



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 29, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

21st Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Isaiah 25:6-9](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 23](#)

Second Lesson: [Philippians 4:4-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 22:1-14](#)

Sermon Text: [Isaiah 25:6-9](#)

Our God Invites Unworthy Sinners to Participate in His Blessing

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's a fascinating statement, I think, in one of the introductions to one of the readings that is in the Service Folder. It says something to the effect that the minimum standard requirement for entering heaven is perfection. That's a Biblical statement. God says, "**Be holy because I, the Lord your God, am holy.**" ([Leviticus 19:2.](#)) He says to be perfect. Jesus said, "**Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.**" ([Matthew 5:48.](#)) God demands perfection. So to get into this banquet on this mountain that Isaiah is talking about, you have to be absolutely perfect.

Think about what "perfect" means. Put it in football terms for a minute. Just think about it in football terms for a minute. I suppose you could say last week the Lions played a perfect game, right? They didn't lose a yard. They didn't give up a point. They didn't play. They had a bye. This is as perfect as they've been this year, right? Perfect is kind of relative then, right? Is that how it works with God? Or in football, you talk about the perfect season, the 1972 Dolphins. Undefeated. The perfect season. That's what they always call it, right?

Where I grew up, the Michigan Lutheran Seminary was in Saginaw and right down the road was Arthur Hill High. It's a public high school. It's a big, big high school. That's actually where my mom had graduated from. We used to get into stupid high school shouting matches with the students at times, back and forth between the two schools. You know how dumb kids can be. That's what we did. But I always had a lot of respect for Arthur Hill in this sense. Before I got into high school, they had a football team that made the 1972 Dolphin season look kind of sad by comparison. They had a perfect season. They were undefeated. The last game of the year, the question wasn't, are they going to win the game? They hadn't given up a point the whole year. Their defense kept everyone from scoring. So the last game of the year...I remember

listening to it on the radio when I was really little...the question was (we were driving in the car someplace), the question was not, are they going to win? That was a foregone conclusion. Are they going to give up a point? That's more perfect than the Dolphins, then, right? They didn't give up a point.

What happens now if another team comes along and they don't give up a yard the whole season? Or every time the other team snaps the ball they get a safety? You can keep taking perfect out farther and farther in that sense, can't you? There is no definite perfect when it comes to the perfect football season.

My question to you would be, is God that way? *God can't really be serious about you having to be absolutely perfect? He just wants you to do your best. He just wants you to try hard and do better than somebody else, doesn't he? I mean, that's absolutely ridiculous that God would expect you to be absolutely perfect.* That's exactly what God demands of us.

This has a ton of implications for what we're looking at here. When we say our God invites unworthy people to participate in all of his blessings, the first person that is unworthy that you and I should think of should be ourselves, right? We aren't perfect. We aren't close to perfect. **"Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect"**? I can't see perfect from where I live. I don't know about you. So when we start thinking about those who are unworthy of it, we should think about ourselves. But because we are imperfect, most often we think about someone else.

This is why I think that book The Prodigal God has been an incredible blessing to me, because it's shown me where I have been that idiot that looks down my nose at someone else that's caught up in a sin because I don't think I'd be caught up in it. I'm so busy doing good and being good, I'm good-ing myself all the way to hell because I stop relying then on Jesus and I start relying more on myself. Read the book. It's fascinating. The lostness of being good—it's a very real thing.

We have to start with this recognition that we shouldn't get into this banquet, with this rich feast and the choicest wine. It sounds like a banquet I want to be at. Rich food, that sounds great, right? This banquet God is talking about is the dessert table all the time and none of the calories. This is perfect, right? This is the kind of thing we'd like. What's your favorite time of the day? As a kid, probably recess, right? Mine was always lunch and supper and breakfast. It was always eating. It's the best time of the day. Unless you're doing the cooking, right? Then it's not the greatest time of the day. But how about if someone else does the cooking, then is it the best time of the day? You could go to Van Abel's and get fish on Fridays. You can't move when you walk away from the table, but is that the best time of the day? Sure it is, until you get up there and they give you the bill and you have to pull out the money to pay for it, right? It's still alright, but you still have to pay for it.

Look at this feast! Someone else has done the cooking and someone else has paid the price, and you enjoy the benefits even though you don't deserve it, even though you

absolutely and positively shouldn't come in because there is a shroud that enfolds you. Isn't that what he said in there? "...**the shroud that enfolds all peoples...**" [Romans 4 or 5](#), one of the two—read them both, they're good—[Romans 4 or 5](#), one of the two, it says, "**Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all people, because all sinned...**" ([Romans 5:12](#)). We're born in original sin and that original sin means we are worthy of death, not physical death, not the cemetery, but eternal death in hell. This is what we are worthy of. This is the shroud that enfolds us.

But you see, the One who cooked the meal, the One who paid for the meal removed the shroud that enfolds us. Isn't that what it says there in Isaiah 25? For this banquet, EVERYONE can come. The people we think are worthy of it, the people we don't think are worthy of it, because none of us are worthy of it except those who can say God is our salvation, we trusted in him, and he saved us. Isn't that the end of Isaiah 25 there? Through faith in Christ, the perfection of Jesus, who lived perfectly, cooked the perfect life up for you and for me and for the whole world, it's credited to us.

He endured the death and agony of hell on the cross which our sins deserved, so now that shroud that covered us, eternal death in hell, has been ripped to shreds. Just like when Jesus died on the cross. Do you remember what happened? Do you remember in the temple, between the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place, the curtain was split in two? Christ destroyed the shroud that separated us from God. So now we are worthy to go to this banquet.

Look at what the people said there at the end. They said "**Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us.**" It's not about them. It's about God. This is what it is for God's people. We aren't worthy. We are completely unworthy. So why in the world would we ever, EVER look down our nose at someone else and say "What are you doing here in church? You shouldn't be here." We shouldn't ever, EVER do that if we understand how unworthy we are. But the problem is we're still sinners and sinners, like we talked about before church, sinners do what they are. They sin.

Sometimes we sin this way against each other and we are the elder son. We think we're better than someone else. We need to open our eyes and see that in ourselves, that it is sin and then see that it is also a sin that is a shroud that Christ shredded and rejoice in the forgiveness he gives us. Then we can start doing now what we are, because now we are also a little Christ and we can start doing what we are and look at how we can be more loving, more welcoming and that we see the one thing that is really important is not whether or not someone is keeping their kids behaving in the back of church or they're annoying you because the kid is playing with a hymnal or something. That's not the important thing. The important thing is, are you and you and you and you going to be in heaven, because I know I'm going to be there. Not because I'm great, but because God is great.

The only thing that matters is I want more people there with me. I would think you and I would think the same way on that, wouldn't we? It should thrill us to death when we

see people getting closer to God. We should get off our high horses and just throw our arms around them and say *I'm really happy to see you because I've got nothing in the world that I want more than to see more people in heaven, because the meal looks pretty good.* Amen.