



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

May 28, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

7<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

First Lesson: [Acts 1:1-14](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 8](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Peter 4:12-17; 5:6-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 17:1-11a](#)

Sermon Text: [Acts 1:1-14](#)

### **We Are All Witnesses: Witness In The Spirit's Power**

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.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Do you know anybody in your life that is kind of annoying to you because they're the only one that ever knows how to do anything? Let's say this weekend you're going to start a grill. You go and start doing it and you're doing it wrong, so they jump in and do it for you because you just don't know what you're doing. And then how you plate the food—you're doing it wrong, so they have to jump in and fix it for you. Then how you clean up the dishes afterwards. You're doing it wrong. Okay, maybe then they don't jump in. They just let you do it the way you want. Do you know anyone like that, that knows everything and it has to be done their way or it's just not done right and they keep doing it over and over? They're so full of themselves, it just drives you nuts. Do you know anybody like that? If you don't, it's probably you.

That kind of person can be pretty annoying. You think you know everything. You think it all depends on you or else it won't turn out right. But there is a flip side to this when it comes to being a witness for Christ.

Sometimes we're so full of ourselves, not that we think we're the only ones that can do it but we think we don't have the gifts or abilities to do it, as though it depends on us. So we don't talk about Christ because we think, "I can't talk well enough. I can't tell others about Jesus. I can't answer all their questions. I'm not that eloquent. I just can't do this. I can't do that." And we act as though it depends on our abilities.

This is what our Lord is telling us today. It's not about you. Get over yourself. Get over yourself and don't think everything depends on you. Get over yourself here. Don't think being a witness of Christ depends on your power. It depends on the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of the Holy Spirit is amazing!

Consider what he did with this group of believers. They went to Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth like we talked about Thursday. They brought the Gospel so that we're gathered together here today and talking about who Jesus is and what he has done and rejoicing in the forgiveness he has won for us because they relied on the Spirit's power.

But that wasn't natural for them, just like at times it's not natural for you and me. We talked about this a little bit Thursday night. I think about how frustrating that must have been for Jesus. Forty days from his resurrection until he ascended. It seems like every time we read in the Bible that he appeared and talked to his disciples he was having Bible class. He was showing them from Moses and the prophets and the psalms how the Messiah had to suffer and die, showing them that this was God's plan all along and they had just had a misconceived notion about what Messiah was. He was then showing them what Scripture actually says.

Then it gets to be about the fortieth day when Jesus is about to ascend into heaven and what do they come and ask him? "Are you at this time going to establish the kingdom of Israel?" As though the glory was all just earthly. They didn't understand really what the true Messiah was at that point in time.

So you can kind of see that they weren't necessarily the brightest bulbs on the tree either. They were a lot like us. They had a lot of gaps in their knowledge. So Jesus, instead of throwing a shoe at them like I would have threatened to, he just says "Stay in Jerusalem. The power of the Spirit will come on you. And then you will be my witnesses. You will ***Witness in The Spirit's Power*** in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth." And that's what they did.

Think about how things changed after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The second Sunday of Easter, the Sunday after Easter this year, we read from Peter's Pentecost sermon. There we saw what we've been using as a theme. He said ***We Are All Witnesses of the Resurrected Messiah***. That's what we've been using as the theme every week during the Sundays of Easter.

But Peter there, going from "Are you going to establish the kingdom of Israel" to showing Old Testament passage after Old Testament passage after Old Testament passage that showed that Jesus was the promised Messiah and that he did what God had planned for him to do, and that included dying so that all sin could be paid for, Peter preached us this incredible sermon. This is the same guy who had denied Jesus on Maundy Thursday. This is the same guy that was standing there saying "Are you going to establish the kingdom of Israel at this time?" The power of the Spirit moved him from at times a brazen fool to a powerful witness of Christ.

So you think he can't do that for you? Do you think that promise is just for someone else and not for you? When Jesus says "You'll be my witnesses," do you think he wasn't talking to you? You are his royal priesthood. You are his chosen people. You are his holy nation. This is not something that you pawn off on someone else. This is

what God has called you to do. And he promises to equip you to do what he has called you to do, because if you try to do it in your own power and think “I can talk pretty good. I know my Bible history. I can answer any objection. I can do this. I can do that,” you’re going to run into trouble. It isn’t about your knowledge. It isn’t about your power. It’s about the Spirit’s power.

Now, you want to know the Word more and more so that you can be plugged into the Spirit’s power, but don’t think it’s about you. It’s about him. If you think it’s only about you, what is going to happen when what our God has said to us really clearly today...God has not sugar coated anything. He said “If you’re going to live for me, you’re going to suffer because of the name of Christ. You’re going to be persecuted. A fiery ordeal...” that’s what he talked about in our Second Lesson. He wasn’t talking about athlete’s foot. He was talking about being attacked because you serve Jesus and you talk about Jesus to others. That’s going to happen. You’re going to tell others, “This is the most important news in the world. Without Jesus, you’re going to go to hell.” Then they’re going to look at you and say “Whatever. I don’t care. I have other things to do.” It’s going to happen. In fact, at times they’re going to even be verbally attacking you and maybe even more, who knows? Fiery ordeals take place all the time yet today. That’s what our Savior warned us about.

What was it this last week in Egypt? Was it 30 Coptic Christians gunned down by Isis? Why were they killed? They didn’t like the vehicle they were in? Because they were Christian! This happens. Fiery ordeals are going to come all the time and if you’re going to face them in your own power, you’re going to give up, you’re going to say “I don’t want to go through that. I don’t like being rejected,” because you don’t understand that it’s not you that’s being rejected.

When someone rejects the Gospel, they’re not rejecting you. It feels like it, I grant you. But they’re rejecting God who has sent you. You are his witness. You’re talking about him. And it’s his power that brings anyone to faith. Just like it’s his power that saved you. Your deciding to believe...you didn’t decide to believe. Your repenting doesn’t take away your sins. The life and death of Christ takes away your sin and you’re connected to that through the faith that the Holy Spirit worked in you. So it’s his power that gave you this forgiveness and it’s his power that enables you to share it with others.

But man, you have to be connected to that power because then you’ll be able to do more than you could ask or imagine. That’s what God promises us in Scripture. I think of that all the time. There are times certainly that you talk with someone about Jesus and you get home and you think “Man, I should have said this. Why didn’t I think of that?” and all that kind of stuff. You maybe beat yourself up a little bit. But I’m amazed at the number of times when I get home and I think to myself, “Where did that answer come from” when someone asked a question I’m not smart enough to know. It’s God who works in us. It’s his power. The Spirit leads us to tap into what he has taught us at the time when we need it. I think of that all the time.

The only way we can fail the Spirit, the only way we can fail to tap into his power is to not ever speak of Christ. If we get attacked for our faith, if we get attacked for sharing Jesus, if we lose a friend and we say "That's it! I'm not doing that anymore. They can just go to hell. I'm not going to talk to them about Jesus. That's someone else's job," then we're sinning against our God because he has called us to be his witnesses. We'll get better at it in time. The more we tap into the Spirit's power, the better we'll get at it. But you just can't deny that this is the task God has given to us. And you just can't try to do it by yourself.

Be in Word and Sacrament so the Spirit can strengthen you, so that when those opportunities come, you'll not only see them but you'll also seize them. See and seize opportunities to witness Jesus Christ. When we're in the Spirit's power, that's what we'll do. When we're in the Spirit's power, that's what we'll find joy in doing. Amen.