



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 5, 2025

Pastor James Enderle

Ash Wednesday

Lesson: [2 Samuel 12:1-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 18:9-14](#)

Sermon Text: [2 Corinthians 5:20—6:2](#)

OPEN DOOR POLICIES Lowering Our Defenses THE TRUTH OPENS DOORS

1. **Pride keeps us from seeing ____ and ____.**
2. **Christ _____ and died for you, to give you _____.**
3. **Without _____ in Christ, there is only _____.**
4. **Live a _____ life, _____ others.**

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:

¹⁶Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. ¹⁷For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. ¹⁸So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. ([2 Corinthians 4:16-18](#))

Those words are just a chapter before our text, and the whole section of [2 Corinthians 5](#) is really filled with this theme here for Ash Wednesday. As we come together on Ash Wednesday, what are we looking at as “Dust to Dust”? We are looking at the truth—the truth of who we are and what is ahead. The problem is that we don’t always want to think about that and what often leads to that. What is the thing that causes us to not think about the truth? **The truth opens doors**, but we often don’t want to think about that. What I would say is from our other two readings today, what do we see? We see that pride is a huge problem. ***Pride keeps us from seeing sin and death.*** We saw it with David, where he was so prideful that he could not see his own sin or admit it or really see what the problem was until Nathan came to him. We see with the Pharisees and the tax collector that pride keeps us from seeing who we are, seeing our own sin.

We look at our world and how pride keeps people thinking that we can live forever. We look at celebrities or people with money and they think that maybe they don't have to think about life and death. When you think about life, think about what is true about us.

This series talks about open doors and how the truth that God gives us opens the door for us to come to Him. But we have to see the truth of us—that our hearts are open doors. Without Him, there are these things we call idol factories that makes ourselves god and finds anything else to trust in. What God says is out of our hearts come all sorts of sinful thoughts—murder, adultery, lust, greed—all these things that are not from out there but from in here. It's when I'm too prideful that I can't see that. That I think I'm better than others or I don't need Christ. If we can see the truth, then we can see what we really need.

I'm going to read just a few passages from earlier in the chapter because I think this sets the tone for what we read. The next verses are from [2 Corinthians 5:14-15](#). ¹⁴***For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.*** ¹⁵***And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*** This whole section of 2 Corinthians 5 is focusing on the fact that we are going to die, but notice what has happened. Though we have this sin and death, we have something that changes us. Christ's love compels us. He died for all, therefore all died. ***Christ lived and died for you, to give you life.*** If we understand that Christ lived and died for us, that we are dead to our sins, that we can live a new life, that Christ's love compels us, than we no longer have to fear our sin, our pride. You don't have to fear these things because Christ has died for you. That frees us to no longer be worried about sin and death but to live; to live in protection and His peace; to live this new life.

I heard this concept recently because there are so many thoughts on truth and untruth, but the truth is not afraid to be questioned. If you hear people that get into debates and they just want to end it or they don't want people to talk about things, if you have the truth, are you okay to be questioned? The truth is that God wants to forgive us, we are sinful, and we come here on Ash Wednesday to admit that we are dust. Our sins are going to bring us back into the grave. But the reality is looking and saying, what is the truth without Christ.

We know that Christ's love compels us and we are alive in Christ, but what happens without Him? We see in [Verses 17-19 of 2 Corinthians 5](#): ¹⁷***Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*** ¹⁸***All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation:*** ¹⁹***that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.*** Whose sins did Jesus die for? He died for the sins of the world! It's an amazing thing!

So what is the truth without Jesus? Even though He died for the sins of the world, we're often too filled with pride and don't want to go to Jesus. We talk about what repentance is and we're afraid of repentance. Sometimes we say, "I don't want to admit what I've done, but then I don't get what God wants to give." God wants to give us forgiveness. The truth is ***without forgiveness in Christ, there is only death.*** God wants to give us a new life, but if I keep those sins, if I say "God can't forgive me for those sins" or I say "This thing is not a sin" about this thing that God has clearly said is a sin and I'm going to hold it up and I'm going to pretend that I didn't do it or that it doesn't need forgiving, what is left but death. God wants to give us this reconciliation, this forgiveness.

In our text it says, ²⁰***We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*** I find this section of Scripture so fascinating. It's this appeal. God has forgiven you. Christ has forgiven you through His work. It's this appeal that's saying to seek His forgiveness because without it, there's death. ²⁰***We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.*** ²¹***God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*** That sin that we have is all put on Christ. He lived for you. He died for you to give you life, to give you the righteousness of God so that we don't have to fear. We can come in dust and ashes and say "I have sinned," and we receive that beautiful forgiveness.

The imploring here is what he says here, ***6-As God's co-workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. ²For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation.*** When God says He wants us to live a new life, He doesn't want to have us living in that burden of worrying if my sin is too great, but to give it all to Him and to live for Him. This is that picture—to not live running from Him; to not hide from Him (like David did), but to live a reconciled life.

If I live a reconciled life, what can I do to others? I can reconcile others. I can now be an ambassador for Christ. I can go to others and share this good news because without it, it's exactly what Ecclesiastes talks about. Everything is meaningless. It's a breath. God gives us so many good things in life, but they are a breath. But when we live a reconciled life, he fills everything with this joy and forgiveness. Then I get to go and give Him glory in what I do and lead others to be reconciled—to live in that forgiveness. ***Live a reconciled life, reconciling others.***

So yes, we come here on Ash Wednesday in repentance, but repentance is not complete without forgiveness. Remember that. And think about this: what is the purpose of guilt? How long should you hold onto guilt? What is guilt supposed to do? Guilt is

something we feel because of sin and it's to drive us to God. So it should be this short-term thing that is going away because you are forgiven. You are reconciled. Be reconciled to God, because you have the righteousness of God. You can't earn it and it's only been given to you through Christ and His forgiveness.

My prayer as we go into this Lenten season is we don't hide from repentance, we don't hide from our sin, but we go to God to be forgiven, to be filled up, to be renewed, so that we can have that righteousness of God day after day; that today is the day of God's favor. Today is the day of salvation. Then we get to share that salvation with so many others who, without Christ are only on their way to death. But you know what we have through that forgiveness is life now and life eternal. That truth opens the door. It opens the door to His grace and forgiveness now and forever. Amen.

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