



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

March 12, 2025

Pastor David Ruddat

Lenten Midweek 2

Passion History: [Luke 22:1-38](#)

Reading: [Isaiah 44:6-11](#)

Reading: [Colossians 3:1-6](#)

Devotion Text: [Exodus 20:3](#)

### LORD, HAVE MERCY FOR OUR INCESSANT IDOLATRY

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.

The First Commandment: ***"You shall have no other gods before me."*** What does this mean? You guys know the answer, right? Yes. What is the answer? You can read, great. I was hoping you'd have this by memory.

Do you ever wonder why God has this as the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods"? Doesn't that seem kind of selfish? *God, you're saying that we can't have any other gods and you're making it all about you? Doesn't that seem selfish? Shouldn't you have commandments dealing with other people? Shouldn't that be first because we're living here in this world?* Jesus even calls this the greatest commandment, ***"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind."*** ([Matthew 22:37](#)) Why does God start off with that one? Doesn't it seem like it's selfish?

If we are asking that question and we're seriously thinking about it, we're doing something called "projection." Projection is what happens when you are having a conversation with somebody else and they are not listening to you at all, and they turn around and say to you, "You are never listening to me!" That's called "projection," and that happens a lot in personal relationships, and that is happening here. We're saying "God, why are you getting all the attention," and what is behind that is a sinful nature that says, "I should be getting the attention. It should be about me."

Why is the First Commandment about God? It's because of two reasons. One reason is because He is the only God. In the lesson from Isaiah, God says there are no other gods. These other gods in the world, they haven't really helped anybody, and we see that throughout the pages of the Old Testament. The Egyptians' gods, did they save the

Egyptians from God's hand? No, because they didn't exist. What about Baal? Could Baal send down lightning to start a fire? No, because he doesn't exist. Elijah prays and God sends down fire and burns up the entire altar and all the water around it because He is the only God. There is only one God, and He is the God who reveals Himself in the Bible. And the true God is one who wants a very close and intimate relationship with us.

You know how God says to pray? Paul says about that in 1 Thessalonians **...pray continually...** ([1 Thessalonians 5:16-18](#)) We should be praying all the time to God because He wants this close relationship with us. God, who gives us His Word (which we'll find out when Pastor Enderle talks about that), gives it to us so He can communicate with us. He is a God who wants a relationship; a very close and intimate relationship with you and me. This commandment reminds us that we are people who very much would rather not have that close of a relationship.

If you think about it, when you had a time when things were calm and unhurried, what kinds of things were you thinking about? When things were just finally set in place, what were you thinking? Of course you're saying: *I'm never that way, pastor. Things are always going crazy. Everything is going crazy. I'm stressed and I have this I have to do. I have this homework I have to get done. I have this thing happening at work. I have this thing coming at home.* Then where are your thoughts? Oh yeah, "All the things I need to do and all that problems that I'm facing." Where is God?

When you are having difficulty in your marriage, where are your thoughts then? When things are going well in your marriage, where are your thoughts then? Are there any thoughts directed to God, any prayers going God's way?

The more we think about the stations that we have in life, the situations that we have in life, whether things are going really well or whether we are going through a valley, the more we realize how little we actually give God the attention that we can have with Him. The relationship that we can have with Him is a relationship where we are often saying: *Only when times are tough, only on Sundays, only in the classroom.* But God says, "Fear, love and trust in me above all things. You have no other gods." He wants this close relationship with us, through the good times and the bad.

As much as we would think that God is offended by the person who does the terrible sin, whatever you might fill in the blank, whatever that is, God is also offended when we are putting something else or someone else ahead of Him. Whatever situation we are facing in life, if we're not also talking about God or talking to Him or reflecting on His Word, that offends Him. That's a sin. And for that, we need His mercy. That's why I love looking at this during the season of Lent because we need that consistent reminder that God is here and we are way down here somewhere. He is perfect and holy, and we are not.

But then it's also right for us to think about who is this God who is perfect and holy? This is a God who puts me first, who wants what is best for me, who is engaged in my life. The God of the universe, there are billions of people in this world, but God is concerned about me. He put His name on me at my baptism. He wants what is best for me and He is actively engaged in my everyday life. Why? It's because that's who He is. And we see this in the Passion History. We see how God is all about us in the Passion History, like we read today.

The disciples are squabbling about who is the greatest. Can you imagine that? And here Jesus, at that moment is thinking about and instituting the Lord's Supper for them so that they would have forgiveness of sins through His body and His blood. These people, who are thinking about who of them is the greatest, and Jesus is like "It's not about that. It's about you serving others. It's about you being more and more like God, who is putting others first and their best interest at heart first."

Jesus is doing that when the disciples are squabbling about who is the best. Jesus is doing that when He is on the cross. "Father, forgive..." Then what makes it even more heartbreaking is when He gets to that moment when He says, **"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"** [\(Matthew 27:46\)](#) Here, Jesus is craving this intimate relationship that He has with God. He is doing that more than you and I could ever do, because He is doing it perfectly, and He is craving that, but He is denied it because He is sitting there on the cross for you and for me. He is suffering what we deserve because we're not up to God's level. He is doing it so that God would never forsake you.

John writes, **"We love because he first loved us."** [\(1 John 4:19\)](#) Our love and our trust for God does not save us. Only the love that God has for us in the person of Jesus Christ saves us. Amen.

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