



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

July 14, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

8th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Amos 7:10-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 78

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Titus 1:5-9](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 6:7-13](#)

Meaningful Ministry Sent with God's Own Authority TRUE AUTHORITY

1. _____ authority is _____
2. _____ and _____ affect the message
3. **Keep the _____ message the _____**
4. **God's _____ is for _____ and _____ 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 and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

This is the same introduction that I had on Thursday, but after some events yesterday, it might have a little different feel. When we hear the word "authority," how do we feel? What does our world think about with authority? You might think of government. People often cringe and there are different feelings on authority. When you look at the trust in authority—I found a few statistics of institutions or different types of authority and how much people trust them. The government—how much people trust the government to do what is right is 22% of people. Is that hard to believe? I don't think so. The television news is kind of at one of the all-time lows right now—14% of people trust that authority. Public schools are at 26%. But organized religion and churches are not much higher at only 32%. Something that we all need as well is the medical system—going to doctors. People trust the medical system only at 34%. Trust in the police is at 43%. Things that go up a little bit more, above 50%, is the military. The highest authority or institution that people trust is small businesses at 65%.

I was having lunch with my mentee, John Jordan, who preached here not too long ago. We go up to a restaurant in Green Bay every time we meet. It's a pho restaurant, so it's like a Vietnamese soup and it's a small business. I talked to her (the owner) about that

and she was like, "Yeah, we're a small business and when we're not here, we like to go and support small businesses." I think some of the struggle is that with all the big things, the big authorities, the big entities, it's harder to trust. But the small businesses—you see them. You see what they are there for. You see them and who they are and it's easier to trust. Otherwise, the idea of authority in our world, I think years ago authority was a little more trusted or people didn't have that reaction that we have today, but even sinfully I think authority is something people struggle with. We don't like listening to someone else putting ourselves under a different authority.

So what is really important? What type of authority is important? Today we are going to talk about **true authority**. How God is a true authority and what makes Him a true authority, both the word "true" and "authority" and why that is a good thing for us.

As Paul is writing to Titus, he describes our God and he talks about our **"...God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior..."** ^(Titus 1:2-3) He spoke about earlier **"...their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness..."** ^(Titus 1:1) Paul is building and speaking to Titus that what is important is the truth. That God is the truth. So what is really important is that a *trusted authority is essential*. Would you agree with that? If you thought about all those different things that we listed that people struggle with, if they trusted them do you think it would be different?

Think about going to the doctor or going to an auto mechanic. If your car is not working right, you can be really afraid if you don't have a trusted person to go to. But if you do, you know that this person is not going to rip you off. They are going to get it done. It's the same thing with medicine. If you trust your doctor, then you don't have that same fear. So what is really essential is a trusted authority. What Paul is saying is that God is that authority. God speaks the truth. He does not lie. The authorities in this world, we can try to trust them, but the truth is each and every one of them is sinful. They are not God. No one authority in this world can say they do not lie. As much as we, as leaders, would like to do that, we are still imperfect. So the true authority, the trusted authority that is essential is God; the one who gives us His Word and that we can trust. In a world where it's so hard to find the truth and so hard to find something you can put your trust into, God says "My Word is true and unchanging. You can trust in me. I love you!" It's about grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus, our Savior. That's what the message is about—the truth and God's love.

So then how do we go out and share this, or how does this authority get shared? Paul speaks to Titus and the situation here is that he says it. He says, **"The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished..."** Paul had started to put elders in place but it was unfinished, and Titus was there, given authority by Paul, to then give authority to others, understanding that authority didn't come just

from Paul but from God. That's what Paul is saying. Paul is a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ. So as he is encouraging Titus, he is encouraging them in what that leadership and authority should look like.

As we talk about authority, I think it's good to see that leadership and authority kind of go together, but they can be different. You can have leadership without authority, but it's hard, and understanding that one can have authority and not be a great leader, as well. But what it looks like here is Paul is encouraging what one will look like as an elder. He says, ***"An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined."*** What was Paul saying here? As he lists all of these things, he is saying watch your attitude and actions. Watch your behavior. Watch how you are displayed and how that faith is being lived out in your life. Why?—because *attitude and actions affect the message*. How we live, what we say is the reflection of what we are trying to share and what we are trying to accomplish. So if I'm trying to share about God and His love but I don't live that out in my life, it's hard. People will call you a hypocrite or tear down what you are trying to share if the actions and attitude don't match. This can be a hard thing.

The encouragement here is to not look just at pastors and those who are called into ministry, but you can compare this to anyone. If you are going to listen to someone, if someone is to have authority or respect from you—let's say they are given to drunkenness. You find them drunk all the time. Are you going to go to them for wise words or to see how to live life if you know that they are drunk all the time? Looking at being self-controlled and disciplined, when you find people like that, it's easier to go and to listen to them and see what they have to share and how they can lead you. Other things like not over-bearing, not quick-tempered, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. If people are dishonest, if they are angry, if they are quick-tempered, it's harder to follow them. I think this is what we see in our politics today. When you question their motive and you see that they are so angry, everyone is so angry at one another, why? Our actions, our attitudes, they affect what we are trying to share. Yes, God is saying this is for those He has called to positions of authority of the church, but He is calling all of us to be witnesses of His message. So an encouragement is for us all to examine how we are doing these things in our lives.

One of the books that I really like on authority and leadership is this one called [How to Lead When You're not in Charge](#). The first point it talks about is to lead yourself. Even if you are not in the highest point of authority, even if you are not a leader, focus just on leading yourself. If you are leading yourself—think about all these things—to be self-controlled, to be disciplined, to lead your family, to be in the Word—if you are leading

yourself, it is going to be easier for others to follow you. So yes, we call our pastors and our teachers, those in authority, our elders, our leadership team to have these characteristics, but God is really calling every Christian to be this way.

The truth is that if it's only about our attitude and actions, then we would have a problem because we aren't perfect and we are going to stumble on these things. So as we read some of them, we're like "Oh, man! There are some of these that I struggle with! Could I be a called worker? Could I serve in God's Church? Is anyone going to really listen to what I have to say?" What Paul is saying this is all about is when he talks about the **"...knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness—in the hope of eternal life..."** [\(Titus 1:1-2\)](#) The focus is eternal life. When we talk about what he is going to do with his works and actions, in [Verse 9](#) it says, **"He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it."** The message is not me, not you, but we need to keep the focus off of us and keep it on the eternal message. *Keep the eternal message the focus.* Yes, we fall short, and it's important that it's all about God. It's not about me. It's not about you, because we fall short. It's about God's authority—that God is perfect and God does not lie, and that we have Jesus, our Savior—the one who comes and redeems us, the one who looks at this list and He did it all perfectly. He did it so when we fall short we know that we are forgiven and redeemed. What a burden it would be if it was all about us and pointing to me! It would be sad!

But know our message is about God's authority, about God's truth and about Jesus, who came to love us and to die for us and to rise again, and the one who washes us and makes us clean. He forgives us for the times when we have failed and fallen short on this list. It's so important for us to see that.

While we might cringe at authority, we don't want to cringe at God's authority because God's truth that He is perfect and He loves us and that you are redeemed and forgiven, that's a truth that we want to hold onto. It's a truth that we want to point to. It's found in His Word that is true and an authority in a world that doesn't have truth. The world is always looking for answers and always swaying back and forth.

As God sends us out, *God's authority is for you and also through you.* It's an encouragement to understand that we have this true Word. God has given us something we can depend on and hold onto and share. Then we get to share that with others. So while we might bristle at authority, we might downplay it and say "How can we trust authorities? How can we say that this is something good," having authority is good because what happens when you don't have good authority?

Imagine in a household where parents have no authority, where young children do whatever they want, and the parents can't say "no." What does that look like? Who becomes the authority? Who is in charge? Each person becomes in charge. So while

we, our sinful nature and our world struggles with authority, a good authority, a true and trusted authority is very important. When authority is downplayed, then everyone thinks that they are the authority and they are right and they make themselves god.

But we have a God who loves us and forgives us and we want to point people to that eternal message that has consequences, an eternal message that means forgiveness and life forever. It's something greater than this world. It's something greater than all the things that we struggle with—the chaos, the fears, the doubts, the trauma, the tragedies, and this broken world filled with sin and sadness and death. God says "There is something more and you can trust me that this is true," even though our hearts question Him. So what do we get to do and what joy do we have as He sends us out but that we can be that authority because God has given us His Word.

In ministry, just like any other job or position of leadership, what are you actually trying to do in ministry? Even think about as a parent—there is this thing you want to pass on. By your words and actions, by what you do, you want to model what it means to be a Christian and be founded in the truth, to pass that on, and for others to take your place. Isn't that often what ministry is about? Here, that's what Paul did. Paul said "I was the leader here but I brought you in to be the leader and to bring others into leadership." As pastors, as those who share the ministry, it's not that the minister wants to do everything. No, we want to train and build you up so that you can share this eternal message. Then as you share this message, as you work in the Gospel, you can lead others who will then, in turn, lead others to Christ. Then it continues and continues. We are always trying to work ourselves out of a job. That's a good thing. It's not about us. It's not about who we are but about who our God is and that message of love and forgiveness; that message of hope and peace and truth in a broken world.

So while our world might cringe at authority, struggle with believing a truth, you don't have to worry. You have a true authority in the God who loves you, a God who created this world and loves you so much to send Jesus to die for you and to live for you and to send you out with a beautiful Gospel message—a message that leads to eternity. Amen.

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