



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 17, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

15th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Jeremiah 15:15-21](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 121](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 12:1-8](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 16:21-26](#)

Sermon Text: [Jeremiah 15:15-21](#)

The Church Is Militant: First The Cross, Then The Crown

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 Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

It was shocking! This past week in Confirmation Class, it was absolutely shocking what I heard from the class! We are starting to go through the pink book that we have and we are talking about what Confirmation Class is about. The word “confirm” means *to strengthen*, so strengthening in Christian faith and in Christian life is what Confirmation Class is about. We talked about not only being there to grow in our knowledge of God and in our trust in God, our Christian faith, but also in the ability to live for God, for doing the right things for the right reasons. So I asked the kids, why do they do what they do? At home, why do you do what your parents want at times? Why do you do it sometimes without even being asked? Why do you do your homework? Why do you do this kind of stuff? I was absolutely shocked to hear that kids at times do things for their parents because they want something out of their parents! Who would have thought? At times kids do their homework just so they won't get in trouble with their parents or in trouble with their teachers. That's not exactly doing the right thing for the right reasons, right? That's doing things so that we get something out of it.

But they're just kids. They don't know any better. They're just 7th and 8th graders. They're just not that sharp, right?

We'd never do that, would we? We'd never think that God owes us something because we do this or that for God. We'd never get mad at God because life isn't as smooth as we'd like it to be and we have to face these different challenges, and we see people that don't love God and that aren't in worship or maybe they just show up on Christmas and Easter and their life looks wonderful, and “Here I am, week after week, sitting on that padded pew listening to that guy in that dress up in the front talking! My life stinks! God, that ain't fair!” So maybe we are like 7th and 8th graders.

It shouldn't surprise us because from what I read to you from Jeremiah today, I think what we're going to see when we look at it a little bit more closely is that Jeremiah was the exact same way. He was a prophet of God. He did incredible things for God. God did incredible things through Jeremiah. But he is a sinner just like you and me. He was at a point in time when he speaks this to God where he said, "God, this isn't fair. I'm serving you and I'm getting nothing out of it. You're a liar." So as we think about this and we see that Jeremiah thought God owed him better, and sometimes you and I think God owes us better, let's think about that and then see what God says to answer that today and see what he thinks about that when that happens. I think it's fascinating to think about.

He reminds us that, what did Jesus say? We need to pick up our cross and follow him. Our cross is the things that we do to serve God that sometimes are just difficult and hard because we're being attacked by others for doing them. It's doing the right thing for the right reasons and then getting blowback when you do it.

So for Jeremiah, this was being a prophet. God called him to be a prophet. When he called him, he said some of the same things he's going to say at the end of our reading today. You know how he said "I'll make you a bronze wall"? He said that at the beginning. He said, "Here is your ministry. These people are not listening to me. They take advantage of me. They come and take advantage of my love and then they go their own way and when things go bad, they come running back. I'm sick and tired of it! You're going to be my messenger to tell them to turn away from doing that, because that's wrong! And here is what is going to happen. They aren't going to listen to you, so I'm going to make you a bronze wall so that they'll keep attacking you but I'll sustain you and you'll be able to get through it all."

Jeremiah is a prophet that probably wanted to be a battering ram, right? Go and knock down the attacks of Satan on God's people and knock Satan and send his attacks running away. But God told him, "Here's your ministry. You're going to be hit by the battering ram. You're going to be a wall and they're going to attack you." He said that to him straight out in the beginning.

But now we find Jeremiah as he is talking to God. In fact, God had just said right before this, "You know what? These people, I'm so sick of them! Even if Moses himself were standing in front of me, I wouldn't listen to him because these people have abandoned me and turned their back on me so often and thought they knew more than me. I've just had it with them!" Those are strong words from our God. That's what he said right before what I read to you.

So then Jeremiah intercedes as spokesman for God. He intercedes on behalf of God's people. He pours out this prayer to God. But really the prayer turns into a complaint. He says, "**LORD, you understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors.**" He turns to God when he is suffering because he feels the wrath of serving these people that God is upset with. He says, "LORD, when you gave me your Word, I ate it and I loved it. I loved the idea of being your spokesman. I loved that idea

because I bear your name.” That’s what he said in there, right? “I want to serve you. I want to proclaim your Law. I want to proclaim your message of the promise, the LORD our righteousness” which, as Jeremiah talked about in his writings that God would send the Savior to come to take away the sins of his people.

But what God told Jeremiah would happen happened. People didn’t listen to him. And in fact, they had false prophets that were saying the exact opposite of what Jeremiah had said. When he would tell them that they were sinning when they were doing wrong, they had other people that were saying, “No! God loves you guys! Look at how he is blessing you! You know who the problem is? The problem is that Jeremiah fellow that is always talking this gloom and doom stuff. He needs to take something to get him off of that gloom and doom and be a little more positive.” The king of Israel once looked at Jeremiah and said, “You’re the troubler of Israel.”

Jeremiah says, “LORD, I’ve served you faithfully. I love this call that you gave me and I want to serve you faithfully, because I love you, but you know what? I never enjoyed the company of revelers.” That’s what he said there in Verse 17. Literally “revelers” there means *those that are laughing*. He isn’t saying, “I didn’t get to go on a bender on Friday night like everyone else did so now I’m mad about that God.” That’s not what he is saying. What he is really saying is, “All those people that are laughing and having fun, they don’t do it with me! I have no one to laugh and have fun with. I’m alone. I’m a bronze wall and it stinks, God. I have no friends that want to be with me because I’m always speaking the message you gave me. I’m doing what you told me to do, God, and I have to do it alone. In fact, not only am I alone, I’m always attacked. I’m sick and tired of it! Why is my pain unending and my wounds grievous and incurable?” You can kind of feel that welling up inside of him.

Now he says something that I think is just amazing in it’s harshness to God. In [Jeremiah 2:13](#), the Lord had said through Jeremiah that the LORD is a spring of living water. Now listen to what Jeremiah accuses God of. **“You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails.”** What is Jeremiah saying to God except, “You lied to me. You told me you were a spring of living water. I did what you told me to do and I’m not living the way I want to live. I’m facing difficulties and hardships I don’t want to face. LORD, I’m sick of it! You’re a liar! I don’t believe you.”

Do you have friends like that? Friends that take advantage of your friendship? When they need you they come. When they don’t need you, they have no use for you? That’s what Jeremiah is saying God is.

The question is, do you ever feel that way about God? That he’s a liar?

As we pick up our cross and follow God, our crosses are all going to be different, but everyone who is a Christian has a cross to pick up and carry. If you pick it up and carry it, whatever you’re doing that you’re doing to serve God, and it brings you difficulty or hardship or problems, you can get worn down by carrying it. God calls you in the face of physical pain to trust in him. God calls you in the face of emotional pain to trust in

him. God calls you in the face of those who are doing what is wrong to stand up for what is right, according to his Word, not according to society's thoughts or your own thoughts or your own emotions. You do any of those things long enough and after a little while the cross gets so heavy you just want to put it down because it's hard to do. When you do it, you get attacked. And you feel as though you shouldn't be attacked. If I'm doing what God has called me to do, if I'm bearing up under this difficulty in my life and I'm trying to glorify God as I'm doing it, why doesn't God make it easier for me to do it? You could apply that to any cross you face in any role in your life. I don't know about you, but I struggle with it all the time.

I share God's Word with people and I see them go "Huh" and turn and walk the other way. It drives me absolutely nuts! I go "God, why aren't you doing something about it? You said your Word won't return empty. It sure looks empty to me."

If you carry your cross and you're struggling with problems and those problems just seem to mount and multiply and you're saying, "God, why are you doing this? I'm trying to live for you! You owe me better!" Here is the thing. You and I are calling on God to keep a promise he has never made to us.

He was pretty clear with Jeremiah, right? "I'll make you a bronze wall. They're going to attack you." That's exactly what happened. God made him a bronze wall and he continued to watch over him.

God has never promised us that if we are a Christian and we live the way he wants us to live life will be easy and smooth. He says it's through much pain and suffering that we'll enter the kingdom of God. He says the devil will constantly be attacking us and that these attacks are always going to come. They are a reminder that we're living on the wrong side of perfection. We're living in a sinful world. They are there so that we look to God for help instead of just ourselves. When things go super smooth, we forget about God. We throw our shoulder out of its socket patting ourselves on the back because we've done things so well. God has said, "If you're going to live for me, there's going to be a cross. Just know I'm going to be with you as you go through it all. But don't ever expect it's going to be easy."

It's not really fair, is it, to get mad at someone who isn't keeping a promise they never made? Yet I believe that's what we, as Christians, do when we tend to think God owes us more because we've done this or that or the other for him. God owes us nothing. God owes us nothing except that which he has promised us. He has not promised us smooth sailing, but he has promised us his love and his forgiveness through the life and death of Christ. For you and I, that's what we have to hang onto.

So look at what he says to Jeremiah now. Jeremiah had basically accused God of being a friend that was false and a liar and a fake and a fraud. If your friend says that to you, how are you going to respond? Put your hand on their shoulder, give them a

hug and say “I still love you”? I’m not! I’m going to be pretty mad. I’m going to answer anger with anger. So take a look at what our God does. Here is what our God says. **“If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me.”**

There is no way in the world I’d be that patient with any of you if you did this to me. And you wouldn’t be that patient with me if I did it to you. But look at how patient and loving our God is. **“If you repent, I will restore you...”** He doesn’t answer his anger in kind. He doesn’t say a lot of things that would have to be bleeped out of television broadcasts. He simply tells him “Repent. What you’re doing is wrong. Turn away from it because if you continue in this path, it’s going to be a problem between you and me. If you repent, I will restore you. When you are restored, then speak worthy words, not worthless words. The words you just spoke to me, they’re worthless. When you speak worthy words, then you’ll be my spokesman. You’ll eat that Word and continue to serve me, as you said is your delight, Jeremiah. But repent. See what you have done that is sin. Stop making excuses for your sin. Stop saying this isn’t fair, that isn’t fair. Instead, repent and find forgiveness in the love of God.”

Can you imagine God being that patient? I would have made him a carbon spot on the floor he was standing on. I would have just blown him out of this world and straight to hell for that kind of attitude towards me if I’m God. God responds with love.

Do you understand that’s what he does with you too? All the times that you think God owes you something more and you sin against him by being angry at him or accusing him of being unfaithful, he still loves you. He still wants you to find forgiveness in Christ, in his perfect life and in his death, he wants you to be in this relationship with him. He wants you then to again focus on what he has actually promised instead of what you have dreamt up that he should have promised you. That’s what our God is really saying.

Again he repeats to Jeremiah what he said in the beginning. “I’m going to make you a bronze wall. They’re going to keep attacking you, but I will be with you to rescue and save you.” Notice he is saying that before Jeremiah falls to his knees and says, “I’m sorry. I was an idiot.” He promises this love to him, not based on Jeremiah’s repentance, but based on who God is.

God loves you for all the times that you have turned your back on him, all the times you have chased your own desires and thoughts instead of his, all the times you have done all of these things and got mad at him and threw that cross off your shoulder and said, “I’m done with it! I’m going to go my own way now!” When you turn and look at God, what you’re going to find is that he still loves you. He says, “I am there to watch over you, to rescue and save you. **I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel.**”

It might not come the way you want it, or when you want it, or how you want it, but this is God’s promise to you in Christ. You were clothed in his perfection at your baptism. He forgives you for all of your anger at him and your accusations of him and he says “I

want nothing more than to be with you and deliver you from all the attacks and bring you safely to my heavenly home.” That love that God has for you just completely boggles my mind. If it doesn’t boggle your mind, if you just hear it and go “Yep, God loves me. He forgives me in Christ. That’s good. Move on, Pastor,” get over yourself. Don’t think of yourself more highly than you ought. Recognize what a sinner you are and how you ought to be just amazed at that love. If you’re no longer amazed at it, you have problems.

That’s why God puts us together with other Christians, so we keep pointing each other to God’s love for us in Christ. It is the only answer. It is the only solution. It is the thing that will sustain us when we start getting angry and accusing God. He loves you. He took away your sins in Christ. So stay close to him and his Word and his promise and his Gospel. Amen.