



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

October 20, 2024

Pastor David Ruddat

22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Isaiah 53:10-12](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 62a CW

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [1 Corinthians 9:7-12, 19-23](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 10:32-45](#)

### **The Need for Followership** **Followers of Christ Make Selfless Sacrifices** **FREEDOM FROM OUR RIGHTS**

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 our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Direct us now, O gracious Lord, to hear aright your Holy Word.  
Assist your minister to preach, and let the Holy Spirit teach.  
Let eternal life be found by all who hear the Gospel sound. Amen.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

Have you noticed that this election season is about rights? It doesn't matter which side of the aisle you are one, you are defending rights. "My rights need to be defended." This morning, as we look at God's Word for today, we are going to be talking about rights, but the Apostle Paul is going to give us a third option. It isn't just about defending your rights. It is about living in a **freedom from your rights**. That is the big concept that the Apostle Paul is talking about this morning. And this is the encouragement for you as Christians to live free from your rights.

The Apostle Paul spent a year and a half among the Corinthians. He tells them in this letter that during that time, he didn't get a salary from them. He shared the Gospel with them. He had Bible studies. He gave Communion to them. But he did not take a salary. Then after he left, other super apostles (that's what Paul calls them, like they are the studs), these guys come in and they are eloquent. They are dynamic. They are charismatic. And they ask for money from the Corinthians and they actually use it as a point against Paul. They said, "Paul didn't say that you guys needed to pay him? You

got what you paid for, do you know that?" So the Apostle Paul is writing back to the Corinthians and he is explaining why he did what he did.

The Corinthians didn't have a budget meeting and say to the Apostle Paul, "Do you really need to take a salary?" and the Apostle Paul said, "Well, maybe not." No, the Apostle Paul, out of his own choice, said "You don't have to pay me." Why did the Apostle Paul do that? It was his choice. Why did he do that? He had the right, as he is going to illustrate today, to do that. He explains how soldiers serve their country, they are selfless in that, but they expect to get paid. Farmers and vineyard keepers and anyone who is working in agriculture, they know they are providing food for the community, but they also expect to get something from that. There is that hope that the Apostle Paul says. You provide something and you get something back. That, as the Apostle Paul says, is from a worldly point of view. You don't even have to bring God into it. That's just the way the world operates. You provide a service. People will compensate you for that.

Then he says (it's actually in the Old Testament), ***"Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."*** [\(Deuteronomy 25:4\)](#) When the oxen is in there treading out the grain, squishing it out and breaking it all up, it's going to get hungry and it's going to eat some of that and the Lord says in the Old Testament, "Don't muzzle the ox. Let the oxen eat."

What is the greater concept that the Apostle Paul is talking about? Even though he had every right to receive compensation from the congregation, he could have said "You should pay me because I'm sharing the Gospel with you," but he did not demand that right because his identity was not in his rights. As he says, ***"...although I am free from all..."*** As you are looking at that, it seems like "I'm free from all people," but in the Greek, it's free from "everything." His identity is not in whether people treat him with respect, whether he gets money, whether he gets this or that, or whether these things are done or those things are done. His identity is found somewhere else. He is free from all of that. His identity is found in Jesus Christ and what Jesus has done for Him; that Jesus gave His life for the Apostle Paul. Jesus kept the Law of God in the Old Testament perfectly for the Apostle Paul. Jesus loved the Apostle Paul so much that He suffered and died for the Apostle Paul, and because of Jesus, the Apostle Paul knows that God loves him; that he has a place in heaven, and he is free from any other attachments. He even looks at the rights that he has as a Christian as sometimes a barrier—as something that is dragging him down, as something that is enslaving him because he wants to preach the Gospel. So the Apostle Paul made the call, when he was with the Corinthians for that year and a half, "I'm going to preach the Gospel and I have a hope, like farmers have a hope when they plant the seed that they are going to produce a crop, I have a hope that the Gospel will move these Corinthians to take care of me" as he says at the very end. ***"And I do everything for the sake of the gospel so that I may share in it along with others."***

Sometimes rights can be a burden, especially when it comes to the ministry of the Gospel. His identity wasn't found in his rights. His identity was found in Christ and the Gospel and preaching the Gospel—that's what was important. That's who he was. That's why he says, ***"To the Jews, I became like a Jew so that I might gain Jews."*** If he was amongst the Jews, he would not eat bacon in front of them. He would probably wear the right clothes around them. He wouldn't cause any offense because he wants the Gospel of Jesus Christ to get through. It's not that the Jews are telling the Apostle Paul "You have to eat this" or "You have to eat that." Paul willingly says "I know I have a right. I don't have to eat this food. I don't have to conduct myself in a certain way, but I will because I want you to hear the Gospel."

He does the same thing for the Gentiles, those who don't have that Old Testament ceremonial law. There he is eating bacon freely. He is having cheeseburgers, if they had cheeseburgers. He is mixing the milk with the meat and he is doing that for the sake of the Gospel. However, he doesn't sin when he is with the Gentiles. So let's say the Gentiles were saying "This is a meat sacrificed to the god Zeus," he would eat that meat freely. But if they were to say "This meat is special because Zeus blessed it," as if Zeus is real, the Apostle Paul would say "No, I'm following the Law of Christ, which is to love God first, love my neighbors second. I'm not going to eat that meat." It's always about the Gospel.

Everything Paul did was a strategy. His identity was not found in the traditions and rights and customs, which he had every right to have. But his identity is found in Christ and what Jesus has done.

This is really where the rubber hits the road, if you want to dig deeper with me. If you were to ask the Apostle Paul, "Which one did you like more? Did you like it when you could eat bacon and cheeseburgers with the Gentiles? Or did you like it when you were not eating bacon and always washing your hands and all that? Which one was better?" The Apostle Paul would say, "I am free from both. That's not who I am. It's all about Jesus and the Gospel. That's who I am."

Now let's apply that to life here at Morrison, or (I've got some Immanuel members here) to life at Immanuel, too. When I first got here seven years ago, at Immanuel, we had Confirmation (the big Confirmation day), guess which day we had it. It was on Palm Sunday. Gussed what happened when we had Confirmation on Palm Sunday. We had families who said "Morrison has theirs on Palm Sunday. Immanuel has theirs on Palm Sunday. What are we going to do?" As a congregation we said, "Our identity is not found on when we have Confirmation." So we moved our Confirmation day.

Everything is given to us. We are free to come up with our rights and our customs and our traditions. We can do those things. That's fine. But let's not be enslaved by them.

The moment we start making the traditions and the rights and the customs that we do as a congregation as something we say “We have to do it this way” is the moment that we have lost sight of who we are. Our identity is no longer found in Jesus Christ and what He has done. Now our identity is found in the rights and traditions. And do you know which Commandment we are breaking when we are doing that? The first one—Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind. You could really think of the second one too, the greatest (as Jesus identifies it), loving your neighbor as yourself, because now it’s all about me.

Both of our congregations are using different translations. EHV (Evangelical Heritage Version) is at Immanuel. NIV II (New International Version 2011) is here at Morrison. Which one should we use? The moment we start saying we have to do it one way is the moment we’ve lost sight of the Gospel. That’s the moment that we’ve made something else our God. What translation we use is a strategy. When we have Confirmation day is a strategy. What we do for Christmas is a strategy.

At Immanuel this last Christmas, the Sunday school teacher said “Pastor, I don’t think those kids are going to be able to recite [Luke 2](#).” As a pastor, I would like my kids in Sunday school to recite Luke 2, but can we do something different? So we did something different. The kids put on a play. They had their parts and all of the content of Luke 2 was there, but there were kids up there saying **“In those days... Caesar Augustus...”** Now, was that a valid and certain Christmas Eve program? Was the Gospel there? Yes! Are we going to say “Oh, we’re Immanuel and we do the Christmas program differently than everybody else”? If so, that’s a problem because then you are looking for your identity in the strategy in what you are doing.

The Apostle Paul says he is free from all. His identity is found in Jesus Christ and what He has done. Your identity is found in Jesus and what He has done—how He loved you so much that He wants you to be in heaven with Him, so He is going to do everything, everything so that you can be there. He kept the Law of God on your behalf. He died on the cross for all of your sins. He opened heaven for you. It is there. It is yours. He rose from the dead to show you that your death is only going to be a temporary passing from this life to the next. And He ascends into heaven and is ruling over all things for your good. This He does because He loves you. That’s who you are to Him. That’s your identity—as a loved, bought child of God. Everything else we do is just a strategy so that the Gospel message might go out to other people.

This election season, this strategy of the Apostle Paul, this statement, this big concept—that your identity is found in Jesus Christ—everything else you do as a church is a strategy. It’s not something that is going to work in our politics of the day because they are in a different field. They are in a different kingdom. But in this kingdom, the Kingdom of God, we look at our rights not as something that are things that we must defend at all costs. We don’t look at our rights and say “Because I have these rights,

that's my identity and I must defend those rights because that's who I am—a person who has those rights." That's not who we are. We are blood-bought Christians, children of God, heirs of heaven, with a wonderful message, and freedom—freedom to come up with our customs and our traditions, but we are not bound by them. They are not our identity. They are our strategy. Amen.

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