



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 29, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

19th Sunday after Pentecost

Epistle Lesson: [Revelation 12:7-12](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 91 CW

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 10:17-20](#)

Sermon Text/Old Testament Lesson: [2 Kings 6:8-17](#)

The Need for Followership Followers of Christ Have Powerful Allies ARE YOUR EYES AND HEARTS OPEN?

1. **God gives many _____.**
2. **Because the _____ is _____ than us.**
3. **We _____ what _____ _____?**
4. **God tells us to _____ more than what we _____.**

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.

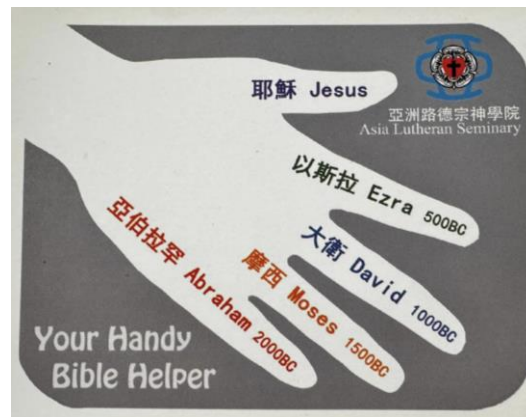
Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

There was an old Native American tradition for kids to enter into adulthood. What this looked like was a young boy would take only his clothes, just a little something to protect himself, and then he would have to go and spend the night away from camp and keep himself safe. You can imagine yourself when you're 12-13 years old, a 7th-8th grader, and you're off on your own. Who knows what animals, what other forces, what enemies might be around and you'd have to keep yourself safe, in the dark, and return. And when you're welcomed back, you'd then be welcomed as a man. The thing that the kids didn't know when they went out (but learned when they got back into camp) was that the father of the child followed behind, watched over and kept watched where the boy stayed and made sure that the boy was safe. The father made sure that no harm came to the child even though they didn't see and didn't know that they were being protected.

Do you think things are similar for us in our lives when it comes to the protection that God gives us? Do you often feel alone in your battles? Do you feel like you're out there and no one else is out there to protect you and you have to do it all on your own? But if you only opened your eyes or could see it in a better way, or could open your hearts to

trust a little bit more, you would know that someone was there helping and protecting you. That's the focus of what we are going to talk about today, of opening our hearts and eyes. **Are your eyes and hearts open** when it comes to knowing you're protected and loved?

When we look at this, we are going to look at Elisha and what the situation is for him and his servant from 2 Kings. This is not a sermon that you may have heard preached on before. This comes up only for the Festival of Michael. It's not in the normal lectionary. You might be familiar with the story, the Chariots of Fire. It's kind of a famous picture. But just to remind us where we are, I'm going to share a picture.



This is a handy little Bible helper. The man who designed this; I'm actually attending a funeral this afternoon for Dr. Lawrenz. He was President at Michigan Lutheran Seminary. I think he was President at Dr. Martin Luther College. He taught Hebrew at Martin Luther College. He taught at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and was President of Asia Lutheran Seminary. He was this gifted man and could understand things in an amazing way but still teach them in a simple way. He understood the whole Testament in this awesome way to really open up the Bible and to open up Jesus. Some things he could explain and teach in easy ways to remember things, and this is one of them. This is the Handy Bible Helper and this will help us understand where we are in history.

You can put out your hand and you see at the bottom is Abraham. That's about 2,000 BC. Then you have Moses around 1,500 BC. The dates aren't exact but the point is to help you with your timeline. Then you have David around 1,000 BC, and then Ezra the prophet, after the Exile, is 500 BC. Then you have Jesus at 0 BC/0 AD. This is a good way to remember your Old Testament history.

And where are we today? We are in between David and Ezra. Elisha, we don't have a ton of lessons and sermons about Elisha, but we know about Elijah and Elisha. Elisha followed Elijah. As Elijah was carried up into heaven, Elisha kept following him and staying with him. Then a chariot of fire then carried him up into heaven. This is the time after David. The kingdoms were divided. There was the Northern Kingdom (Israel) and

the Southern Kingdom (Judah). So we are in the Northern Kingdom (Israel). The kings actually weren't even good followers of God, but here Elisha is still protecting the kingdom because the king of Aram is attacking (this is present day Syria). So we have this king of Aram and he wants to attack and kill the king of Israel, but we see what happens. Every place they go, Elisha knows. Elisha knows where the king of Aram was going to be, so he warns the king of Israel. Here the king of Aram is getting angry and upset. He says this: **"Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?"** Notice, it's not just once, not just twice, but time and time again that God had helped. So he was like "There must be a traitor!" But God was providing help and protection for Elisha and the kingdom of Israel.

I think that's an important thing to remember. We are going to talk more about the angels that appear but maybe it's good to remember that *God gives us many protections*. One of the ways that God protects here by using his prophet and helping him know what is going to happen. It explains how this happened. They say, "No, it's not us. There is no traitor, **but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.**" God was providing a miraculous way to save the king of Israel.

How has God provided protection for you? He provides angels, but he provides natural ways of protecting you as well. He creates structures that protect you like government and healthy society. He gives us police and family and safe schools—all these different things that protect us naturally. He gives us his Word. Two weeks ago, in Ephesians, we looked at the armor of God and how God has prepared you for battle. But we also know that God can save us miraculously. If he could use surgeons and natural medicine, we know he can use the natural means to protect you, but he can also use a miracle. It's a comforting thing that he has angels to send and he does, but he protects us in so many ways.

The king of Israel was being protected by Elisha. But we see what happens when the king of Aram learns this. **"Go, find out where he is," the king ordered, "so I can send men and capture him." The report came back: "He is in Dothan." Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.** The first question to ask is how wise of a plan do you think this was by the king of Aram? If Elisha knew what the king did, do you think Elisha was worried about these chariots and the horses that were coming? Do you think God had told him and had prepared him for what was coming? It's kind of a foolish thing of the king to think, "Oh, he knows our plans, he knows where we are going to go, he knows what I'm talking about, but he's not going to know that I'm going to send this strong force to attack him."

But we see someone who doesn't know the plans. ***When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. "Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?" the servant asked.*** The servant of the prophet did not know the plans, so you can just picture how this would be. Can you imagine your morning routine: you get your newspaper, maybe you get your coffee and go outside and sit on the porch. Here the prophet's servant gets his morning breakfast, opens the doors to look outside and the hills are filled with chariots—this huge force. We see his reaction. ***"Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?"*** Why is his reaction ***"Oh no..."***? It's *because the battle is bigger than him*. The battle was too big for him. He didn't know this was going to happen and he was overwhelmed. He couldn't face this on his own. He is picturing himself and Elisha and saying there is too much. But he is forgetting how God has provided and will provide and continues to provide.

Are there times in your life where it is the same? That there are these big battles that are going on and you feel like you're surrounded and there is no hope. You maybe have never been in a situation where you're worried for your life because you're surrounded by a military force, but there are probably some battles and worries in your life where you feel surrounded and might feel quite hopeless. Whatever it might be of the battles going on in our culture or in politics, maybe your family, maybe health, all these different scares and worries and true things that cause us to be afraid and say "It's too big for me!" But what is the response? We see the response of the servant of God—***"What shall we do?"*** Is that a similar response that we have? *We ask what can I do?* When the battle is too much, what do we look to first? We look to ourselves. "How can I fix this problem? I can do this. I have to think of all the ways that I can do it!"

It's interesting to think that the king of Aram did not believe in God. He did not trust in God. But at this time, was the servant of Elisha trusting in God? You might say that sometimes even though we are strong Christians, we believe in God, sometimes we function like he is not there, like he is not protecting us, like we are that Native American child that thinks that there is no protection, no one there to help us. A term for that is called "Functional Atheist." We know there is a God. We believe in him, but sometimes we live our life forgetting that he is there, that he is caring for us. We don't always believe that he is helping or wants to help or has helped. Even as we are encircled and are struggling with a battle, we can't even think about what God has already done to make the situation better by what he is doing now and what he is going to do. It's so important to understand that we can't do it all and we need to trust in God.

How can we do that? Elisha explains how we can do that. ***"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered. "Those who are with us are more than those who are with them."*** They are simple words but they may be hard to believe. ***"Don't be afraid, those who are with us are more than those who are with them."*** The word "more" isn't just numerical. It also means greater/stronger, so he is saying "Don't be afraid. We

have more and better things fighting for us.” But the servant of Elisha couldn’t see it, so Elisha prayed so that he could. ***And Elisha prayed, “Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see.” Then the Lord opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*** We see this great protection that God had provided. Why chariots of fire and horses? That’s what was attacking them, so this is showing the greater protection. He could have sent angels. He could have sent horses to appear or whatever he wanted, but here this strong force, greater and stronger, he could see them encircling Elisha and the servant and nothing was going to harm them.

So what is true for you and me? *God tells us to trust more than what we see.* I think there is an honest thing that we don’t think about the spiritual battles all that often. Would you agree with that? There are times when we don’t see what is going on.

I was just at a conference yesterday and I went to a presentation about demons and evil forces. The presenter said “If we could see the spiritual battles going on...” Could you imagine that? If God opened our eyes, like he did for the servant and for Elisha, what would we see? I think we’d see angels and we’d see demons. We would see these forces all around us. But we can’t see it and we look to the natural ways and it’s hard to believe sometimes because we just don’t see it. So we need to understand that there is a huge battle going on but God is protecting you. He sent his angels to watch over you and guard you and protect you in all of your ways, and to trust even when we can’t see it; to open your hearts and to believe what is hard to believe. And to open our eyes to see things that we can’t see by normal ways. So our Lord is there protecting us and giving us a hope and peace and encouraging us to trust in more than what we see.

How can we do that even more? I want you think about the promises that God gives to you about protection. Maybe you have some Bible passages that you remember that when you’re struggling, when you’re afraid, you can go to them to remember how God loves you and is protecting you. Think about this Psalm in connection to 2 Kings. This is [Psalm 121](#). Picture the hills and the protection that God gives.

- ¹I lift up my eyes to the mountains—
where does my help come from?
- ²My help comes from the Lord,
the Maker of heaven and earth.
- ³He will not let your foot slip—
he who watches over you will not slumber;
- ⁴indeed, he who watches over Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep.
- ⁵The Lord watches over you—
the Lord is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶the sun will not harm you by day,

- nor the moon by night.
- ⁷ The Lord will keep you from all harm—
he will watch over your life;
- ⁸ the Lord will watch over your coming and going
both now and forevermore.

What great promises that were true for the people of Israel, for Elisha and are true for us today—that the Lord provides help.

How do we know that this is true, that God is watching over and protecting us? There is one thing to remember to see how much God loves you and how he is always going to protect you. In [Romans 8](#), Paul writes about the difficulties in life and how God protects us. In [Verse 28](#), he says, ***“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.”*** He goes on then in [Verse 31](#): ³¹***“If God is for us, who can be against us? ³²He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? ³⁵Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? ³⁷No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. ³⁸For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, ³⁹neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

Here we see how great God’s love and protection is for you. He sent Jesus, his one and only Son, to die for you. He sacrificed his own Son to forgive you, and he says that all things are working out for our good, our eternal good. This is very important to understand because as we talk about protection and God sending angels to protect you, are there times when you don’t feel protected or that you have experienced something that is a hardship, a difficulty? Paul says “...hardship or persecution or famine... death.” These things are hard! We’re not saying that God won’t allow suffering in your life, but when you understand that Christ is for you and that you have eternal life through all of this, through all of these difficulties—it doesn’t mean that God doesn’t love you or he is not protecting you, but he has your eternal good in mind, so that means even in death. Even with the loss of a loved one, we know that God’s protection didn’t fail but he is protecting them spiritually to get them into heaven.

So open your hearts; open your eyes to understand that God loves you and is protecting you. He sent his Son, Jesus. He protects you with all sorts of means and he sent his angels to watch over you and guide you. These messengers share the good news at times. They protect you. But most of all, we hold onto that message of Christ, that God created us and loves us and has saved us through Jesus. So there is nothing to fear.

Though our eyes may deceive us, though our hearts may be troubled, trust in God. Believe in what is hard to believe, because your God loves you and has protected you through Christ our Savior. Amen.

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