



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

March 7, 2018

Pastor Randy Ott

Midweek Lenten Worship

Passion History according to Mark: [Mark 14:43-65](#)

Sermon Text: [John 13:12-17](#)

### **Community In Christ: Brings Blessings Through You**

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:

How many times do you have to say something to someone until they actually hear it, not just hear it but understand it, not just understand it but they actually start doing it when you told them to do something? This morning we had the school kids here, sitting right over here. So I asked, "Teachers, tell me. How many times do you have to say something to your kids before they actually hear it and do it?" They were all too chicken. Not a single one of them would give me an answer.

Do you ever get that feeling like you're just saying the same thing over and over and you're not being heard? It's an interesting question. How often does someone have to say something to you? What do you think? Do you think 59 times? If you repeat yourself 59 times, do you think the other person would start getting it into their head and start living it and doing it?

What if you were on your death bed and you have these people gathered around you and you're trying to tell them, "Hey, here is the most important thing in the world for you to know," and you say it over and over and over. Do you think they'd listen? Do you think they'd get it?

You would think so, but I'm going to tell you, you and I don't. Fifty-nine times in the New Testament God uses a phrase of "one another." Encourage one another. Love one another. Rebuke one another. Correct one another. Teach one another. Admonish one another. Love one another. On Jesus' death bed so to speak, at this Last Supper in the Upper Room, he was there on Maundy Thursday, he is never going to sleep again. We talked about that. He is never going to sleep again and he is filling the disciples with all the stuff that was real important for them to know. One of the

things that night he says over and over is where we get the name for that night. We call it “Maundy Thursday.” It comes from the new mandates or mandata in the Latin, the commands that he was giving them. What was the command he repeated over and over and over and over and over on Maundy Thursday? **“Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”** [[John 13:34-35.](#)]

Before he started saying that (that comes a little bit later in John), he showed them what it is to love one another. He got up from that table, where they were all reclining around the table to celebrate the Passover, and, as we talked about last week, he washed their feet. Part of God’s plan is that when we gather together as the **Community In Christ**, he is going to bring blessings to us. Today as we gather together, he comes to us through his Word and he washes us, makes us clean by telling us “I lived and died in your place. I took away your sins.” That’s what he does for us every time we gather around Word and Sacrament. But he also reminds us that his foot washing was not about foot washing.

Did you hear that in there? “You don’t understand what I’ve done for you. Maybe later you will. But I have set you an example.” Not that every time people get together as the **Community In Christ** we leave our shoes at the door and wash each others’ feet and strip down to putting a towel around us. That’s not what he is talking about. That’s not the example he wants us to do. But he said, **“You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and rightly so, for that is what I am.”** Teacher. Rabbi. The greeting the betrayer used. And Lord. Lord here means “Master.” It means if he says “Jump,” you and I should be saying “How high?” If he tells us to do something, that should be something in and of itself enough because we belong to him lock, stock and barrel. He created us. We ran away. He redeemed us. He bought us back with his perfect life and his death on a cross. We belong to him. He is our Lord. He’s not just our Savior. He is also our Lord. He says, “You’re right to call me that. If I am the Lord, if I’m the owner and you’re the owned, and I loved you enough to put you ahead of me and I got down on my knees in front of you and washed your feet and dried them with this towel that I had around my waste, I’m setting you the example that you should do the same for one another.”

One of the reasons he wants us to gather together in community is so that we can serve one another. We can be a **Community In Christ** that God uses parts of the community to bring blessings to the other parts of that community. That’s one of the reasons he tells us to not give **up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.** [[Hebrews 10:25.](#)] This is his plan for you and for me. I suppose we do it as we gather together here. But we’re really here also to encourage one another.

I’ve had people tell me a lot of times at Bible studies and in conversations that “Worship is just between me and my God.” I’ve even had people tell me “Communion, that is just

between me and God. I'm not saying anything to anyone else." God says you are. That's what we looked at last year. We looked at the Lord's Supper at this time of year last year. As often as you eat and drink, you proclaim the Lord's death until he returns. [[1 Corinthians 11:26.](#)] Every time you come up here, or I go back to you, whichever the case may be, and you receive the Lord's Supper, you're saying something to everyone else in here. You're saying, "I believe Jesus lived and died to take away my sins. I believe this forgiveness is important to me. I believe the strength he gives me, as he gives me his body and blood and forgives my sins, is important to me." You are proclaiming it to the people that are here. I'll grant you that they might not be listening. They might not catch that proclamation, but that doesn't mean we shouldn't do it. If we should stop proclaiming because people aren't listening, I should have said "Amen" a long time ago, right? Our job is to proclaim the Word faithfully. Whether or not someone else hears it, that's up to them.

So as you come together to worship, you're talking to other people. What did we say at the beginning in the Gathering Rite? Didn't we say that? We gather to meditate on God's Word, and proclaim God's Word? Did you think about that? Tonight, as you guys were reading from those Psalms, you were proclaiming God's Word to one another. You were saying to the person next to you, "You're a filthy, rotten sinner who deserves to go to hell just like I am. But this is incredible! God's grace covers us and forgives us. Can you believe it?!" This is what we're doing.

The question is, are we doing it faithfully? Are we doing it well? Or aren't we? When we come together as the body of Christ in this community and we gather around Word and Sacrament, we are to be a blessing to one another. So we either are or we aren't. It's not a question of should we be. God says yes.

Three weeks now in these midweek services we've sung that opening Gathering Rite. I think it's really cool. It's written by Mark Bitter. I served on committees with him before. He's a really good guy. I like him a lot. But each and every time we sang that, "I was glad when they said to me, 'Let us go to the house of the LORD,'" I really wanted to stand up and interrupt you and say, "Really? You don't look like it! You don't really look like you're glad to be here. It kind of looks like your husband or wife drug you here, or mom or dad drug you here! You don't really look like you're thrilled that God is telling you he loves you and you telling him you love him! Maybe I'm misreading your body language, but it sure doesn't look like it."

We're proclaiming to the people around us all the time. All the time. Whether we're here at worship and singing a neat Gathering Rite or any other hymn, or when we're out in our daily life, we're proclaiming who God is to us by how we treat other people, aren't we? Love one another. Serve others. Serve each other like Jesus did, unselfishly.

Do you ever do that? You do something for someone and in the back of your mind you're thinking, *You know, somewhere down the line this person is going to pay me*

*back, and it's going to be really cool because I'll get something out of it.* That's not really unselfish service, is it? Think about it. If you and I start loving like Christ loved, that means sometimes we're going to be taken advantage of, right? Every time you get taken advantage of when you love someone else unselfishly and serve them and do the things God has called you for and you start to get a little hot under the collar about it, think about God's love for you and how he loved you even though you often pay him back with less than a loving hug. His unselfish love for you - as we learn to live and serve each other unselfishly, as we take to heart God's task to encourage others - that would mean the people that we don't see in worship that often that we don't try to guilt them into coming but we just go to them and say "It's really important to stay close to Jesus because this has been an incredible blessing for me and I want it to be a blessing for you," this is what God has called us to do. He wants to be a blessing through us. He wants to bless the people that are there as we worship the Lord with what Scripture says, our heart and our soul and our mind.

As we go out and live every day and we put others' interests ahead of our own and we do the hard things, the things God has called us to do, teach, encourage, admonish, love, and we do it knowing full well that at times we are going to be rejected, but we do it because we love the God who loved us first, we're going to grow in our love for God. We're going to see how absolutely difficult that had to be for HIM to do; to love the people that were pounding in nails, to love the people that were spitting at him, to love the people that were beating him, to love the people that walk out church doors and act as though they've never heard of Jesus, yet he did it, right? He did that for you. And you're going to go out and you're going to fail him again, and he's still going to love you.

It's that knowledge of that depth of his love for us that moves us to want to get better at loving unselfishly. Not what can I get out of it, but how can I honor God and how can I serve the people that God loved perfectly. It isn't just you he loved perfectly. It's every last person you meet.

Here is the privilege he has given us. He knows we're going to fail. Yet he forgives us and puts in front of us another opportunity to unselfishly love and serve other people, to be a blessing to them. Isn't that just amazing? Amen.