

MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
www.mzluth.org

January 26, 2025

Pastor James Enderle

3rd Sunday after Epiphany

First Lesson: [Isaiah 61:1-6](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 146a

Second Lesson: [Acts 4:23-31](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [Luke 4:16-30](#)

EPIPHANY MOMENTS
REJECTION IS NOT PROOF OF FAILURE

1. **Familiarity can bring _____.**
2. **How do you want _____ to _____ you?**
3. **Rejection is _____ and _____.**
4. **The _____ Jesus is the _____.**

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:

I'm going to start off our sermon right away with a picture. This picture might even be considered ancient history. This comes from 2019; way before that thing we call Covid. This is who everyone was rooting for in the 2019 AFC Championship. What do you notice up there? Everyone was rooting for the Chiefs and there are a few people up there rooting for the Patriots. The Chiefs lost this game but they had tons and tons of people rooting for them. People didn't like the Patriots at this time. Everyone was like "Oh, let's get those Chiefs to win!" This one was taken from ESPN where states actually voted.

I don't know if this next picture is measured, but this is what it is for today. If you heard



about it a little bit, there are lots and lots of people cheering for the Bills and many people don't want the Chiefs to win.

So my question on this then is does the fact that fans have rejected the Chiefs, does that mean that they are failures? Because people don't want them to win, have they failed? They are being rejected. People don't like them, so are they failures? I would say no. In fact, because they have won and even if they lose today, are they still failures? Well, they have won two Super Bowls. They have done pretty amazing things. So just because people are rejecting them and not liking them, are they failures? No.

As we look at our sermon today, we are going to look at how **rejection is not proof of failure**. Just because a majority of people believe something or feel something, that doesn't always make it true. If there are people that are rejecting something, it doesn't make that true. We see that especially with Jesus. As He is going to be rejected, it doesn't mean that He is a failure. We see this about Christianity. As we talk about rejection throughout the whole sermon and critiques and people not liking things, an important thing to say is we're not talking about when someone is doing evil, when you are doing something wrong where there should be critiques or there should be rejection of evil. We are talking about when something is done right and yet people reject it. That's what we find with Christ and with Christianity when there is the truth and it is rejected.

This is where we find Jesus and what happens to Him. One of the important things, as we go through the sermon, is applying how the people reject Jesus and putting ourselves in that place in a way because as you are here this Sunday, as you are Christians, I'm not saying you have rejected Jesus. We're not like those people that are having nothing to do with Jesus. But how do we apply that rejection of Jesus to our lives as Christians.

To understand a little bit of this picture, we have to get to a couple verses before our text in [Verse 14 and 15](#). It says: ***¹⁴Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. ¹⁵He was teaching in their synagogues, and everyone praised him.*** Right before He goes to Nazareth, He has begun His ministry and news is spreading about Him. He is doing miracles. He is teaching with authority. He is on His way home and people are getting excited. "Hey, the Son of the city is coming back and we want to see what this is all about." They are excited to see what these rumors are all about. So we see what happens. ***¹⁶He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom.*** He does His "normal" thing. We see then that He reads from Isaiah, that section of Scripture that you heard in the Gospel, heard in the Old Testament, speaking about the ***good news to the poor*** and proclaiming ***the year of the Lord's favor***.

Then as He sits down, He says, ***“Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”***
²²***All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. “Isn’t this Joseph’s son?” they asked.*** They hear Him and are amazed, but then something is off. ***“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”*** They were familiar with Him. They knew Him. They saw Him grow up. Maybe He helped build a table or a chair for them or helped fix a wagon. They knew Him and something is weird. “How can this man that we knew then be saying He is the Messiah, the promised One from of old?” Do you think it’s true that ***familiarity can bring challenges?***

Think about it in your life, the people you are most familiar with—your family, friends, and co-workers—does familiarity bring challenges? You know these people so well. Think about someone you went to high school with or college and then you see them later and you know the things that they did when they were a kid. There are challenges with familiarity. You have these bonds and there are struggles that come with that. Even though there are challenges with familiarity, familiarity is necessary because how do you really get to the next level of knowledge? If I’m going to master something, I have to know it and I have to become familiar with it, but there becomes this stagnant point when you are just familiar with something until you master it. You have to really get to know it, but sometimes we’re stuck in that familiar point.

Think about that with God’s Word. Are you familiar with God’s Word? Have you heard that story again and again and again and you’re like “I don’t want to hear that again” or “I know that story. I don’t need to hear it again” or “I went to Morrison school. I was confirmed. I don’t really have to go to church all that often” or you come enough and you think you know it. Then maybe church becomes too familiar and the way that we do things becomes too familiar. Sometimes familiarity is good to get to that mastery, but there is that challenge. The people knew Jesus. They were familiar with Him. But there was a problem, too. They said, ***“Isn’t this Joseph’s son?”***

An interesting thing is when it says that they were ***amazed*** at His gracious words and then start thinking about this familiarity. We then see what happens as Jesus understands where they were coming from. He says, ***“Surely you will quote this proverb to me: ‘Physician, heal yourself!’ And you will tell me, ‘Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.’”*** He is saying “You are going to want me to do a miracle, aren’t you? You’ve heard that I’ve done miracles. Now you want me to do my song and dance and show you that I’m this Savior.” But we see that this is not what Jesus came to do at this time. He came to preach. Though they were amazed here, Jesus is going to speak a little bit more about what He is and who He is for. But then as He says these things, we see what they do. They are furious at the words that Jesus said and they want to throw Him off the hill.

If we’re familiar with Jesus, do we sometimes lose our amazement? ***How do you want Jesus to amaze you?*** For the people of Nazareth, they wanted Him to do miracles.

“Show us you are the Savior. Show us who you are.” Jesus was saying “I’m not going to do that.” The interesting thing is when it says *“Isn’t this Joseph’s son,”* we are pretty sure that Joseph had died already. His mother, Mary, was still there and His brothers and sisters, but Joseph wasn’t around, so do you think the people in the town were saying “Hum, this guy is the Savior but He let His father die. What kind of Savior is that?” Is this a place where we struggle with God that, just as Jesus here, He preaches the Gospel. We come to church and we hear that Gospel over and over again and we get a little too familiar with it and we’re like “God, can’t you do something a little more amazing? Can’t we make church a little more special? I’m kind of tired of that Gospel. Let’s hear something else. God, I know I’m forgiven. I know I have this peace. But, you know, there is this thing in my life where I’d be really amazed if you could take care of that.”

Or, we struggle and begin to reject Him because He didn’t take care of something. So we lose our amazement because we’re saying “God, you aren’t that amazing in the things that I want you to be amazing in.” Isn’t it kind of fascinating that we get tired of the Gospel and get tired of this amazing thing that we have.

People joke about when a pastor has a guest preacher, or now as we are doing the pulpit rotation with Shirley where Pastor Ruddat and I switch and I’m gone or Pastor Ruddat comes in and someone says “Oh, I really liked Pastor Ruddat’s sermon. That was great.” Or they say the guest preacher was really great. So then the pastor will go, “Okay, you really like their sermon, but what about my sermon?” No, that’s not the point, but think about it a little where people can start getting a little critical and start saying “I like this person better” or “...this sermon better.” What happened when Jesus preached the sermon?

When Jesus preached the Gospel, how did people react? Were they like “Oh, yeah, preach that message again!”? They wanted to throw Him off a cliff. What does that tell us about how we feel and our rejection of what is good and right? I think it’s true that *rejection is common and deceiving*. If Jesus preaches and people reject Him, then what about our hearts—where are the hearts of people if the perfect God comes and preaches a message and people are like “That message is so bad I want to throw you off a cliff”? We have to always be struggling to say “What is in my heart and what do I want? What do I emphasize?”

I think it’s good to think back. We read this book several years ago, I Am A Church Member. One of the things it talks about is sometimes we make church so much about “What do **I want**? What do **I want** church to be? What can the church do **for me**?”—the country club mentality. But we have to understand sometimes we don’t know what is best. We get tired of that Gospel message that we so desperately need and we have

to start thinking about what everyone needs. What is best for the church and for the community and to get that Gospel message out to everyone? Rejection is here and common.

I'm going to show a picture just to explain a little bit about how common rejection is.



This is a picture of what I think is called the doorbot. You are probably wondering what the doorbot is, but this is a prototype of something many of you maybe have today. Do you know what this became?—the Ring doorbell. Here the inventor of the doorbot presented on Shark Tank, the show where people present ideas, and he

wanted a stake of \$700,000 and they were debating how much people wanted to spend. He didn't like the offer. People rejected what he wanted. This was in 2013. And in a few years, they changed the name to Ring and then he had \$200,000,000 instead of just \$700,000 of investments. Then only five years later, 2018, Amazon acquired Ring for \$1,000,000,000. Here he was rejected by the Shark Tank group, and he could have stopped. But he kept going—understanding rejection is part of what happens in the world.

A question/thought that I have is how does rejection go today? Why is rejection so severe and harsh and hurtful today? I would say it's because so often it's done in ways that are unkind and not seeking to understand. Where do the critique and the words come from? Usually it's on the internet. "I have to say this angry thing." And this person posted this thing so "I'm going to say this angry thing to them." How does that work and who most often are you talking to? People you don't even know. How does anonymous discussion like that work? If you get anonymous rejection from someone, if people aren't seeking to sit down and understand, if you can't share why something is happening, if people aren't speaking with kind words because when things are anonymous people are emboldened to be hateful and mean and not seek to understand, how often does any of that conversation get anywhere? That's the world we live in, so we have to understand how we work with rejection, especially when we are sharing the Gospel. When we are doing the right thing and someone is rejecting, maybe it's by gaining trust, showing I care and showing love for the person, sitting down face-to-face and discussing instead of just angry words. That's the world we live in, but it doesn't accomplish anything with unkind and hateful words and not seeking to build trust and understanding.

Where do we go from there of understanding this rejection is common in our lives and in Christ? We see especially why Jesus was rejected. We see that as He begins to talk

about the miracles, then He talks about miracles that were done in the past. Like during the time of Elijah when a widow from Zarephath was helped out. And then in the time of Elisha, even though there were many with leprosy, Naaman, another foreigner, was helped. What the point is that He is talking about is that the Gospel and God are not just for Israel but for all people. We have to understand that *the rejected Jesus is the Savior*. Jesus is saying something that these Nazorites, the people in Israel, hate. (1) He is the Savior. (2) This message of salvation and the Gospel is for **all** people. Notice how important that is for us to remember—that He is the Savior. He was rejected. People don't like that. People want to save themselves. People want to make it all about themselves. But Jesus is the Savior. And this message is not just for one people, one church, but for the whole world.

What is amazing is how this all takes place. We can struggle with rejection, being rejected and dealing with hurt and pain, but do you know who was rejected? Jesus was rejected on the cross as God turned His back from Him to let Him suffer for our sins. He suffered the pain that we deserve. We know that we are forgiven and because we are forgiven of all those sins, then we can serve and love and we can say "Let's not make it about what I want, what I need, but what everyone needs." We can work through that rejection and pray boldly, like those disciples, and continue to share this message. Even though people reject this message of truth, it is the truth that gives peace, hope and forgiveness.

So hold onto Christ and this message even when a world looks at it and scoffs.
Rejection is not proof of failure, but in Christ, it means salvation. Amen.

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