



# MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

November 3, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday of End Times: The Reformation

First Lesson: [Daniel 3:16-28](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 46

Second Lesson: [Revelation 14:6-7](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Mark 13:5-11](#)

## LIVE LIKE YOU WILL LIVE FOREVER Live a Life of Courageous Witness WATCHFUL PREPARED WITNESSES

1. **Watchful:** This world is \_\_\_\_\_.
2. **Prepared:** You will be \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. **Witnesses:** You are a \_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_ to and \_\_\_\_\_ the Gospel.

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:

As we live up here on what they call the Niagara Escarpment, often when we are driving with our kids we go down into Greenleaf or down into Green Bay and a couple of our kids will yet out "We can see a long ways!" often looking at Greenleaf and into Wrightstown. And when you're looking into Green Bay, "You can see a long ways!" When you're going into Green Bay, what stands out to you as you go down the hill? There might be this large building with a big "G" on it and some screens, and it kind of stands out over the rest of Green Bay.

If you've been to Lambeau or maybe you've been to some other stadiums—I've been to Arrowhead Stadium and Memorial Stadium, where the Huskers play. Even in college, my friends and I went on a tour of college stadiums throughout the Midwest. These stadiums are huge! I know someone that just went to SoFi Stadium to see the Packers play. I once went to what we call "Jerry World" down in Dallas, where the Cowboys play. They are gigantic buildings! Some say they are the cathedrals of our culture today where billions of dollars are spent on building these buildings. If you've never seen them or if you come from a long way, the trek there and getting there is when you look up in amazement. This is actually what it kind of was like for the disciples as they approached the temple in Jerusalem and the context of our reading today.

It's the context of where Jesus talks about what is going to happen because the disciples are not from Jerusalem. So here they are in Jerusalem and they are looking around and they are like "Oh, it's so amazing! Jesus, look at this beautiful temple!" It says at the beginning of [Chapter 13](#): ***As Jesus was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!"*** It's true that the stones of the temple were massive. I've been there in Israel and they are gigantic! So you look up and you are amazed! The temple at that time was beautiful. Herod had made this amazing temple so that this temple mount stood out over everything. So the disciples were amazed.

But what does Jesus reply? He says, ***"Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down."*** Could you imagine that? Could you imagine going to the front of Lambeau and someone saying "Oh, this is so amazing! It's so beautiful!" and someone saying, "It's all going to come crashing down one day." You're all excited and then you're like "Ooh! Okay, so that's how it is." He's saying this is what is going to happen—that these magnificent buildings, this magnificent temple that they all love, one day is going to come crashing down.

So the disciples asked Him about this. It says: ***As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, "Tell us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"*** Just like anyone who said "These massive arenas would one day come crashing down," you would want to know when and how? Who could do this and why and when? So Jesus tells them. He explains to them what is going to happen and how we should be prepared for it: to be **watchful prepared witnesses** for the end times.

So Jesus explains what is going to happen. ***Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains."*** He explains all these signs of what was going to happen and, in a sense, He is telling them to be *watchful*. Watch for these things because we know that *this world is temporary*. So watch for these things because when these things happen, we know that the end is coming. For the disciples and what Jesus is talking about here, it's important to understand that often in prophecies, they are kind of like mountain tops. If you've ever driven to Colorado, you'll see one mountain top and then behind you think "That's the big

mountains," and then behind are even bigger mountains. Jesus here is talking about one thing but also talking about another. The immediate fulfillment of this would happen in 70 AD because, is that temple still standing today? It's not. What were the signs that the temple would be temporary and come down? He talked about wars and rumors of wars and famines and earthquakes. These things were all happening and happened as the Romans besieged Jerusalem; as they set fire to the temple and brought this thing that the Jewish people all centered around came tumbling down. But that picture of the temple coming down and the signs were not just signs for that but also they are signs for you and for me about the end of this world.

We need to be reminded and see that this world will come to an end either on the Last Day or when God calls us home. So we need to be reminded that this world is temporary and we see the signs and if you think about it, the famines, the earthquakes, the wars, how long have those things been raging on but from the beginning of time. And since the time that Jesus died on the cross and rose again and Pentecost came, we've been living in the end times. He could return at any time. So we need to remember things here are temporary.

So we look up at these huge stadiums. Can you be passionate about sports? Can you love going to games and can you spend money on it and can you go? Of course you can. Can you be passionate about your work and your hobbies and politics and maybe all sorts of other things in this world that you can be passionate about? Of course you can. But it's a question about priorities and understanding that these things do not compare to God. We don't have to get all wound up in what happens or doesn't happen when it comes to our sports team. If they win or lose, are you devastated for the next day, the week? Or can you put it in proper perspective? When it comes to politics, are we putting all our hope and joy and thoughts of salvation in this candidate or that candidate? Are we afraid if this person gets in or that person gets in that it's all over? Politics, governments are temporary. We need to be reminded of that. We'll talk more about that tomorrow night in our Election Eve Service. But we need to be reminded that all these things are temporary. They are not bad, but we don't put our hope in them. We don't find our identity in them. We find our identity in Christ and our eternal identity that He has heaven in store for us.

But what do we face until that time? That's one of the challenges. Jesus tells the disciples what they will face. He says, ***"You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit."*** We can read that and kind of glance over all the things that He tells the disciples they were going to

face. "You are going to be handed over to councils and flogged. You're going to go before governors and kings. You are going to be arrested and brought to trial." There are quite a few things that they are going to face. Are these things that we have to face? Have you been arrested for your faith? Have you been flogged for your faith? No. I know people, as I continue to work with the 316NOW Ministry that works with Chinese, that are being arrested or they are being pulled in to be interrogated for being Christian and for sharing their faith, but are we facing that? Not really. So that's one thing we do have to be thankful for.

We live in a country that has freedom. We can come here and worship in public and share the Gospel with others without the fear of being arrested. So what, though, might we encourage us to be ready to face? Yes, some day we might need to face this, to be prepared for that, but what would Jesus maybe tell us? I would say as you are to be *prepared*, be ready because *you are going to be confronted, you are going to be questioned, and you will be ridiculed*. Yes, you maybe haven't been arrested, but have you faced those things? Have you been questioned for your faith? Have you been ridiculed and confronted for what you believe and stand for? My guess is if you have shown your faith and confessed your faith in anything public, among friends, among family, among people who aren't Christian or are straying from the faith, these things have happened to you.

So should we be surprised? Should we be shocked when a loved one, a coworker confronts us or ridicules us or asks us questions about our faith? But why are we? I think we so often are. They ridicule us or confront us and question about our faith and we are just like, "Oh! Why is this happening?!" Well, how long has it been happening? Go back to Daniel, and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego; go to what Jesus said; go to Martin Luther and what he thinks—is it anything new that people don't like God, they don't like the Word of God, and they don't like the Gospel? This is nothing new, so we shouldn't be surprised. Instead, we should be prepared to answer the questions when we are confronted and ridiculed, like "You don't believe this, what the world says?" "No." But I think that can help us, though. If we are prepared and know that this is going to be happening, then I can maybe respond in a better way. I don't have to be offended. I don't have to be shocked. I can share with peace. I can share with confidence. I can share the reason for the hope that I have.

When you get all angry and maybe take it personally that someone is attacking you, do you attack them? Or do you make it about the thing it's not about? You might get emotional. But we should be prepared for this. Maybe there are times when you feel "I don't know enough" or "I don't have a strong enough faith," but what does God tell us? He tells us **"...the gospel must first be preached to all nations."** And then as you are standing trial, He says **"...do not worry beforehand about what to say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit."**

This isn't saying "Don't prepare." As I just said, be prepared. But it's meant to give you confidence because you are a *witness*. You are a witness of what? The truth is that *you are a sinner/saint* and you understand what it means to struggle with sin and to struggle with this sinful world. But you also know what it means that you have the Gospel, that you are forgiven, that you are loved, and that you can have peace in this world that has so many troubles and so many conflicts and sadness and pain. But you know where to run to. But an encouragement on this is which of these identities do you cling to more, the sinner part or the saint part? My encouragement is to *cling to and to share the Gospel*.

We read a book recently in my pastor coaching program, the CrossTrain program, called Christian, Who Are You? It's by a WELS pastor, Mark Cares. He has done a lot of work with Mormons out in Utah and Idaho. What he talks about is do we find our identity more in that sinner part or that saint part? Are you clinging to the fact that you are in your sin and you make mistakes all the time, or are you clinging to the fact that you are loved and redeemed? I think sometimes we can come to church and we focus on that Law too much. The truth is some people maybe are ignoring sin and really only hearing Gospel, so maybe sometimes you need to hear that sin part and the Law. But I think for many of us, we hear that and identify with that sinner part too much. He says in the book that he asked people, "What do you identify with?" He asked people to raise their hand. "Do you identify as a sinner or as a saint, someone redeemed?"

We are going to have Saints Triumphant in a couple of weeks as we talk about those saints who have gone onto heaven, but you, yourself, right now, are a saint. You are forgiven and redeemed. This world struggles with that. The world does not function in the idea of Gospel. Everything else is all about Law and they don't understand how to forgive. They don't know that they are forgiven. So go out and share that because you know that. You know the peace and forgiveness that is true.

Are you equipped? Are you prepared? We know what is around us. We know the world and that it is temporary, so we cling to that eternal truth of our salvation. We are prepared because we know that up until that time, it's not going to be easy. We are going to be confronted. But you are prepared. We turn to Luther, who has so many quotes, so many things about the beauty of the Gospel and the truth of the Word and how it empowers us and that we can understand that we are not righteous by doing righteous deeds, but we've been made righteous so that we CAN do righteous things for others. You are prepared to go out into the world.

Luther says this amazing quote. He says, "A simple layman armed with Scripture is greater than the mightiest pope without it." You have the Word. Jesus encourages us that the Holy Spirit will give you what you need to say, but you are here. You are in your devotions. Kids, you go to school. You are learning the Scriptures and the truth and if

you don't feel prepared, continue to learn and grow. But you know what has made you safe—the truth of the Gospel. Cling to that. Cling to your salvation and go out into the world sharing that eternal hope that we live forever. You are **watchful prepared witnesses** of that true Gospel message. Amen.

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