



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

January 21, 2018

Pastor Randy Ott

3rd Sunday after Epiphany

First Lesson: [1 Kings 19:19-21](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 37](#)

Second Lesson: [Acts 13:1-5](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 1:14-20](#)

Sermon Text: [Acts 13:1-5](#)

God's Glory is Revealed in Those He Calls to Serve

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:

Both last week in our readings and this week in our readings, we see God doing some incredible things as far as it goes to calling people to serve in the public ministry. Last week we had the young boy, Samuel, in the temple. God wakes him up a few times during the night to talk to him. That's pretty amazing. Then Nathanael under the tree and Jesus describing him before he had even seen him. Then today we have Jesus along the Sea of Galilee saying "...**follow me**," and they get up and they leave their business behind and go. We also have Elisha. He must have been pretty well-to-do to have twelve yoke of oxen that he was plowing with. The Lord must have been blessing the work he was doing. Yet when God calls him through Elijah to serve in the public ministry, he feeds the village with two of the oxen and he burns the plowing equipment to celebrate his call into ministry.

So as you listen to that, what two things are competing in your head? 1-God hasn't done anything that cool in my life! And 2-I'm sure glad he hasn't asked me to leave everything behind and go serve him! Are those kind of the competing thoughts that could run through your head when you look at God calling people to serve?

God still calls people to serve in the public ministry, the representative ministry, those that minister on behalf of us, like the pastors and the teachers, the public Gospel ministry. But he also calls each and every Christian to their private ministry. Ministry means "service." God has called you to serve. He has called you to "...**whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.**" [[1 Corinthians 10:31](#).] To serve Him. He has called you to "...**grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.**" [[2 Peter 3:18](#).] To serve yourself by growing in your knowledge of God. And he has

called you to “...as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.” [[Galatians 6:10](#).] He has called you to serve other people as well.

Today I want us to think a little bit about how God’s glory is revealed when he calls people like you and me to serve. Whether it’s in the public ministry or in our private ministry, whose glory is being revealed in our service? The answer is always God’s. It’s about God. It’s about telling other people who he is and what he has done and this incredible love that he has for us that sent his Son to die for our sins. It’s an incredible message, and one that he has asked us to share.

You might think to yourself, *Wait a minute! I’m no Elijah! I’m no Elisha! I’m no Paul! Paul! He’s one of the greatest missionaries ever! I’m no Paul!* We tend to look at ourselves and maybe at times like this downplay what we can do. Really? Paul’s ministry revealed Paul’s glory? Or Paul’s ministry revealed God’s glory? I think you have a few things up on Saul, right?

Remember Saul? He was persecuting the church. When Stephen was stoned in Jerusalem, he was there holding people’s coats so they could wind up and throw the stones harder to kill Stephen. [[Acts 7:54-60](#).] Okay, raise your hand. Any of you ever killed other Christians? Any of you ever enabled other people to kill other Christians? Any of you ever arrest Christians and throw them in jail? Come on. Don’t be shy. Raise your hand. No? God can work through Saul, why can’t he work through you?

Another guy that was mentioned there in Antioch. There were five of them there that were prophets and teachers. That meant there were a bunch of people there that were being taught the Word of God so that they could go and do their own private ministry. But the five guys that were publicly serving, public ministers, were listed for us in there. Saul was one of them. Barnabas. Simeon called Niger. And then there was a guy named Manaen, something like that. Did you notice who he grew up with? Herod the tetrarch.

Remember Herod the tetrarch? [[Mark 6:14-29](#).] Okay, raise your hand if you had a brother or a step-brother or whatever the relationship was between Manaen and Herod who got so drunk at his birthday party that he promised the girl that was dancing whatever she wanted and what she asked for was, well, all of a sudden John the Baptist’s head was on a silver platter among the party members. Any of you have a brother that did that?

God could reveal his glory through those guys? He revealed his glory through him as he taught in Antioch. He revealed his glory through all these people, because it’s God’s glory! Sometimes we think it’s about us. It’s not about our ability, how good we are with the English language, or our ability to present things and sway people to our opinion by our impeccable logic. If that’s what you’re going to go with, you’re going to fail. It’s all about God.

God reveals his glory in that he works through simple people like you and me. He works through called workers, the public ministers, to prepare every Christian to do their works of service. [Ephesians 4](#). Just read through it. He calls you the ligament in the body of Christ. And if you aren't serving the way God has called you to do, then the body of Christ is going through life with a blown ACL, and that's not good! So don't be saying "Well, there isn't anything I can do. I'm not those guys. I don't have the training." Well, you're called by God to be a witness. A witness tells what they know to be true. So your job is to tell what you know of to be true about Jesus.

Now, can you always learn more about Jesus? Certainly. That's why he gives us public ministers, prophets, and teachers, like at Antioch, or the pastors and teachers in our congregation so that we can share God's Word with you, to build you up, but so that you go do your private ministry. He will reveal HIS glory, not your glory, HIS glory as you take Jesus to other people and teach, admonish, encourage, rebuke, and all those one another passages that are throughout the New Testament.

And if you say, "I can't do that pastor. I don't have any gifts or abilities," do you understand you're calling God a liar? And really, is that where you want to start your defense? "God, you're a liar"? It's in Corinthians. He says it to every Christian, "**...to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.**"

[\[1 Corinthians 12:7.\]](#) The manifestation of the Spirit in the context of 1 Corinthians 12 there is spiritual gifts that God gives to every believer. Every believer has a spiritual gift or gifts to use to serve in the body of Christ. Someone else might have more gifts than you do. They might be better at it than you are at the gifts he has given you. That doesn't matter. God hasn't called you to say you can only serve in the kingdom if you are THE best. He has called you to serve in his kingdom with YOUR best abilities that he has given to you.

Think about it. When I say "Amen" today and you stand up and get done and we have the rest of the service and we have the final Benediction and you go out to the rest of your work week, your life, the people you are going to run into, think about all that. You're going to go to places that a pastor or teacher are never going to go. You're going to go see people and rub elbows with people that I'll never see. So the ministry God has given you is to take Jesus to them when they need it. You're going to encounter some people that are struggling, that are fearful, that are worrying, that are facing physical problems, that are facing financial problems, that are facing all kinds of challenges in this world, and they need this encouragement that God still loves them and is with them no matter what they're going through. The proof is that Jesus lived and died in their place. YOU are the voice of God to them. As you speak to them and God works in their hearts, it's God's glory that is revealed. It's not yours.

He works through us at times when our knees are knocking and our palms are sweating and we think we're saying all the wrong words, but if we point people to Jesus, he works in their hearts. That's what reveals HIS glory.

The question I think for you and I to struggle with becomes, what are we willing to leave behind to carry out that task? I don't think God is asking you to kill some oxen and burn some plowing equipment. I doubt any of you have it. I don't think he's telling you to leave behind some nets and a boat. But what are you willing to maybe, MAYBE put on the line because you love your Lord? Maybe it's a friendship, that if you talk to someone else about Jesus you're not sure how they are going to react, so you don't encourage them or you don't point them to Jesus because you're valuing that friendship more than you're valuing your God at that point in time. We've all done it. There isn't a single one of us in here that hasn't done that. That's just what we do. We like to focus on ourselves and what it might cost us instead of focusing on our God and what he has done for us. When we do this, we have failed our God. We have sinned against our God.

This is the amazing thing about our God...the message that he has given us to share with others, he tells us first of all to share with our own hearts. "I love you. In Christ, you are forgiven for all the times you have failed me. In Christ, you are perfect in my eyes. In Christ, the sin has been washed away." His love for you is unshakable. Unfailing I think is the word we used earlier in the service. His love for us is unfailing! So cling to that and then live for God, because as you do it, God will reveal his glory through people like you and me. As amazing and hard to believe as that might be at times, that's his plan. So trust him, and live for him, because he lived and died for you first. Amen.