



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

February 4, 2018

Pastor Randy Ott

5th Sunday after Epiphany

First Lesson: [Job 7:1-7](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 103](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 8:28-30](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 1:29-39](#)

Sermon Text: [Romans 8:28-30](#)

God's Glory Is Revealed In Our Weakness

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:

You have an option. Let's say this choice was in your power. Which would you choose?

- A. To have God's glory revealed in your life like it was in Simon Peter's mother-in-law, where God healed her fever and took the sickness away and she just jumped right up and had at it?
- B. Or would you rather have his glory revealed by maybe letting you have a chronic illness, a disease, something you struggle with over and over?

It's your choice. Which do you want. A or B?

Anybody here choose B? Anybody? Anybody? You, or anybody? It's not how we think of as glory being revealed, is it? Weakness? It's not the American way. The American way is to reveal glory in strength, power, authority, not weakness. Yet this morning our God comes to us and makes to us this incredible promise, that his glory will be revealed in us as we struggle through on this side of heaven with all the different weaknesses that are going to come in our lives. All the different challenges. All the different worries. All the different anxieties. All the different struggles. As we look to him, he is going to reveal his glory at times not by removing those things, but by helping us endure them and continue to serve him.

Look at what it says at the start of what I read to you from Romans 8. **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him...** The word **know** there, it means to know because it's been revealed to you. There is a different word in the Greek that means to know by experience. I'm going to guess that you and I don't

know this by experience that God is going to make all things work for us at times. At times, because we're sinners, when we're going through difficulty or trouble, we say "God, why would you let this happen to me? I've served you. I've done this. I've done that. I'm always there at church. I get out there and go when the winds are 20-30 mph and the snow is blowing and I still get to church! Lord, look at all the other people that don't. You must owe me more than you owe them." Is that really where you want to live?

As Christians, we probably should know that karma isn't how God works. Karma: you do good and good comes to you; you do bad and bad comes to know. We know that's not how God works. As Christians, we know it, and we rejoice in it. But sometimes I think we buy into that lie and we think that because we've done this or that, God owes us something more. So when those difficulties and those struggles come in our lives, through a doctor's diagnosis, through a relationship that ends, through the loss of a loved one, at times we say "God, why would you let this happen to me? You owe me better."

He doesn't. There is no way in the world he owes you better. We'll look at that and we'll see that clearly. But this is something we have to know because he's told us. It has to be a matter of faith, because at times our senses, our emotions and everything in us is going to be saying "This isn't revealing God's glory." In fact, we're going to start buying the devil's lie that *If God were a God of love, he'd never let a child have cancer. If God were a God of love, he'd never let these terrible things happen in my life or in that person's life.* You've heard those things. You probably even thought those things from time to time.

But God's glory is not always revealed in the difficulties he removes from our lives. At times it is revealed in how he strengthens us to get through our weakness. How he makes everything work out for our eternal good, not our earthly happiness. But please also note, God never says he is going to make everything be good in our life. He says he is going to take even the bad things and work them out for good in our life, our eternal good, drawing us closer to him.

How? Bad things don't feel good as you are going through them. Bad things make you question everything. So how is he going to make it work out for your good? I suppose you could say the apostle Paul had the same struggle, right? He had a messenger from Satan he said, not a messenger from God, a messenger from Satan that was a thorn in his flesh. Some physical ailment that he struggled with. He said three times he pleaded with God to take it away. [[2 Corinthians 12:1-10.](#)] I don't think it was because Paul thought he deserved better, right? Paul was pretty clear. He said he was the worst of sinners. He had killed Christians because they were Christians. He viewed himself as the worst of sinners who had nothing to claim from God. [[1 Timothy 1:12-17.](#)] My guess is that his intentions were noble and that he wanted this removed so he thought he could be a more faithful missionary and take the Gospel to more people more effectively because this thorn in the flesh wouldn't be slowing him down, whatever it might have been.

But God's simple answer to Paul's plea was "No. **My grace is sufficient for you...** My grace is enough." God's love for you is enough to get you through it because God has promised, in love, that all things will work together for the good of those who love him.

So Paul came to the conclusion, "**...when I am weak, then I am strong.** So I'll boast all the more in my weakness." In his weakness, he had to learn to rely on God's strength. In God's strength, he could do more than he ever could in his own physical strength.

There is a real truth that we self-centered, sinful human beings need at times to get over ourselves. Our strength could never do what our weakness can do when we're relying on God. The problem is that we don't always rely on God. Sometimes we doubt God and challenge God.

So why should we believe that he is going to keep this promise, that he's going to make sure everything works out for our eternal good? Why believe it? Look at what Paul pointed us to in what I read to you from Romans. It says that God predestined us. He foreknew us. He predestined us. In Ephesians, Paul tells us that before the creation of the world, God knew those who would be his own. [[Ephesians 1:3-14.](#)] Before there was time, God knew you by name. He knew your sins. He knew your shortcomings. He knew your doubts. He knew the times that you would get mad at him. And he still loved you and sent Jesus for you. He knew all of these things about you. He knew you before time. He foreknew you and predestined you to be his own.

I remember asking, I think I was in 7th grade, and we were talking about God's election, predestination, and I asked my pastor, I raised my hand and said "Pastor, why in the world would God create the world if he knew we were all going to sin?" I don't remember what he said. But I've thought about that question over and over since, and the only thing I can come up with is his love. We don't deserve anything from him. It has to be about him. It's not about us. Look at us! Yet God not only foreknew us, not only predestined us, he called us. He sent the Gospel into our lives to learn of this message that even though we are sinners who should go to hell, he loved us enough to send his Son into the world.

He sends the Gospel through people that speak it to us. Maybe our mother read it to us as she held us on her lap. He gives us the Gospel through water and the Word, like he did for Asher today. He gives us his body and blood, in, with and under the bread and the wine to tell us, "I'm calling you and I'm keeping you in this faith because I love you, and this love for you is persistent and pervasive." This is our God.

Those he called, he also justified. This is how we know he's going to make all things work for our good. Not only did he call us to faith, in that faith he has declared us not guilty. This is what justified means. He declared us not guilty. We are guilty as sin. **...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...** [[Romans 3:23.](#)] That's not just the person next to you, in front of you, behind you. That's the person who is sitting in

your shoes. That's you! You're a sinner and yet he declared you not guilty. That's not karma. That's the exact opposite of karma, right? He gave you what you didn't deserve.

So now, the God who knew you before time, the God who knows you in time, the God who has declared you not guilty, now you're thinking, *You know what? You're just trifling with me and making my life miserable because you're mad at me.* Really?

Before time he knew you. Look at the last phrase in what I read to you in that paragraph. Those he justified, he also glorified? Isn't that an amazing phrase? I don't know about you, but when I look in the mirror, the first thought in my mind isn't glorious. I know my heart. I know the things I struggle with. I know I am declared not guilty through Christ and in his eyes, he sees me covered in Jesus' perfection, but my being glorified in this world is still imperfect, because of all the struggles we have and how often we fail our God. Yet the God who knew us before time is still also looking beyond time and seeing us right now at his side in heaven because he has done all of this for us.

Foreknew. Predestined. Called. Justified. Glorified. In his mind, it's an accomplished fact. We're already in heaven at his side because he's not bound by time like you and I are. He sees us completely and perfectly glorified. Before time and beyond time, his love is that perfect for us.

So that's why now I know, because he's told me this. I believe it, because his Spirit has worked faith in my heart. He is going to work all things for my good and that even as I struggle in my weakness to serve him and to serve others, he is going to take even the things I screw up and work them for my eternal good as I continue to look to him. That's my confidence. That can be your confidence. That's what God has done for you. That's what he desires to continue to do for you.

So don't make demands of him to do good for you as YOU see good. Let him do good as HE sees good. And let him take even the bad things in your life and work it out for your eternal good as it drives you closer to his love. That's where we'll all find our purpose. Amen.