



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 24, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

16th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Ezekiel 33:7-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 51a](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 13:1-10](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 18:15-20](#)

Sermon Text: [Ezekiel 33:7-11](#)

The Church Fulfills Her Rose As Her Brother's Keeper

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:

The last 2-3 weeks have been full of interesting things on the news as far as nature goes. Hurricanes. Earthquakes. One after another after another after another it seems like. A couple people asked me, "Do you think these are signs of the ends of the age?" Scripture speaks of it that way, but I don't know. My encouragement to you would be to live as though the end of the world will come before I finish my sermon, so that you're always ready to go to heaven. That would be my encouragement.

It's interesting, these different natural things that have been happening, but they're kind of different, right? Earthquakes and hurricanes? You can't exactly turn to the earthquake channel on your dial to see where the next earthquake is coming, can you? It just happens. That's why there is such a loss of life at times because you can't evacuate because an earthquake is coming. You just don't know. It happens.

However, with the hurricanes they've been telling us for how long it looks like Harvey is going this way, Irma this way, and so on and so forth. They're telling you to get out of the path of the hurricane because it could take your life.

A guy that was I think two years ahead of me in high school lives in the Keys now. I saw on Facebook how he said "I don't know if I have a way to get out of the Keys. I think I'm going to have to ride out the hurricane." People that were back in Michigan were basically screaming at him on Facebook, "Get out of there! Get out of there! Get out of there!" Eventually he did say he got a ride out and he went someplace and now he was going to turn back to the devastation that was there. But you'd be surprised, wouldn't you, if his friends said "No big deal. It's a hurricane. Just some 100 mile an hour wind. You'll be alright. Just stay there. Why don't you get a lawn chair out and sit and watch. It will be fun. Go ahead and do that." I don't think anyone would be saying

that to their friend that they love, or even a friend they didn't love that's going to be in the face of a hurricane. You'd be saying to them "In any possible way, get to a safer place," wouldn't you? Or else you're just really cruel and heartless and please don't come to my house for lunch if that's the case.

That's kind of what God is talking about to Ezekiel today. He tells Ezekiel, "No, you're not going to be a weatherman that goes and stands out in the wind of a hurricane and tells us it's windy. You're going to be a watchman. You're going to stand on the wall and warn people against things that threaten their life." But he isn't talking about their physical life. He said, "You're a watchman that is supposed to warn people about things that are going to harm their eternal life." So he says, "Okay, son of man, I've made you a watchman, so listen to what I'm telling you. I tell you, as a prophet, to go speak this message to this person, 'Turn from your sins, because otherwise your sin is separating you from God and you will die.'" He's talking about dying eternally in hell. He says "If you don't do it and they die for their sin, you're accountable." That shows you God was pretty serious about him wanting the watchmen to do their job.

He says "If you do warn them and they don't listen to you, they will die for their sin but you will not be accountable for a sin against me." That tells us that God expects his people, or in Ezekiel's case, his prophet, to faithfully carry out the task that was given to him.

The definition we always teach for a prophet is *one who speaks God's Word to God's people*. Sometimes it was a message about the future. But very often it was just like what God is talking about here. It's a message he wanted to proclaim right then and there. "Turn away from your sin." Not 700 years in the future. "Turn away from your sin now."

But these words I think are pretty clear. If you're Ezekiel and you hear God saying this to you, "This is what I want you to do as my watchman," you understand what he is telling you. There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. God expected Ezekiel, when he tells him to warn someone that it's a sin and it's going to lead to hell, that he should do it. If he doesn't, he himself sins.

Ezekiel was a prophet, right? That's a message for the prophets today, the guys that stand up on the 90 degree days and wear a black gown like and idiot, right? That's who he must be talking to. Not you. You're not a prophet, right?

Prophets spoke God's Word to God's people. You don't hear of prophets a whole lot in the New Testament time, do you? We don't talk about prophets anymore at all now because now we have the Word of God that God wants us to have. He caused the prophets, the apostles, the evangelists, Moses, the kings to write it down. We call it the Bible. He says "Don't add to it. Don't subtract from it. But grow in your knowledge of it. And then share it. Teach it."

He doesn't speak about prophets anymore because now he has entrusted to his entire church, all believers everywhere, this incredible treasure of his written love letter that tells you the lengths he went to take away the guilt of all your sins. He wants you to know that. In fact, that's also what we heard in Ezekiel today.

But now, are you God's watchman? Well, we heard in the Gospel today, if your brother sins, go and show his fault just between the two of you. And whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven. Whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Bind. Loose. What is that talking about? That's the Ministry of the Keys. When you confront someone with their sin and they repent, you say to them "You are forgiven." That's the loosing key that unlocks the door to heaven. If they don't repent, you say to them "Your sin clings to you. You're not forgiven. Your sin is bound to you. The door to heaven is locked."

Who did he give that to? That's to his church, right? If your brother sins against you... He doesn't say *if your brother sins against you and you wear a black robe, go and show him his fault just between the two of you*. He says "If a brother or sister sins against you, go and show them their fault." This is what God has called his entire church to do. He has given to the church the Ministry of the Keys. He has given to the church the treasure of his Word. Are you a watchman? The answer is a resounding "yes".

Thirty-nine or fifty-nine, I don't remember, in the New Testament, God uses "one another" passages. Encourage one another. Teach one another. Rebuke one another. Admonish one another. Those passages are spoken to his church on earth. This is your task. If you are a part of the Holy Christian Church, if you believe Jesus lived and died for your sins, God has called you to be his watchman. Just like he did Ezekiel. You are to warn those who are caught in a sin, "Turn from your sin." If you don't, he says now some sin is clinging to you.

You might want to argue about it. You might want to say "That's not my job. That's your job, pastor. That's the elders' job. That's the council's job. That's the teachers' job." God would just look at you and say "I said it's yours." It's pretty straightforward.

So the question isn't, are you your brother's keeper. The question is, how are you to be your brother's keeper? We're not real good at this in our society today, are we? We're not very good at expressing any kind of disagreement with anyone else, are we? We almost feel at times as though if someone takes a stand different than ours, it's almost like we're expected to hate them, to be angry at them, and to attack them because they are wrong. That's why a Conservative and a Liberal can't talk with each other anymore in our country, right? It's as though you can't disagree about something and still love that other person.

Where does that come from? That isn't Biblical. That isn't God. I guess that leaves one option, doesn't it? It's Satan. The devil works in our hearts at times so that we don't rebuke our brother or sister in Christ in love. Sometimes we're the older brother in

that book we're reading and we think "God, you shouldn't bring that younger brother back. They're terrible! I'm good. They're terrible! I'm good." That isn't love.

Would it have been loving for my highschool mate to have his friends say, "Stay there. I'd like a firsthand account of a hurricane." That wouldn't be love. It isn't love for you to say "I'm not going to tell someone about their sin because, well, oh, hey, wait pastor. Wait a minute. You're skipping over the Romans passage. Romans passage, top of the next page there. Take a look at it. It says 'Love does no harm.' Pastor, if I tell that person what they're doing is sin, it's going to harm them." Really? So if their hair is on fire you're going to say "Hey, that's a good new look"? Aren't you going to say "Put out the fire"? Or do you want to not harm them by critiquing their choice of flammable hair gel?

Is it harmful to tell someone "If you continue down this path, it's going to lead you away from your God"? No! Isn't that love? "Let us love one another, for love comes from God." Isn't it love to say "Get out of the burning building"? Isn't it love to say "Get out of the way of the hurricane"? Isn't it love to say "Turn from your sins and live"? Isn't that what God said to Ezekiel in that second paragraph of our text?

"Ezekiel, say to the people, 'The Lord takes no delight in the death of the wicked, but rather turn to the Lord your God. Turn! Turn and live!' God isn't telling him to go warn this sin, because God is mad at the sinner. God is telling Ezekiel and you and me to go warn the sinner because he loves the sinner and he has no greater desire than that the sinner repent and be at peace with God through the life and death of Christ.

God has no greater desire for you. For all the times you have failed to be a watchman, for all the times you said someone else should be going and telling that person, for all those times, all those sins you have committed, Christ lived and died. He washes them away and through faith in Christ, through his body and blood, through the waters of your baptism, you are forgiven!

Now, because you are forgiven, these aren't just words. This is now to be a way of life for us, that we love others by at times doing the hard thing by telling them that what they are doing is going to lead them away from God. But, make sure you're loving as you do it.

What did God say? "Always be ready to give an answer for the hope that you have, but do so with gentleness and respect." ([1 Peter 3:15.](#)) When you start talking to someone else about their sins, they're going to say "Who are you to tell me? I know what you did in 8th grade. I know what you did last Tuesday." They're going to know your sins and they're going to say "Who are you to tell me?" How are you going to answer that? What answer are you going to give?

I would suggest this one. "I know I'm a sinner, too. This isn't my message to you. This is God's. God has said what you're doing is a sin. It doesn't matter if I say it's a sin or

not. God has said it's a sin and he wants you to turn to him and live. Because he loved you so much, he sent Jesus to die for you."

It is imperative that you and I, as Christians, go the extra mile to demonstrate love even when we're rebuking and admonishing, especially when we're being our brother's keeper, because they aren't going to see it as love at first. They're going to say you're judging, you're harsh, you're hypocritical, you're all of this stuff. You have to go the extra mile to show that you are loving. How are you going to do it?

I've tried different ways at different times and the one that I've come to that I've used most often today is to say to someone, "I have one goal in life. My one goal in life is not that the Lions play in a Super Bowl before I go to heaven. My one goal in life is that you're in heaven with me. I want other people to be in heaven with me. I know I'm going there because Jesus lived and died and took away my sins. He did it for you, too, but right now there is something that you're doing in your life that is putting a wedge between you and your God, and I'm worried that it's going to lead you to lose faith or to turn away from the faith and that you won't be in heaven with me. I desperately want you in heaven with me. That's why I'm telling you what you're doing is sin. Turn away from it and turn to God, because he loves you."

This is what we're called to do. We're called to be watchman. And we're going to do it because God has loved and forgiven us, so we want to love one another because of that love that has come from God to us that we want to love and say to these people, "Get out of the way of the hurricane." Amen.