



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 31, 2017

Pastor Randy Ott

1st Sunday after Christmas

First Lesson: [Isaiah 45:20-25](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 111](#)

Second Lesson: [Colossians 3:12-17](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 2:25-40](#)

Sermon Text: [Colossians 3:12-17](#)

Continue to Wear Your Christmas Clothes

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, dear fellow redeemed:

It's kind of fun at the children's program on Christmas Eve Day to see the kids come in some of their nice new clothes. Nice new dresses the little girls are wearing. Some of the young men were even wearing ties. That was interesting. I don't see a lot of them wearing ties. But the one thing you notice when they are wearing stuff like that is like the Friday of the Christmas program on the last day of school, I went over to school to walk around all the rooms because they had food in every room. So I went over to take some of their food. The kids that wore the ties had already taken them off. They couldn't stand to wear a tie for another minute. They had taken it off and wrapped it around their head like a bandana or something, I don't know. It just made me kind of smile about how they couldn't wait to get out of those clothes.

I suppose a lot of times we're told to get out of our good clothes right away because otherwise we're going to do stupid stuff in them like I did when I was a kid. I honestly don't remember what service it was for, but there was a service in the middle of the week and we were going to church for some special service. I got in all my good church clothes that mom had out for me. I put on my church clothes and there was a little time to kill before we went up for the service. So I went outside, found some kids in the neighborhood, and we ended up down the road chasing the hay wagon while they were chopping hay. That probably wasn't the best decision I've ever made in my life. I became convinced of that when I got home and my mother discovered what I looked like and we had to leave late for church because I had to change clothes. I couldn't go to church with those clothes anymore.

You can understand that, right? I understand that. So it's kind of interesting to think about our Christmas clothes. Not just our good new dress or a nice tie or nice clothes that we wear to church, but the Christmas clothes that God came to earth for. That's

what he's talking about in Colossians today. These aren't clothes that we only put on when we are coming to celebrate Christmas. These are clothes God wants us to wear every single day of the year, where we put into practice and live what Jesus came to earth to give us.

Look at what he says in here. **...clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** All the things that come so naturally to us, right? These things are hard for us. It's not in my nature to be patient. It's not in my nature to be kind or gentle or any of these things. But this is what Christmas brings us. This is what Christmas is all about. He says **...over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.**

At this time of the year, if you watch Hallmark movies like someone's spouse makes someone watch, you see a lot of ideas about what Christmas is about. It's a magical time where Santa performs magic. It's where elves perform magic. It's time for family. It's time for remembering the past and all these other things. They're all nice, sentimental things in their place, but they aren't really the message of Christmas. The message of Christmas is that word, isn't it? Love?

God loved you so much that he left heaven to come to earth, born in a manger, to be perfect in your place, to die as the punishment for your sins. This is the love he has for you! His love that has been poured out onto you, unearned, undeserved, unmerited, he tells you to put THAT love on as you go about every day of your life and live in response to God's Christmas love. It shows up in gentleness, kindness, patience, humility, all those things that he mentions. It's the perfect love that God has for us that he wants us to show to one another. These are our Christmas clothes he wants us to wear every day of the year, not just when we're sitting here in church, but when we go out. This is his desire. This is his plan. This is his goal.

It's not always easy. Again, like I said, it's not natural. But the more we immerse ourselves in God's love for us in Christ, the better we get at it. The more we learn to love the way God loved us. By nature, our love is pretty self-centered. We hear these words about how God wants people to be gentle, kind, patient and all these things, and we probably think of someone else in our life that should be that way more towards us, right? That's how we are by nature. We're just so self-centered. Yes, God is talking to that person, but I can't control that person. I can only work on me. God is talking to ME about wearing these clothes every day of MY life. I need to work at being gentle, kind, patient and show compassion and love like God showed to me.

I keep going back to that book we read earlier this year, ***The Prodigal God***, about how in the Parable of what we call the Lost Son God shows such lavish love for the younger son who rebelled against him openly. And he shows incredible love to the older son that rebelled against him secretly, in his own heart, and served him faithfully, but for all the wrong reasons. Yet the father, as a picture of God, keeps loving him. Those who have sinned by being wayward and those who have sinned by doing the right thing for the wrong reasons God continually loves, and he wants us to love THAT way. Think of

how hard it is to do. There are a lot of people that have hurt you that it's hard to say you can forgive as the Lord forgave you. But that's what God calls me to do.

Here is the other truth. The more that you and I seek to put on these kinds of clothes and live in them every day, there are going to be times when we are going to get even messier than I was that day long ago that I've repressed. We're going to be dirty and messy because sometimes people just aren't going to want this kind of love from us.

Notice in the second paragraph of what I read to you from Colossians, it talks about a way that we show this love. We let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly. We have the Word build us up through hymns and songs and through our study of the Word, through our focus on the Word, so that WE can love other people by gently, kindly, patiently, and passionately teaching and admonishing them. Notice how he connects that. Here's how we show that love.

God has called us to teach and admonish those who at one time professed their love for God and drifted away. Those who the community of believers is no longer an important thing to them. Those who think that what God says about something cultural, whatever it is, doesn't apply anymore. God has called us to teach and admonish them based on God's Word. At times, that's going to be messy. People are going to reject us. They're going to laugh at us.

Think about it. Think about it just for a minute. Simeon and Anna, we heard about them in the Gospel today. You probably think they are pretty neat people. Cool people. How do you think the people around them viewed Simeon and Anna?

Anna is an 84-year-old that was in the temple every day worshiping and praying and fasting and all that. Do you think there were people thinking she was nuts? She went around and told everyone that she met about this Jesus, that little day-old baby? Do you think she was met with a little bit of mocking or rejection? But do you think it stopped her?

Simeon, telling people that the Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he wouldn't die until he saw the Messiah? Do you think you wouldn't think he was a crackpot? Yet, what did he do? He taught. He admonished. He warned Mary and Joseph about, "This is the Savior. This is incredibly cool. But man, it is going to be hard for you. It's going to get messy."

It's the same thing for you. You may have loved ones that have wandered away from Jesus. It hurts you to your core. And you think someone should go and talk to them. Maybe you're even praying about it. I think God is telling us this morning that when you wear your Christmas clothes and live this every day of your life, you're the answer to your prayers. God has called YOU to do this.

Now, you may get messy. You may get rejected. You may have people laugh at you and think you're nuts. You should be used to it. You're Packer fans. But think about it.

You might think it's difficult to do, but it's not impossible. Impossible would be to give to God what he demands of you...perfection. That would be impossible. You could never do that. That's why Jesus came to earth. He did the impossible. He gave you the perfection he demands. Now for you to share that love with other people is hard, difficult at times, yes. I'm not going to tell you it isn't. But impossible? No. It's not impossible.

Your God has loved you with such an intense, fervent love that the more you focus on it and the more you live in it and rejoice in it and see it and every day, as you put that love on like your cloak, you'll be able to do it. God's Spirit will enable you to speak and to share God's Word gently, kindly, compassionately, like it said. Don't do it as though you're smug and arrogant and know it all, because you don't. None of us do. But do it because you love someone. And if they reject you, that's on them. But if you're going to wait for someone else to do what God has called you to do, then it's on you, right?

God puts so many opportunities in front of each of us to share the love of Christ. When we say "Lord, help me to see these opportunities. Not only help me to see them, help me to seize them," then God will help us put on those Christmas clothes every day of our lives and live with the love that can only come in his Spirit. Amen.