when YOU can commit yourself to God, when you can show how faithful you are. And that baptism needs to be a whole lot flashier than just a sprinkle of water on a tiny baby." But God works amazing things through the simple, ordinary.

It's the same thing with the Lord's Supper. As we eat and drink bread and wine, that God says He is present in, what does He work? He works the forgiveness of sins—the

same thing He does in baptism. Increasing our faith and forgiving our sins, reminding us and really, forgiving us; just as in His Word; just as the Holy Spirit works. The ordinary does amazing things. But we can be offended at that and say “Ugh! That’s just not that flashy.” We might say “How can a little church...” or “How can we really make a difference? We’re not that big.” Or, “I just talk to people in a little way.” We know that God works through these things.

We might look and we might say “God’s Word, baptism, the Lord’s Supper—those things are just so ordinary. I want something bigger. My faith is failing. God, give me a sign! Give me a miracle!” You’ve heard people ask that, maybe you’ve asked that at times. “Give me a sign to help prove this.” What I think one of the things this text does is shows Jesus was performing miracles. He was doing amazing things, and what did the people do? They still were offended. If you don’t see how God works through the ordinary, how He works through His Gospel and means of grace, then you are going to want more or you’re going to say that’s not good enough.

When we understand that as the Gospel comes to us, as Jesus comes to us, as we sang in our hymn, a Light that comes down, it descends from heaven, if Jesus is not of this world and this Gospel message doesn’t come from man, it’s going to be offensive. But through the Holy Spirit, through these means of grace, He works in our hearts.

We read in Ezekiel where God told Ezekiel to stand up and go share the message. In the next verse, there is an interesting thing. It says, “...***the Spirit came into me and raised me to my feet...***” The Holy Spirit caused him to stand up. We’re so thankful that the Word works, that His means of grace works and changes our hearts to believe. But often it’s hard for people.

So what is the encouragement? I think as we look at who Jesus is and the Gospel and understand that it’s really counter-cultural, it’s not surprising that many people struggle with God’s Word. The encouragement is to *feel the offense but don’t take offense*. What does that mean? We should understand that yes, it’s sometimes hard to believe God’s Word or that the Gospel message is really contrary to even what my own heart, by nature, believes. So if someone else struggles with God’s Word, we shouldn’t be like, “Who are you? Why don’t you believe this? Why don’t you understand this?” We should feel and understand that God’s Word can be offensive, to our sinful nature and to the world. But that doesn’t mean we stop preaching. We continue to preach and share that Gospel message; to not be offended when people don’t like what we say, but to continue to share God’s Word. We can keep on sharing that Gospel message with those that are close to us, who might be really offended or we really struggle to share with.

We are going to do something at the end of this sermon. I am going to have some ushers hand out something as we are finishing up. I have a little note card and a pen

that they are going to hand out. If you heard of this just a couple weeks ago, there was a large tragedy in the WELS church body. One family lost six family members in a fire. This is the Witte family. [Pastor Steve Witte](#) was a pastor in New London and Green Bay before he served in Hong Kong, in Asia with me. He was president of the seminary and then was recently serving in Chiang Mai, Thailand. He and his family were vacationing at a home and a fire broke out overnight. Pastor Steve Witte lost his life and two of his daughters and three granddaughters. There has been a lot shared on this but a lot of hope and peace that comes with knowing Jesus. In a tragedy like this, it's hard to find comfort, but in Christ and the peace that comes from heaven, we know there is comfort and we will be united with our loved ones and that they are at peace now.

One of the things that Pastor Steve Witte is known for is both for his heart of evangelism and also for his life of prayer. One of the things that he did with his churches was a thing called "Each one, reach one." What he would do is give out this note card, and on that note card, think about someone that you have shared God's Word with or that maybe has fallen from faith or isn't in God's Word anymore and someone that maybe you've shared with but maybe they've now become confrontational or they just don't want to hear God's Word. I want you to write that name on there. If you can't think of anyone right now, you can continue to think about that throughout the rest of the service. Even if you don't think of anyone right now, throughout the rest of the day. Then I want you to take that card home and have that name on there and put it in a place where you are going to see it. It's easy for us to get lazy and forget things and if we don't have it in a prominent spot, we are going to forget.

Then what I want you to do is to pray, not that you have to have a list of 10 people or even 5 or 3; just one person. I want you to pray for that one person. Then think about that as you look around this room and you think about Thursday service and our second service, and if each of us is praying for one person who needs to hear the Gospel, maybe thinks God's Word is offensive, we pray for them. Pray for them for a month, for two months. Pray for God's Word to work in them. You can be bold and you can pray for YOU to have an opportunity to share God's Word. But even if you don't want to pray for you to have an opportunity, you can still pray for them and pray for God's Word to work in their heart. The truth is that sometimes you don't feel like YOU can evangelize. But what can you do? You can pray. We know praying is good and it's low risk.

What is going to happen if you pray for someone? It might work. God hears your prayers, so you praying for people who are offended or struggling with God's Word, we know God is going to work through that. So think of all the people of our congregation, all the people that are hearing this message and then going to pray, and each of us, if we're reaching one person and praying about them, praying for their faith, and even praying boldly for an opportunity to share that faith; that God can work; that even though we might feel offended at times that they don't like our faith or have said mean

things to us or said mean things about God, don't be offended. God's Word to our sinful nature is offensive. But we have a Savior who forgives us and loves us, who died for the sins of this world. That includes you and me and those people that struggle with God's Word. Our Lord loves us so much to die for us and to rise again, and that tomb is open so that we know that our tomb will be open one day and we will rise. We want so many others to know of that message.

So our joy today, as we go forward, is to take Pastor Steve Witte's good practice and lesson of "each one, reach one"—to share this message and to pray for someone that they can get to know Jesus a little bit more; that we enjoy this message and know of eternal life through Him. Amen.

We pray: Heavenly Father, we thank you for this opportunity to know of your Word and to know that even though these words are offensive to our sinful nature, that Jesus is our Savior, that Jesus loves us, this Gospel message, can be offensive. The ordinary can be offensive, but Lord, we ask you to help us pray for some who are struggling with the Word or just need to hear it. Help us to be bold in our prayers. We know that you work through prayer, that you listen to us, so keep us faithful and help us to open up our hearts and to speak to you. Our prayer is that you open up the hearts of our friends, our family members, some of those that we are closest too, that it's hard to share our faith with, that they know us, but help us to share and to pray for them knowing that you work through prayer, through your Word, through your Gospel message, and through your Savior, Jesus. We pray this all in Jesus' name. Amen.

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