



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 26, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

Reformation 500 - #2 of 4 - Christ the King Sunday

First Lesson: [Isaiah 45:5, 6, 18-25](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 98](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 3:19-24](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 14:1-6](#)

Sermon Text: [Acts 4:1-12](#)

In Christ 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.

In Christ, the world's only Savior, dear Christian friends:

What's in a name? Have you ever noticed how sometimes a name can contain and evoke visceral emotions in us? Some of you, you use a politician's name, some of you, you use a different politician's name, and it evokes a visceral response in you to your very core, right?

I see that in politics. I understand it. But it shows up in other places of our life. I experienced one of them yesterday. I heard a name spoken with visceral emotion and vile, vile as they said, "We've been O'Korn-ed again!" Did you ever hear that before? Yesterday, I and 113,000 of my closest friends were at the big house in Ann Arbor, Michigan. We were at the football game. Michigan against some other team. Michigan played a really good game. I expected that other team to blow them out. They played a pretty good game. But what really sunk the Wolverines was their quarterback. The quarterback, as a freshman, started for the University of Houston. He had a pretty good year. Something happened and he lost the job. He later transferred to Michigan. He is now a fifth-year senior. He started the year as #2 on the depth chart. The starting quarterback got hurt. And here he is, his last game as a college player. His parents are there. They walk him onto the field for Parents' Day, Senior Day, and this and that. He doesn't have a very good game. If he could have thrown the ball to people that were wide open, they would have won the game.

But he didn't. To be honest. I felt bad for him because there were some people behind me that were loud and they used his name over and over as a visceral expression of disgust. Before the game started, "We're going to get O'Korn-ed today" I heard. When he threw the last interception when he had two guys wide open, he threw it 15 yards over their heads, they said "We got O'Korn-ed." His name became a way to express this visceral emotion. I felt bad for the guy. Did I want him to complete the passes?

Sure. But do you think he got up that morning thinking, *Hey, I sure hope I can throw an interception that loses the game?* Of course not! Those things happen. Yet, I felt bad for him because that's how this guy that was behind me was expressing his frustration.

It really shouldn't surprise me because I bet the Sadducees had the same visceral emotion every time they heard the name Jesus. In fact today, don't a lot of people use the name Jesus to viscerally express a visceral emotion? It's not a positive one. In fact, that guy behind me that was a complete and absolute idiot, he used my Savior's name an awful lot yesterday in the same way he used John O'Korn's.

What's in a name? To the Sadducees, the name Jesus, I suppose, was a lot like that guy behind me who used John O'Korn's name. It brought up a lot of emotions that were not positive to the Sadducees.

Who were the Sadducees? I don't know if you remember. They came from within the priests. They came to become the priests that became kind of like a dominant subculture within the priests. All the high priests came from them until under Herod they lost some of their power because Herod just removed and put people that he wanted as he saw fit. They were a group that were very religious, very zealous, and they thought their teaching was correct and others were wrong. But their teaching was marked by denying certain truths in the Bible. They didn't believe angels existed. They just thought that was something made up. They also denied the Resurrection. You're here on earth, you live, you die, and that was it. I don't know what the purpose of their teaching of that would be, but they were very zealous about it. *You do this and you do that because this is what we're supposed to do. This is our tradition. This is what we've always done.*

So you could understand they didn't like the name Jesus. These are the guys that had put the guards at the tomb of Jesus because they had heard him talk about rising from the dead and they believed there was no resurrection and they didn't want anything to do with a resurrection, so they bribed their own guards, who talked about an angel and about an earthquake and an empty tomb, to make up a different story and deny the Resurrection.

In [Acts 3](#), what takes place is that Peter heals a man that was born lame (you got that from what I read to you) in the name of Jesus. Then he starts explaining to the people that were there that he did this in the name of Jesus, who was killed, but who was raised from the dead. So this talk about the Resurrection, the Sadducees jumped in and stopped it right then and there. They didn't believe in the Resurrection. They didn't want people talking about the Resurrection. They had the authority to teach. The apostles were teaching something different. It was about Jesus and about Resurrection. They had a visceral gut reaction to that and said, "Seize him! Throw him in jail. We'll deal with him tomorrow." You can kind of hear it in the question they asked Peter, right?

“In whose name did you do this?” They aren’t going to call it a miracle. They’re kind of implying that it’s something that is done by an evil spirit, an evil name, something wicked, something anti-God, not something from God, because they don’t agree with it. So they won’t even say it’s a miracle that a man who was lame, who was standing there among them (they couldn’t deny it) was now **STANDING** there among them. He was no longer lame. “By what name did you do this?” So Peter responds.

Think for a moment about Peter. What do you know about Peter? He had athlete’s tongue because his foot was always in his mouth, right? Denier. “I don’t know the man. May I rot in hell. I don’t know who you’re talking about.” (See [Matthew 26:69-75](#).) How is Peter going to respond? He has dropped the ball in other places. He had a bad attitude at times, didn’t he? “All these other guys may deny you, Lord, but I never will.” (See [Matthew 26:31-35](#).) He was a little full of himself. He thought too much of himself and then crashed horribly to the ground when he denied Jesus.

Now here comes another chance. What is he going to do? It’s not a fire in the courtyard. What is he going to do? Is he going to deny Jesus again? This time, he just got out of prison, right? He got thrown into jail the night before. He had spent the night in jail. I’m going to guess it wasn’t all that comfortable. I don’t know. The prospect of standing up and talking about Jesus again would seem to be more jail. Possibly even the same death that Jesus experienced. Who knows? What is he going to do?

Notice the difference. Did you catch that in what it said at the start of that paragraph in your Service Folder? “**Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them:...**” It’s a new Peter. It’s a different Peter. It’s a Peter filled with the Spirit. He stands up and says, “Hey, if you guys are going to get all wound up and upset because someone who was born lame is now healed, that’s on you, but I’m telling you, it was by the name of Jesus, the Messiah (Jesus Christ; Jesus, the promised Savior from the Old Testament; Jesus, Anointed One), it was in his name that this miracle was done. Remember, he is the guy that you guys killed but God raised from the dead. He is the guy they talked about in Psalm 118, ‘the stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.’ The Lord has done this. And it is marvelous in our eyes. That’s whose name we did this in. And don’t forget this. There is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved.” Salvation deliverance.

It’s a play on words because the word “heal” has the same root, *this man was healed* has the same root as the word “salvation.” Just like this man was healed from his physical things, Jesus healed the whole world from their spiritual sickness. He removed the guilt of their sin. That’s what he’s saying.

Think of how hard that must have been for him. Think of the temptation to deny Jesus, to keep his mouth shut, to rationalize it and say *You know, if I don’t talk about Jesus now, I can go over there and talk to more people about Jesus.* So how did he do it? Well, he was filled with the Holy Spirit. I think he also remembered what Jesus had said to him. “The day is going to come when you’re going to be brought before councils, rulers, authorities, synagogues, kings, things like that, and don’t worry. When

that day comes, the Spirit will give you the words to speak.” ([Luke 12:11-12](#).) And that’s what happened. The temptation was there to deny the name of Jesus, to point people at something else, but he didn’t do it. He pointed them at Jesus, and he pointed them at Jesus as clearly as you possibly could do.

This is something the devil is always trying to do. He’s trying to get us to deny Jesus and point at something other than Jesus. He’s constantly doing it. He constantly wants us to take our eyes off Jesus and put them on something else, our own cost to live for Jesus, or whatever it might be.

It was no different in the time of the Reformation. We talked about that. As we celebrate the guy who wrote “A Mighty Fortress,” who God used to wield that trusty shield and weapon, the Word of our God, that Luther stood before princes and kings and authorities and was asked, “Are these your words? Are you going to recant them?” Scripture said it. They pointed to Jesus. He wasn’t going to recant. He wasn’t going to take any of them back and if he would die, he would die.

But how thankful we can be that God has given us people like Peter, and God has given us people like Luther, to point us to **Christ Alone** as the answer to our sins. As you see, in Luther’s day, what they were pointing at were things like indulgences. We’ve talked about that. We talked about your own works. That’s one of the things they said. *Jesus died for you, but you also have to do this, this and this to pay for your sins or to have comfort and confidence.* And relics. *Go see that bone of Peter, or whatever, and then you’ll get years off of the temporal punishment of your sins in purgatory.* All these kinds of things were all things that were pointing you away from Jesus and to something you could do or something that you could achieve.

Luther came and said they’re all wrong. It’s **Christ Alone**. God’s grace is revealed to us **In Christ Alone**. Salvation comes by faith **In Christ Alone**. Scripture is the authority because it’s the Word of Christ. All these things that we are blessed by. You see what you can do when you focus on **Christ Alone**.

So the question you and I have to ask ourselves today is, how about us? Where is the devil tempting us to look at something besides **Christ Alone**? Where is he tempting us to find our confidence or our comfort? Or where is he tempting us to deny **Christ Alone**? Those are valid questions for us to ask. Yes, we’re the inheritors of Luther’s heritage, but that doesn’t mean the devil has stopped attacking us. It doesn’t mean that we always win the battle of his attacks, does it?

I think sometimes we say things that sound really good and godly, and it sounds kind of close to the Gospel, but it’s really not the Gospel. It really points us to finding our comfort in something besides Christ. What I’m thinking of is this. Have you ever heard of someone who died and as people talk about them, they say, “If ever anyone is in heaven, she certainly is because she was such a wonderful, loving person”? Is that the Gospel? Not really. If you’d say she was a wonderful loving person because she lived her faith in her Savior, now you’re talking about Jesus, right? But if you don’t add that

explanation, if the person that you're talking to doesn't believe in Jesus, they aren't hearing that at all, are they? What are they hearing? You get to heaven by being good and by doing good.

I'm assuming you're all here today because you believe Jesus is the way and the truth and the life, and that no one comes to the Father except through him. I think you're here because you believe that, but do we at times say things that give to someone else the impression that *it's one fork in the road, but here's another one. Do good and be good.* At times maybe we have.

Or are we tempted to deny Christ flat out as though he's not the only way to heaven? It's a popular thing right now to say that *All roads lead to the same place. It doesn't really matter which god you believe in, as long as you believe in some god and do good and be good, you'll get to heaven.* It sounds loving. But it's not. Jesus is pretty clear. He's the only way to heaven. God was pretty clear. **"I am the LORD, and there is no other."** If we give someone the impression that there are other things, then we are denying Christ and we're saying there is something besides **Christ Alone** that saves.

Again, I believe that you believe Jesus is the only way to heaven. But I have to ask you the question, do you ever deny that? If someone else is looking at another way to heaven, if someone else is talking about their confidence and they've always done good or been good or tried hard, if someone is there on their deathbed and they say "I've always done my best. I sure hope the Lord will take me to heaven," and you don't stop them and point them to Jesus, haven't you in essence denied Christ?

If Jesus is the only way to heaven, and he is, and you know someone that doesn't believe in Jesus, have you told them about Jesus? If you haven't, isn't it the same thing as denying that he is the only way to heaven?

Here's the good news. Our God is so desperate to share his good news with us that he gives us the Word, he gives us Baptism, and today he also gives us his body and blood in, with and under the bread and the wine, and he tells us "This takes away every sin of every time you have denied me. This takes away the sin of every time you have looked at something else for your comfort or your confidence. This takes away the sin of every time that you have acted as though I am not the only way to heaven. I love you and I forgive you because of my perfect life and my death in your place." (See [Matthew 26:17-30](#).) That's what our God is saying to you. In his Word, he has taught you that he is the only way to heaven. His Word is that sword. The sword of God is the Word of God, as it says in Ephesians ([Ephesians 6:17](#)). He has swung that sword to work faith in your heart and to strengthen your faith and to increase your faith.

The question now becomes, for you and for me, forgiven by our God and loved by our God, how are we going to leave this place and go and swing the sword of the Spirit? Who are we going to share Jesus with? Who are we going to encourage that is hurting

by telling them, “**In Christ Alone**, you are forgiven. **In Christ Alone**, you are loved. **In Christ Alone**, you have the strength to endure. **In Christ Alone**, you have someone bigger than you with you at all times.” Who are we going to share that message with?

Thank God it's been shared with you and me. Amen.