

## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 2, 2025

Pastor James Enderle

The Transfiguration of the Lord

First Lesson: [Exodus 34:29-35](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 2

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [2 Corinthians 3:7-18](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 9:28-36](#)

### EPIPHANY MOMENTS

**Glory is hidden in Order to Be Revealed**

**THE RIGHT TOOL MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE**

1. The Law had \_\_\_\_\_ but was \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The Law brings \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
3. The Gospel brings \_\_\_\_\_ and is \_\_\_\_\_.
4. The Gospel is what \_\_\_\_\_ through \_\_\_\_\_.

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 want you to consider some projects or some work you've had to do that you tried to do and you tried and tried and tried and it just didn't work until you had the right tool. You can think about some sort of yard work. People on the farm probably have this, too. You can try something all the time and until you get the right tool, it doesn't work. One of the things I thought of is if you change the oil in the car and the oil filter, to reach in there and try to get it turn out is really hard. But if you have that tool that is an oil filter remover, it comes right out.

I have two tools pictured. I thought two of these might be a little fun. The kids might recognize the one on the left. That's a Lego tool to get things unstuck or to get the pieces removed. Otherwise sometimes you have to work really hard to get them apart. It's fascinating because if you have kids, they are always asking, "Can you get this piece off? Can you get this piece off?" I was downstairs with my three-year-old and he could use this piece to pretty much get everything apart all on his own.



The other tool on the right, do any of you know what that one is? It's a spring puller. If you've ever had to put

together a trampoline, you can try all sorts of things to try to get those springs to pull and then hook in the way you need to. You can try and try and try. You can try a screwdriver and all different things, but until you have that tool, it just doesn't work.

I want us to think about that, how having **the right tool makes all the difference**. Then we're going to focus on Law and Gospel and how having **the right tool makes all the difference**. This is what Paul is really writing to the Corinthians about.

We've been hearing about how Paul has had to defend himself many times in this letter. First it was against the super apostles, in some chapters we were talking about previously. He had to defend who he was and what he faced. Then he was boasting in his suffering instead of boasting in who he was. And he was boasting in what God had given him, trust in the Gospel.

Now what people are accusing him of is that he writes (and I always do this, not when writing, in typing, but in that time they wouldn't be typing) in words that were filled with Law and were somewhat harsh. But then when Paul came in person, he sounded and seemed like a different person. He was filled with the Gospel and came with kind of with a different message. He talks about that in the previous verses and part of the problem was in 1 Corinthians where we hear about this man who was living in sin and the people rejoiced about it. Paul wrote to say "How dare you rejoice in this sin." It seemed like it was a man who was having a relationship with his father's wife, so his step-mom. Everyone was okay with it. But now it sounds like the person had repented, but they weren't forgiving. He writes that unforgiveness is the tool of the devil. The devil wants you to hold onto that lack of forgiveness. So this really gets into our section for us to talk about the difference between Law and Gospel. He writes with Law but what he really wants to come with is the Gospel, because the Gospel is greater. He explains it using Moses and the Old Testament, the Old Covenant.

To be honest, this section is fairly large and there are some difficult things, so we will try to simplify it as much as possible. We are going to point out the key things, but we are going to go through it, continuing to really stick to the main point. We are going to see what he talks about with the Old Covenant.

When he is talking about the Old Covenant, he is talking about the Law. How does he describe that Old Covenant? He says in Verse 7: ***<sup>7</sup>Now if the ministry (he is talking about the Old Covenant, or the Law) that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone (the Ten Commandments), came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, transitory though it was, <sup>8</sup>will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? <sup>9</sup>If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! <sup>10</sup>For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. <sup>11</sup>And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!*** We see the huge

comparison there. He is talking about Law and Gospel. What does he first say about the Law? *The Law had glory but was fading.* We saw Moses' face when God and Moses talked, and his face was glorious when he was presented to the people. But then what we see in the next verses, beginning in Verse 12, he says, <sup>12</sup>**Therefore, since we have such a hope, we are very bold.** <sup>13</sup>**We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away.** Paul adds this explanation to one of the reasons why Moses covered his face. Yes, it was glorious, but when he would read the Law, he would have his face uncovered. But then he would leave the people and cover his face. And what would happen to that glory of his face? It would fade away. This was a representation of that Law that was glorious, that had a purpose, but was fading away. It was temporary.

So one of the purposes of the Law, and this is important to understand, that yes, the Law has its purpose but it is fading and temporary. The Law has its purposes. We know those three things that we talk about—the mirror and the curb and the guide.

- The mirror shows us our sins. It shows us our need for a Savior and how we fall short.
- The curb is that it punishes us and helps people to not cause harm to others and to themselves because our moral compass is off. So we need that restriction and that guidance.
- Then for Christians, we have that guide, which helps us when we have the Spirit (which we are going to talk about), and shows us how to live a life of thanks.

The Law certainly has its purpose, but it was limited and it was fading. One of the reasons that we know it was fading and it was limited and so much less than the Gospel, is also how Paul describes that ministry as you hear what he says. <sup>7</sup>**Now if the ministry that brought death...** And then, <sup>9</sup>**If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious...** *The Law brings condemnation and death.* Is that something we want to hold onto? Is that something we want to put out in front and say, "This is what we're all about," something that brings condemnation and death?

Why does it bring condemnation and death? We see the glory of what Moses standing before God looked like. His face was shining. And we see on the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus shining in glory, and this is what we need to be if we want to hold onto the Law to save us. We need to be perfect. We need to match God's glory. Can that happen? Can you be perfect? Can you match what God asks in the Law? But the Law was given so that people saw they couldn't keep it and they needed something else to save them. It brings condemnation. It says that you can't do it on your own. And it leads to death.

The sad thing is when you look out into the world, what are the fastest growing religions? It's the religions that are Law-based and make it so you can do it. They will take the Law and set it into things like, "Pray this many times per day..." "You can act this

way with your family and do these things..." Mormonism, Islam, very Law-based religions that make people feel righteous, but it condemns and it finely brings death. It's so limited.

But the problem is that we don't want to just say "Those people out there are doing that." What is easy for you to fall into in your regular life? What do you use most often with other people? What is the tool that you feel is the best tool to use for this job? Often I think we reach for the Law. But we are going to see that the Gospel is so much better. While the Law has its purposes, do we go to the Law so much more and pummel that thing instead of pulling out the Gospel, which is really why we are going to see it's so much more glorious. Do we even do that with ourselves? Do we pummel ourselves with the Law and make ourselves feel so guilty? Do we motivate ourselves by guilt instead of looking to the Gospel?

So how does the Gospel outweigh the Law? ***<sup>9</sup>If the ministry that brought condemnation was glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! <sup>11</sup>And if what was transitory came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts!*** We see what really brings righteousness is the Gospel. ***The Gospel brings righteousness and is lasting.*** Just to point out though, don't people think that the Law is what brings righteousness? "If I use the Law, that's what is going to make that person good. That's how I am going to change that person." But notice, Paul is saying no. It's the Gospel that brings righteousness. The key there is that it doesn't make you righteous, it brings righteousness. It has to be something that is given to you from somewhere else. It's given to you from Christ, who on the mountaintop where Peter said "How good it is for them to be there," that yes, it would have been great to stay there and if Jesus could have remained in that glory. But no, what does He do? That's what we are going to talk about in the next season. He goes down resolutely, sent down to Jerusalem to live perfectly for you, to be arrested, to be lied about, to be put on the cross, to die and rise again for you, to give you that righteousness. The righteousness of God has now become our righteousness because of what Christ has done. It's not something that can be earned. It's only given through Christ, and this then lasts. It's not fading. It's not based on ourselves. It is based on God and what He has done for us.

How does that Gospel surpass the Law? In every way—it gives us freedom, freedom to serve and love God, freedom to serve and love your neighbor. I'll use this example. I was at a conference yesterday and the last presenter was talking a lot about boundaries in ministry and a lot to do with healthy expectations. She talked a lot about guilt in life and how the Gospel changes that. She said years ago her husband would be coming home from work and she knew she had about 30 minutes to clean up the house. She would always be filled with such guilt, that "I had to make the house nice for him." It was more of a feeling of guilt that she put on herself. But then she started to realize that and said "Why am I doing this? Is it because I feel guilty? Is it the Law that is burdening me that I have to do this? Or am I doing this because I love my husband and

I love my family?" When she switched that around, when she put it into an idea of loving her husband and loving her family, her attitude changed tremendously. It wasn't "I have to do this" but "I get to do this." Her husband noticed the difference and she honestly said "Sometimes I didn't do it near as much, but that attitude makes all the difference."

I had this question in catechism earlier, too. We were talking about relationships of kids and parents and it was said, "It doesn't matter how I say 'I'm going to go do this.'" Parents, does it matter if you ask your kid to go do something and they say "Yeah, I'll go do that" or "Okay! I'll go do that!?" It matters. Are you doing it because of the Law or are you doing it out of love? So we have to see how the Gospel changes. That's really what this is all about.

It talks about how this veil has been covering everyone and this is because of when you read the Old Testament, when you read the Law, it's opened up through Christ. If you don't have Christ, if you don't have the Gospel, then you read the Old Testament/the Old Covenant and you look only at the Law. But only through Christ is it opened up. That veil covers our hearts. But then really what it says is, <sup>18</sup>***And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.*** The truth is, what transforms is the Gospel. ***The Gospel is what transforms through Jesus.***

When you read the Old Testament, when you read Scriptures, if you're not reading through the eyes of Jesus, through that lens, then you are going to see all the work righteousness. You're going to think it's all about Law. But when you see Christ and that Gospel promise over and over again, as we saw in the Psalm today and in Psalms over and over again in Isaiah and the pictures of our Messiah, but then, to think about this again, what do people think transforms? People think the Law is what transforms. "If I put the Law down, then they'll finally change." But what happens when you don't have to do that anymore?

We talked about parent and kids. Does the attitude you do it in matter? Parents, if you only act in Law, then what are your kids used to? What do you use the most in the home? I'm not telling you to not use law. Of course kids need to be trained and brought up in righteousness and be corrected and disciplined, but think about this. I heard this example that said when your kids get a little bit older and they are out and about and something bad happens, they make a mistake, do you want them thinking "I can't call mom and dad. I know that they are going to lay down the law on me" or do you want them thinking, "I have to call mom and dad. I know they are probably not going to be happy, but they are also going to show me love and forgiveness and they are going to help"? The truth is they are not going to be in your house forever. They are going to be adults. So you have to train them up in the Gospel, to be motivated by love, not just by Law.

I know the Law has its purposes—the mirror, the curb, the guide—but in the same way that here, at church, we talk about what we want to predominate. We want the Gospel to predominate. We want people to know that they are loved and forgiven. What is going to guide people in their lives most? It's to know that they are loved and forgiven. That's going to transform them. The word here, "transform," is actually the same word that means "to transfigure"—Transfiguration Sunday. This is what is happening to you, as Christians. You are being transformed, and here I said through Jesus, but in our text it says over and over again by the Spirit. But as you are in the Word, as you are hearing that love and forgiveness, you are guided more and more by the Gospel instead of "I have to"—the Law.

So that's my prayer—that we see the tool that really works. It's easy to grab the Law, but what do people really, really need. The rest of the world deals with the Law. We deal with the Gospel. We are going to use the Law, but we want people to know that true Gospel.

At this conference, there was one other presenter that had just gone through cancer treatments. He is a pastor. He was talking about how he had gone through a year of chemo and how it was really rough. He said "If I had the cure for cancer, I just wish I could have given it to all the people that were there and going through the treatments at the same time." He said this also, and I thought it fits very well, "We don't have the cure for cancer, but what do we have? The Law brings condemnation and death, but the Gospel brings righteousness and is lasting. The Gospel is the cure for death." We don't have the cure for cancer, but we have the cure for death, that gives life eternal. This is what we get to use. This is the tool that we have to go out to our loved ones and to those around us, our family, friends and relatives. So go with that Gospel knowing its glory and its lasting power. Amen.

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