



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

March 4, 2018

Pastor Randy Ott

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

First Lesson: [Exodus 20:1-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 69](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 8:1-10](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 2:13-22](#)

Sermon Text: [John 2:13-22](#)

### The Road to Redemption: Staying On Course

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.

Now is the time of God's favor. Now is the day of salvation. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Let's say you're driving a long way, say like eight hours. As you're driving along, you see one of those neat temporary signs that have the words that start with "D." Detour. Do you get all excited? *Hey, great! I get to see a new part of the boring plains of Minnesota.* I had that happen this last summer going on Highway 7. The detour took us up and around and added on 30-40 minutes to the trip. I don't know about you, but I find that really frustrating, annoying and irritating. I don't like those orange signs that say "Detour Ahead."

But I suppose there are some times I do - when you're halfway through the detour and you haven't seen one of those orange signs in awhile. You're 20 minutes into that 30-minute excursion and you still don't know that it's only a 30-minute excursion, you haven't seen one in awhile, and you start wondering, *Did I miss it? Am I going...? Is Canada ahead? What is going on?* Then you get kind of excited when you see one of those orange signs again that tells you you're still on the right track. Yes, it's going to take a little while. You went off course a little bit, but you're not completely off course. So I suppose there are times when those orange signs are very comforting and very nice.

As we gather together today on this 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent and continue to focus on **The Road To Redemption**, we see about **Staying On Course** and what God uses as those little orange detour signs to remind us to get back on the right course, to get back to the path that we're headed. It's his Word. He uses his Word to show us what to do and what not to do. He uses his Word to comfort us when we're troubled by our sins. He uses his Word to show us just how important it is that we aren't distracted by the things

of this life, or even the things that we use to worship God. He's really reminding us today, don't get distracted by the how and the what of worshiping God so that you lose your focus on God himself. It's all about Jesus. Those are words that have to remain true for us. Anything that causes our eyes to depart from Jesus and go to ourselves or to go to something else is something that is taking us off course. So at times we need another Christian, we need God himself speaking to us through his Word to show us this is what God wants for us. Get back on course. Stay on **The Road to Redemption** that only Christ can win for you. Keep your eyes on Jesus.

In John 2 it is the beginning of Jesus' ministry. This is one of the first Passovers in his public ministry. He clears the temple of the money changers. This is an account we're probably familiar with. He makes a whip out of cords and starts chasing them out. One of the things that always boggles my mind: if I see something that I know is wrong and I have to start making a whip out of a bunch of cords that are lying around, let's say I have to chase all you guys out of here this morning because of something you're doing, I guarantee you I'm going to sin while I do it. My anger is going to cause me to sin as I do even the right thing.

So here is Jesus, seeing people distracted in the Court of the Gentiles by the money changers, by the animals, by the noise, by the smell, by the activity, so that the Gentiles, and this is as far as they could go, can't really focus on God's promise of the Savior to come because there are too many distractions, there are too many things taking their eyes and leading them off course, so Jesus makes the whip out of the cords and he chases them all out. He flings their tables over. He chases them out. He gets the cages and the birds, everything, all out, and he does it without sin! Doesn't that boggle your mind?

Parents, did you ever discipline your children and cross the line into sin as you're doing it? If you're breathing you have. This is what we do. We're sinners. But here is Jesus doing what is right, having zeal for the Lord's house, "zeal for the Lord's house will consume me" [[Psalm 69](#)]. His zeal leads him to get away the things that take away the focus off of who God is and what God was doing.

You see him do this and you see him questioned about it, not "You shouldn't have done that," but "Give us a sign to show us you can do it," and he gives them a sign. He gives them a sign that they don't understand, but I think they understood it before the disciples did. "**Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.**" Herod had been on a building/remodeling process in the temple and the surrounding courtyards for 46 years and he said he was going to do it in three days? They didn't understand at that moment he was talking about his body, but I think they got it a little bit later, didn't they? Because these people that were opposing Jesus, the pharisees, the members of the Sanhedrin, these people that didn't think Jesus was what he claimed to be, they wanted a guard posted at Jesus' tomb because he had said, "**Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.**" I think by then they

had figured it out even though the disciples really didn't. The disciples, even though they had been told plainly "I will be handed over and be killed and then on the third day I will rise," they still were surprised when the women brought them the story.

Distractions that take us off course. For each and every one of us here this morning, it's different, isn't it? For each and every one of us, this isn't about whether or not you can sell greeting cards in a church basement. That's not what this is talking about. This is talking about the things that distract you, even the good and godly things that you think you're doing. Sometimes it becomes style of worship for some people. "I don't like that hymn, so I'm not going to focus on the words that we're singing." "Singing that Psalm was a little unfamiliar, so I'm not going to pay attention to this word that the Holy Spirit inspired the psalmist to write because it's all about me. And if I'm uncomfortable, God obviously can't work through that song or that Psalm to speak to my heart." Sure he can't if you're distracted and focused on yourself and what you like and dislike and you're not focused on who God is and what he has done and what he is trying to say to you. Then you're distracted!

When these things happen to us, if Jesus was here, would he start putting together a whip out of cords? What would he chase out of your heart? That has to be the question you ask yourself during Lent, isn't it? If Lent is all about this struggle, this discipline of repentance for yourself and not for someone else or not for what someone else has done, but for yourself, what are the things in your life Jesus would make a whip and try to chase out of your life? If you don't know, go back to our First Lesson.

Look at the Ten Commandments. Where are you struggling? Or go to our text. "Zeal for God's house will consume me." Do you find the zeal for the time you spend in God's house or in God's Word? Is there a passion and a desire for this? Do you work at it while you're there, or do you just sit back on a nice red cushion and say "Okay pastor, keep me awake for 10 minutes. It's all on you." Oh, bull, no it isn't! It's on you! God says you are to worship him with all your heart and all your soul and all your mind! Not all your entertainment.

So what is it in your life that Jesus would be chasing out? Is it how you view other people? It's kind of easy to get distracted in our relationships with other people and forget that our relationships with other people are also how we glorify God. It's also how we serve God.

Look back at the Ten Commandments. It talks about family life. It talks about married life. It talks about those kinds of relationships. Are you glorifying God in those relationships? Or do you struggle with how someone else has hurt you and you can't set that aside and forgive them as God forgave you? The Second Lesson would also apply to your brothers and sisters in Christ that irritate you, right? "**...there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus...**" God loved them enough to forgive them by dying for them. Can you and I set aside our hurt and our anger and say "Lord, help me to love as you love"?

There are all kinds of things that if Jesus hung out with me for a week, he'd be wanting to make a whip and chasing things out of my heart and my life, right? Same thing for you. The truth of the matter is that Jesus hangs out with you all the time, right? So, for you and I, in this Lenten discipline, on this **Road to Redemption**, we have to see where we have strayed off course. We need to let the Word speak to our hearts and change us. The power to change us comes in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It comes in the love that he has shown us by dying for us, to put to death in us what we could never put to death - the sins that we struggle with. We can't overcome them. We might set them aside for a time, but even that doesn't take away the guilt they have incurred. Only Jesus takes away that guilt. Only Jesus sets us free.

So that is why our God is so concerned about us not getting distracted. That's why he wants the brothers and sisters in Christ to be that orange detour sign that says to us, when we're straying, when we're going off course, "Hey, there is still time to get back to the right route. Turn back to Jesus. Focus on him and his love because the sign that Jesus gave, he fulfilled. He lived. He died in your place. And the third day he rose again so that you would always have that reminder that his love for you is that perfect, and he'll keep you connected to him." Amen.