



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

March 16, 2025

Pastor David Ruddat

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

First Lesson: [Jeremiah 26:8-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 42a

Second Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Philippians 3:17-4:1](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 13:31-35](#)

### **OPEN DOOR POLICIES** **No Detours Allowed** **LOOK OUT; LOOK IN; LOOK UP**

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, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father through our Lord and our Savior Jesus Christ.

*Direct us now, O gracious Lord, to hear aright your Holy Word.  
Assist your minister to preach, and let the Holy Spirit teach.  
Let eternal life be found by all who hear the Gospel sound. Amen.*

Detours can be a good thing. If there is construction, you don't want be driving in it. Where there is construction, it is going to slow you down. If there is an accident, it's a good thing that there is a detour because you could probably harm somebody else or maybe make the situation worse. But detours can be a bad thing if you are supposed to be on that path. I think so oftentimes when there is a conversation that we need to have happen, maybe we have to talk to our kids about something or talk to another family member about something and this is really the thing we have to talk about, but we'll talk about the weather or the Packers or the Brewers or something else. We'll pick the easy subjects because we don't really want to talk about the hard subjects. That is also true in life. Sometimes there are hard things that we have to do and we would much rather do the easy things than the hard things.

Paul is writing to the Philippians. If you have a top-five list of Paul's favorite congregations, I think Philippians would make that list. I don't know where it would fit in the 1-5, but the way that he speaks about them—he calls them his joy and his crown and his dear friends. The letter that he writes to the Philippians is one of joy. We call it the Epistle of Joy, as he is encouraging them and he is complimenting their faith that is

worked in them by the Holy Spirit. Even still, even in this letter, even to people who he has great affection for he is going to tell them difficult things. He is going to tell them to **look out**. He is going to tell them to **look in**. And he is going to tell them to **look up**.

First of all, he tells them to **look out**. There are dangers out there, Philippians, and they are the same dangers as they are today, as he says: ***"To be sure, many walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. I told you about them often, and now I am saying it while weeping. Their end is destruction, their god is their appetite, and their glory is in their shame. They are thinking only about earthly things."*** Look out for these. I like how the Apostle Paul doesn't just give them a label. He calls them the enemies of the cross of Christ, but he describes them.

Do you know why I like that? It's because oftentimes when we give labels to things, that gives us distance. I say "Illinois drivers," and what do you think? People driving too fast, not concerned about the drivers around them. You say "Oh, those are bad—Illinois drivers, ugh!" even though they're not all bad, but you know what I'm saying. We're over generalizing. "Illinois drivers, ugh; I would never be like them!"

Then there is a situation where you need to get from Point A to Point B and you are going to go over the speed limit and you are not really going to care about the other drivers on the road. What have you become?—an "Illinois" driver. But since you put a label on it, that gives you distance. "That's not me!" So that's why I like the Apostle Paul because he talks about the enemies of the cross of Christ, and then he describes them so that we don't put a label and put some distance and so that we would not see that problem is not in our situation.

So he describes them for us. He says these are people who ***their god is their appetite, and their glory is in their shame. They are thinking only about earthly things.*** When you hear those words, it sounds like a certain segment of the bar culture in Wisconsin. These are individuals who are just concerned about consuming as much alcohol as possible, doing embarrassing things and not caring. Yeah, but it's not just that. Let's take a closer look at those words: ***their god is their appetite.*** Paul is using an idiom and it doesn't translate well. In the Greek mind/thought, your emotions, your impulses came from your intestines. So any kind of feeling or instinct or yet, the closest thing we've got is to "trust your gut." "My gut feels something." This is kind of the concept that the Greeks were dealing with, that your emotions/impulses are coming from your gut, your stomach, your appetite.

***Their god is their appetite.*** You would say "Well, that's not me. I'm a rational human being." You're a human being that has feelings and instincts that you follow more often than you want to admit. I'm the same way. I'm trying to lose weight and all of a sudden I'm saying "I need to eat now" and I'm like "No you don't!" "Yeah, but I do. I feel it!"

Somebody wrongs you and you feel like "I need to share this with somebody! Somebody needs to know! I need to vent!" And what are you doing? Gossip! We're living in a time when people do not want to BE spiritual. They want to FEEL spiritual. They don't want to BE spiritual the way that God defines it—as someone who is watching over their own life and being a people of repentance, of looking at their lives and saying "I'm not measuring up to God's standard and I need to repent of that and find forgiveness in Jesus Christ, and in Him find the strength to do the hard thing." No, no, no, no, no—we're living in a time when you want to do what FEELS right—trust your gut. "If I FEEL this is the right thing to do, it should be the right thing to do."

So oftentimes that's what you are seeing in the lives of Christians, well-meaning Christians, and what you are seeing as you are looking in the mirror. "Am I doing this because it's the right thing to do, or do I trust some feelings, some impulses?" Our feelings aren't bad. They're not sinful in and of themselves, but our sinful nature is also attached, not just to our mind but also to our feelings. It can influence the impulses that we have and the feelings that we have.

So the Apostle Paul says **look out. Look out** for those whose god is their stomach. Look also in the mirror. It doesn't end well, he says. ***Their end is destruction.*** Their god is their stomach ***and their glory is in their shame.*** Again, we think bar culture, but then also just looking at the term—glory in their shame. When we think of the glory of Jesus, like on the Transfiguration, the glory of God, everything that makes God, God, was there in Jesus and He was taking on all of His divine nature that He has. But that means His love, that means His power, that means His strength—everything that makes Him, Him. That's His glory.

If we are people who are following our gut and our emotions, if we are acutely aware of our instincts and not aware of the fact that we are a person who is constantly in conflict with our sinful nature, then our glory, what is being revealed, is shame, and we can't get rid of it. No matter how we feel, no matter how spiritual we think we are, we can't get rid of this shame. This shame is just radiating. The only way to get rid of it is to go to the cross of Christ and there say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." So **look up. Look in**, as Paul says. He says in Verse 17, ***"Brothers, join together in imitating me and in paying attention to those who are walking according to the pattern we gave you."*** **Look in**, not inward, but **look in** to the Word, to the pattern that has been given to us.

Paul is mentioning his life and his example as well, but he's not someone who says he is perfect or that he has it all figured out. Earlier in Philippians he says, ***"Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal (been made perfect), but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus also took hold of me."*** [\(Philippians 3:12\)](#) The Apostle Paul says, "Don't look at me and my example in terms of I am one who has been successful and victorious over my sinful nature. Look at me as

someone who is pressing on and holding onto that which has taken hold of me—holding onto Christ.” **Look in** to God’s Word for that pattern.

And the ultimate pattern is not the Apostle Paul but Christ Jesus. We see that in our Gospel Lesson for today. Here Jesus was willing to do hard things, to say hard things, to go in difficult situations because He was thinking of you. “I need to go here and I need to go there and I need to suffer and I need to die because humanity needs me. Without me, they’re stuck in their shame. Their shame is radiating out. They have nothing, no hope of getting into heaven, so I must do these things, the hard things! I’m not going to take a detour. I must say the hard things. I must do the hard things.” The Apostle Paul says to look at that as your pattern, but then look at that as your source.

Jesus did all of that for you, not as just an example but in your place. Jesus did the hard things, said the hard things, for you, so when God looks at you, He doesn’t see you in your shame. He sees Jesus and His perfection instead. So **look in** to that pattern. Because of what Jesus has done for you, that gives you strength to do hard things because you’re only following Jesus. You’re not following your gut. You’re following Jesus, saying the hard things, doing the hard things, by His strength and by His power. So **look in**. And, **look out**.

Paul says, ***“But our citizenship is in heaven. We are eagerly waiting for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. By the power that enables him to subject all things to himself, he will transform our humble bodies to be like his glorious body.”*** What I appreciate about Paul in this section is this beautiful balance between our existences. We have an existence here on earth, where we are struggling with our sinful nature inside of us. We are struggling with the new person inside of us that God has created through faith, through the work of the Holy Spirit. And we are struggling with the sinful nature which is influencing us in ways that sometimes we’re not always aware. We are in this struggle, but, at the same time, we are citizens of heaven. He says, ***“But our citizenship is in heaven.”*** The Greek word there is the idea of “it exists.” “It’s real.” It’s not something that you earn or that you’re trying to grab. It’s there. It’s yours. You get all the benefits of a citizen of heaven—someone who is sitting in heaven, enjoying the glories of God right now. That is yours right now because of Jesus Christ. You have that citizenship. That’s who you are—a citizen of heaven. Even while you are struggling with your sinful nature, struggling with those spiritual battles within, who you are is this citizen of heaven. I like how he talks about that because it reminds me we are in two worlds at the same time.

If we are so focused on this world and what is going on right now and our citizenship here, maybe as a citizen of America, then what happens is our thoughts and our drive is always thinking about what is going to happen in the next election; what is going to happen in the next moment or the next month, or here and now, and that’s where our focus is.

On the flipside, if our focus is ALWAYS on being a citizen of heaven, we forget about our neighbor. We think “Jesus is going to come again at any time. I’m just waiting for Him to come and I’m just sitting here twiddling my thumbs,” then we forget that God has placed us in this world to be a light for others, to plant those Gospel seeds in other peoples’ lives. We forget that if we’re focused only on one or on the other and we’re not where we should be.

Paul says **look up**. Remind yourself who you really are. You are a citizen of heaven, with all the rights and all the privileges of someone who is in heaven right now. That means your Heavenly Father is watching over you, protecting you. That means that He is providing for you, whatever you need—strength or patience, kindness, that’s yours as a citizen of heaven. That’s your identity.

Paul is writing to some of his favorite people in Philippians and by the Holy Spirit’s guidance, we are also hearing these wonderful words of an inspired writer who reminds us of who we are, reminds us of what we are to do while we are here—to **look out**, to **look in**, and to **look up**. Amen.

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