



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 5, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

The Festival of Reformation

First Lesson: [2 Kings 22:1-11; 23:1-3](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 85](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 2:1-14](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 8:31-36](#)

Sermon Text: [Jeremiah 23:1-6](#)

By Scripture Alone

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.

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, which brings you peace, is yours through the work of the Holy Spirit in your heart. Amen.

The Word of God we are going to look at today as we consider how it's **By Scripture Alone**, Scripture alone is the authority in spiritual matters, is from the weeping prophet, Jeremiah. [Jeremiah 23:1-6](#), on page 5 of your Service Folder. As I read this to you, think about how God feels towards these shepherds he is talking about.

23 "Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!" declares the Lord. ² Therefore this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: "Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done," declares the Lord. ³ "I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. ⁴ I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing," declares the Lord.

*⁵ "The days are coming," declares the Lord,
"when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch,
a King who will reign wisely
and do what is just and right in the land.*

*⁶ In his days Judah will be saved
and Israel will live in safety.
This is the name by which he will be called:
The Lord Our Righteous Savior.*

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

I asked you to think about what God's attitude is towards these shepherds he is addressing at the start, and once you understand he is not riding a horse and saying "Whoa," as in *slow down horse*, but he says "Woe," as in *God's wrath is coming on you because you're not doing what I called you to do*, you get the feeling he is kind of upset, right? He's going to punish them. He is going to have bad things for them.

Who are these shepherds? These shepherds are the kings. Right before this, Jeremiah had just spoken God's wrath on the kings that followed Good King Josiah. The kings before Good King Josiah had led the people away, and so much so that the Book of the Law was lost in their presence. They read it and the king tore his robe. He was just torn apart because they hadn't been doing what God wanted them to do. There was a famine of the Word in the land because of the kings, the shepherds that were there before him.

Then, after Good King Josiah, there came a couple more kings that also led to a famine of the Word of God in the land. So God says, "Woe to you! I'm going to do this. I'm going to do this. I'm going to do that." When you understand "Woe" means *God is upset*, it's God's wrath.

It's kind of like when I'm talking with my Confirmation Class kids and they're out in outer space, just floating around someplace. I tell them "Start paying attention or I'm going to throw my shoe at you and I'm not going to take my foot out of it." That's just me talking smart. I've never thrown a shoe at anyone yet. I never will. But don't tell them.

God is not just talking smart, right? When he said, "My wrath is going to come on you," that's what happened during the time of the weeping prophet, Jeremiah. Jerusalem fell. The temple was destroyed. Why? Because there was a famine of the Word of the land because these kings, the shepherds that were supposed to shepherd the flock like David did, by pointing people to God's promises, to his love, to his forgiveness - all those things that we read in the Psalms earlier today - they didn't do it. When they were threatened, they didn't say "**God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble**," like [Psalm 46](#) says. Instead they made political alliances with this king and that king against this king and that king. They relied on their own knowledge and their own understanding. They didn't put their trust in the Lord. And WOE was the result. It's always the result when there is a famine of God's Word among God's people. When God's people are looking in some other direction besides at the Word of God, it never ends well for God's people. That's the course of the history of the Christian church. Those kings were unfaithful.

The time of the Reformation: One of the things I've enjoyed most about this year of the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation is the time we've spent together as a group of Christians, reading some of these books about the Reformation, talking about them, having the video-based Bible study where we looked at some of these things and

talked about them. One of the things that has stuck with me, and really struck me, is that at the time of Luther, the emperor was Charles V. He was a son of the church. He loved the church desperately. I find that amazing because the pope had plotted and manipulated to try to get someone else to be king instead of Charles, because he didn't want Charles. But when Charles was elected to be the next emperor and when he came into power as a child of the church, the pope said Luther was a heretic. Charles didn't want to hear what Scripture said. He just said, "The pope said so. The church says so. Therefore, he is a heretic."

I'm amazed at Charles because he worked so hard to try to do what he thought was right, but he was messed up. Why was he messed up? Because there was a famine of the Word in his life. He stopped at those who said "This is what the Word says," but he never got to what the Word itself actually really said. He trusted in those people. He trusted the pope. He trusted the church.

Charles ended up retiring from being emperor. Can you imagine retiring from being emperor? Usually emperors die or they're killed. He retired and went and lived in a monastery because he loved his church so much. You can love something and still be wrong when there is a famine of the Word in your life. In Charles' case, there was.

Luther was called before the emperor, Emperor Charles, at the Diet of Worms, in Worms, Germany. The cardinal, the pope's representative, the emperor's representatives said to Luther, "Are these pamphlets on this table, these books, these pamphlets, are these your writings?" "Yes." There was no debate about what was written in there. The next question wasn't *Defend yourself from Scripture*. The next question wasn't *Which part are you willing to recant*. It was "Do you take them all back?" He needed to take them all back because the church of the day said he was a heretic. There was no debating what Scripture actually said. If the church spoke, that settled the matter. There was a famine of the Word in the land. They didn't go back. They were shepherding with someone else besides the authority of Scripture.

So Luther asked for a day before he would give an answer. Why did he ask for a day? Do you think he was kind of scared? I think so. I don't know if you're familiar with Jan Hus. Jan Hus had said some of these same exact things about Scripture as the authority and not councils or not popes. Do you know what happened to Jan Hus? Did you ever have a goldfish when you were a kid? Did you sprinkle goldfish food on top of the water and see the fish come up and eat it? That was Jan Hus. He was burned at the stake and his ashes were spread in a river. He became fish food. So for Luther to say, "I'm not going to recant these books," in his eyes, he thought, "I'm going to be fish food. I'm going to be killed."

He sought the consolation and the comfort of his brothers in Christ. Then the next day, the same question came. "Are these your books?" "Yes." "Do you take them back?" "Yes, if you show me from Scripture where I am wrong. If you can't show me from Scripture where I am wrong, I'm not recanting anything because popes and councils have been shown to be in error and contradict each other. Scripture has never been

shown to be in error. This is what Scripture says and if I am wrong, I will recant all of it. But if it's not, I can't take any of it back because Scripture alone is the authority in spiritual matters."

If you know the rest of the story, as he was going back, he was kidnaped. I have to think for a moment he probably thought he was about to die. But he hid out in the castle for awhile. But that's for another day.

When there is a famine of the Word in the land, people can do things out of what they think is right for God, but they're wrong because they don't know what God has said. We don't want to listen to what someone else says God has said. We want to listen to what God has said.

This is the one thing that I say to the kids all the time in class. "Thirty years from now, I don't want you to say to your kids, 'This is what Pastor Ott taught me when I was in Confirmation class.'" Pastor Ott is a sinner. Pastor Ott can be a nut job. Pastor Ott can go nuts. Pastor Ott can teach false doctrine. But if you say "This is what Scripture says," you've always got something to stand on. To be honest, it drives me nuts when people tell me *Pastor So-and-So or Teacher So-and-So taught me this*. I don't care what they taught you. Show me in Scripture because any teacher can be full of errors, but the sword of the Spirit, the sword of the Spirit, the weapon God has given us to use is the Word of God. Not to talk about what someone else said about the Word of God, but talk about the Word of God.

When I ask the kids a question in Confirmation class, I'll say, "Okay, read this passage." We read it together. "On the basis of this passage, tell me what God is saying about this or that." I don't know how many times they'll give me a good answer, a correct answer even, but it has nothing to do with the passage that we read. They aren't picking up the sword of the Spirit and swinging it, they're just saying what they learned from some other place. Even if it's correct, that's not as solid as picking up what that portion of God's Word says and swinging the sword.

Now, we're Lutheran Christians, right? We're built on this Sola, Scripture alone. So WE do this. It's those people outside those walls that are terrible, right? They're the problem, not us, because we love Scripture and we dig into Scripture, right?

I know of a Lutheran church that the Lord had given a new pastor to. This new pastor had a reputation for teaching a lot of Bible studies. A couple members were discussing this after worship service one day and they said, "I hear the new guy coming likes a lot of Bible classes." The other one, in the true spirit of Sola Scriptura said, "We'll have to break him of that." That doesn't sound like the spirit of Scripture alone as the authority, does it? That sounds like *I was taught something before. I know what I was taught. Leave me alone. I know what I was taught. I don't want to dig more into Scripture*. That might sound like faithfulness, but look at where it got Charles V.

The sword of the Spirit that God has given you and me to swing is the Word of God. We have the opportunities. We have the ability to grow in knowledge of it, on our own and with others, but that's what we're called to do. If we truly believe IT is the authority, then that's what we want to dig into because here's what we find when we dig into it. When we dig into the Scriptures, here is what we're going to find.

Let's say you're convicted that you don't love Scripture the way you should. You don't use Scripture the way you should. You are much more comfortable just being a little lazy and not digging in on your own and *I'm just trusting what the guy said up in front of church because he's got a gown. He has to be right. He's wearing a gown. He has to be correct.* And now you understand that isn't right. Maybe you're feeling guilt over *I don't know Scripture the way I should. I've had every opportunity to learn it and I don't know it.* Or maybe you're struggling in some other area of your life, with guilt over some other sin that you're caught up in. This is what these things are - they're sins. They're things that separate us from our God. When the sin separates us from our God, the devil comes in and he says, "You aren't a good Christian. You screwed up here. You screwed up there. You tripped up there. Man, you fell down so far into that hole there that you can't hardly see the daylight anymore. God can't love you anymore." The devil is going to do that, and the only thing that we've got to fight back with is the sword of the Spirit, for ourselves and for others that are caught up in this trap of Satan. That's when we can pick up the sword of the Spirit that I read to you. For God promised us, because there has been a famine of the Word in the land, and at times by the doing of God's own people, God would fix the problem. God would send a Righteous Branch, a King who will rule wisely and do what is right in the land. He will shepherd them with his truth. **This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.**

This is God's answer to your sin - the Righteous Branch that is Jesus Christ. He loved the Word of God at all times. He lived the Word of God at all times. *Yeah, yeah, I know he wrote the Word of God, so it has to be easier for him, right?* But in his human nature, he didn't constantly use his full and divine power and glory. He sat at the feet of those teachers when he was 12 years old in the temple and asked questions and grew in knowledge and stature in his human will, for YOU. He did it perfectly because God demands that you be perfect.

When he was doing the work that he was sent to do, he didn't do it as he thought best. He said, "I am here to carry out my Father's will." And he did THAT perfectly, in your place, which involved the message of the sword of the Spirit, the cross. Dying for the guilt of your sins. Dying because he loves you so desperately and he wants you to know that HE did what you couldn't do. He paid the price of the punishment sin deserved. He paid the price of perfection that God demands of you. He loves you.

So when Satan comes and tells you that your God can't love you, you pick up the sword of this Word of God and you start swinging it for all your worth. You chase him out of your life. Then when you see people struggling with guilt or something else, you pick up the sword of the Spirit and you go to work and bat for them. You tell them about how

God loves them. You tell them *There is NO doubt that God loves you, no matter who you are or what you've done. He loved you to death on a cross. He loves you to live with you now.*

If you and I have a famine of the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God, in our lives, we're going to cheat ourselves out of that peace and we're going to cheat the people around us out of that peace. I've done it in the past. So have you. I don't want to do it in the future. And I hope you don't either. So the answer is to go forward in the forgiveness of Christ and get better at swinging the sword of the Spirit because our God loves us SO much. Amen.