



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

August 31, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

13th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Isaiah 56:1, 6-8](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 133-134](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 11:13-15, 28-32](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 15:21-28](#)

Sermon Text: [Isaiah 56:1, 6-8](#)

The Church Is Meant For All People

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:

The past three weeks, I've done something I hadn't done in over a year. For a year's time, I hadn't gone golfing. My back had been hurting. My arm had been hurting. I tried golfing twice last year and it just didn't work. It just hurt too much. The last three weeks I've gone golfing. I don't know if I can really call it golfing or not, but I went swinging clubs and chasing balls. It was fun. Not that I golfed well, but it was fun. One of the reasons it was so much fun is because I was pain free. That was kind of nice.

I'm not the world's greatest golfer, but I do enjoy watching it on television, or at least sleeping in front of it on television on Sunday afternoons at times. My favorite tournament to watch every year is always the Masters. I love watching the tournament in Augusta because it usually means the snow is going to be gone soon because it's the start of Spring/Summer, and we get rid of that snow. I always enjoy seeing that on television.

Augusta is a closed club. Evidently everyone who is a member of that club has lost my number because none of them have called me up and asked me to go golfing. I think it would just be really cool to go there and see what you see on television and walk the course. I think that would be amazing. But it's a closed club. You have to be a member. You just can't show up and say "Here I am. Let me golf." It doesn't work that way. If all of a sudden it was open to everyone and everyone came rushing in there, how do you think the members of Augusta would react? Would they turn their nose up at guys that show up like me and golf like I do? Maybe.

This idea of a closed club, where outsiders aren't allowed, should invoke images of the Old Testament for you, shouldn't it? The children of Israel, they were God's chosen people. Everyone else was the nations, the Gentiles, the Goyim. They could get into

Jerusalem into the temple of the Gentiles. They couldn't go any farther. They couldn't be a part of some of the sacrifices. They couldn't be a part of various other things. They couldn't participate in the worship life of the Israelites like the Jews could. In fact, some of these guys of God told them, "If you come into contact with them, you'll be ceremonially unclean and you can't go to the temple and worship." So how do you think they viewed those kinds of outsiders? A little different than a golf game. "Now I can't go to worship the Lord just because I came into contact with a eunuch unknowingly." Think of how you would view those people.

You kind of wonder, when I read what I read to you from the synagogue worship, in the time of Jesus, what did they think about that? That's basically God saying, "The day is going to come. Maintain justice and do what is right, because my righteousness is about to be revealed. Then it's going to be a house of prayer for all nations, not just for the chosen nation." You wonder if they embraced it. Do you think they turned their nose up at it? Or do you think they thought, "God can't honestly mean what he says"?

Think of how they looked at the nations. I've told this story at various times in Bible classes and the like, but my great uncle, my father's mother, her sister married Martin Block, a Jew by race, by birth. A wonderful man. He became a Christian. A wonderful man. Loved him to pieces. He ran a furniture store. When I was a little kid and I was in the furniture store and I got to running around doing stupid stuff, like little kids are prone to do, and I did something that I shouldn't have and knocked something over or something like that, I'd hear Uncle Martin thunder at me, "You dumb Goy! What are you doing?!" Not dumb boy, dumb Goy. Goyim is the Hebrew word for Gentile, or the nations. This was an insult that he had heard growing up thousands of years after Christ. It was still ingrained that "We're the chosen people. Everyone else is the Goyim. When someone does something stupid, they're a Goy." Then God comes and says, "My house is going to be a house of prayer for all nations. They're going to come. They're going to worship. They're going to be in the places where they couldn't go. They're going to be in there offering sacrifices. They are going to be in there observing Sabbath laws." Maybe as you heard that read you thought to yourself, "We don't observe Sabbath laws. This isn't Saturday. This is Thursday night. We don't offer sacrifices." You have to remember, the Holy Spirit is talking through Isaiah to the people and he's describing their worship life that they knew and really what he is saying is putting it into a picture that they would understand. "The Gentiles are going to be on the exact same footing as you are in their relationship with me because I'm going to reveal my righteousness." His righteousness was that he sent his Messiah into the world, who was his own Son, who became flesh and then revealed God's righteousness. The righteousness that God demands God gave through Jesus' perfect life and death in our place. He credited it not only to the Jews, but also to the Goyim. This was his plan that he revealed hundreds of years before Jesus came.

This had to upset the apple cart. This had to upset some of the people because this is one of the reasons that the pharisees were upset with Jesus at times. He hung out with the sinners, the people that made you ceremonially unclean. He was sent out to the lost sheep of Israel, but we see him describing a Goy's faith as great. Only twice are

we told in the Gospels that Jesus described anyone's faith as great. Both times it was Gentiles. This had to sting a little bit to the pharisees.

God had a special relationship with the Israelites, but it wasn't because the Israelites were special. It was so that he could carry out his plan of salvation to save, not just the Israelites but every person on earth.

For us, this is exciting because it means we're part of it because, for the vast majority of us in our congregation, we're Gentiles. Our God's plan has always been to love us and redeem us and pay for our sins. God's plan has always been to include everyone inside the fold of the church, his body, all believers everywhere. It's intended for all people. Gentile. Jew. Everyone. Christ lived and died for everyone. He paid for the sins of all people of all time. That's what he revealed. Now he wants his house of prayer to be a house of prayer for all nations.

So what that means for us today is, can you think of any person that you would not want to be with you in heaven? Can you think of any person you would not want sitting next to you in worship? I'll tell you what that means.

If you voted Democrat in the last election and a Republican is sitting next to you, you should still be happy they're here. If you voted Republican and a Democrat is sitting next to you, you should still be happy they're here. You should still love them with Christ-like love because God loved them and died for them.

So how good are we at that? How good are we at loving people that are different from us? Let me ask you this another way. Who do you not want in heaven with you? Can you think of anyone? Can you think of anyone you don't want in heaven with you? Do you know who you don't want in heaven with you? The person God has given you the opportunity to share Jesus with and you didn't do it. On some level, maybe you just don't want them in heaven with you. Maybe you don't want people that look different than you or act different than you here in our congregation, so you don't share Jesus with them because they're not like us.

Is it possible? Sure. We're sinners. Sinners sin. Sinners think the world revolves around themselves. At times we do it when we don't want to make ourselves uncomfortable by sharing Jesus. We rejoice that he made himself so uncomfortable that he endured the agony of hell to pay for our sins, but there are those days when our selfishness keeps us from living in his love and leads us instead to live in love for self and not want to make ourselves uncomfortable.

Yet God's house remains a house of prayer for all nations. For those who serve him faithfully and for those who serve him less than faithfully. To those he has called, to those he has given the gift of faith, he loves and he forgives. He wants all people to receive the blessing and the benefit of what he has done for all people. He has revealed that to us. Now he has called us to reveal it to others so that his elect might be gathered into the church that is intended for all people. Amen.