



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

August 5, 2007

10th Sunday after Pentecost

Revelation 22:20

Pastor Leon Ehler

First Lesson: Genesis 18:20-32

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 6

Second Lesson: Colossians 2:6-15

Gospel: Luke 11:1-13

Would You Go?

My guess is that you don't need to be reminded, but it is now Sunday. And for many of you, that means that Monday is right around the corner. It means that you will be going back to work. You've enjoyed the last couple of days. Maybe you had a chance to hang out with your family and sleep just a little bit later than you ordinarily would have. What happens though if I would have the power to be able to turn back the clock so it would be Friday, about 4:00 in the afternoon, and you knew that pretty soon that whistle was going to sound, you were going to walk out of the office or wherever you are employed, and the whole weekend was sitting in front of you? Would you want me to do that?

As long as we are dreaming, why don't we dream even bigger? I don't think I have to remind those of you who are teachers or those of you who are students that school is right around that corner. It is now August and we are close to entering into the second week of August. What happens if I would have the power somehow to be able to take the clock and to move it forward through the whole year? There would be no winter this year. No blizzards. No cold weather. We would go all the way around and it would be May and pretty soon it would be graduation and you would be starting summer all over again. Would you want me to do that? My guess is that for many of you, you would say "yes." And the reason for that is we recognize the value of vacations. We recognize the value of warm weather. We recognize down time.

I want to ask you one other question. If I were to tell you right now that Jesus Christ was in that little room right back there and he was waiting for you. All you had to do was walk in there, put your hand into his hand, and he would take you to be in heaven for an eternity. But you would not have the opportunity to say "good-bye." You would not have the opportunity to go back home and take care of those loose ends. You would walk into that room, put your hand in Jesus, and you would be done. It would be over. You would be in heaven. Now, would you take that one? I can hear somebody say, "Hey look! That's not fair!" No. I want to know, would you take that opportunity at this moment? "But you see; I have a lot of plans right now. I'm getting married. I'm getting ready for a big promotion." Would you go? "Pastor, I'm in the middle of living."

Do you trust Jesus enough when he talks about the old order of things passing away with his crying and his pain and his death to say just like our text says, "Amen, come Lord Jesus." Or, have you and I somehow become so attached to this world with its pleasures, both petty and profound, that instead of the thought of going to be with Jesus in his tangible kingdom, instead of that filling us with great joy, instead of having a rush

to get back into that room, we say, “Yes, I want to go to heaven—someday, but heaven?—just not today.”

My brothers and sisters, that’s a weakness of faith. It’s a sign that somehow or another we have begun to attach ourselves too firmly to this world and to this existence instead of eagerly anticipating what God has prepared for us in the future. The future that he talks about in Revelation 21 where he says, “I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down from God and I heard a loud voice saying, ‘Now the dwelling of God is with men and he will live with them’” (see Revelation 21:2-3). Now of course there is a certain percentage of you in God’s house this morning who would say, “You know what? I wish Jesus was back there in that room visibly and I wish he would give me the option of going to heaven right now, because you know what? You would not have to ask me two times.”

Now let’s examine you for a minute. The people who are comfortable with leaving this world on a Sunday; in fact, maybe you are positively impatient. What do you think it could be that would have led you to that conclusion? I think maybe two things—the first group I would like to describe for a minute. I wonder if that phrase is spoken or that desire is shown by the people who get things done—the kind of person that is involved in anything. They are always working for the betterment of their family, their place of work, their church, and we love having people like that in any one of those organizations. You know why? Because they have the six-month plan and they have the five-year plan. This is where they are going to be going. This is what they have to do to accomplish it. Those are wonderful people because they have vision. They are so hard working. Sometimes we call them type “A” personalities, but you see, there can be a problem sometimes with people like this because they like to control others and they like to control situations and the problem is very often other people don’t like to be controlled.

Then we find certain situations in our lives that are always beyond our ability to influence them and so it is easy to become frustrated with self and others and life because we keep looking around and we see what we want to happen. We see the ideal and yet, when we look and we see what is really happening in our lives or in our families, they don’t seem to quite match up. So it is easy to become frustrated. And they think, “Somehow, what I need is a change, so I will change my place of employment. I will change where I live.” All the time thinking that somewhere along the line what will happen is everything will be different.

But it’s not. The same frustrations and the same disappointments are still there. But I’m not telling you this morning that I think that is negative. I wonder if it is positive, because once you begin to see this world as truly a fallen world, a world that you and I can never make perfect, we begin to say, like our text “*Amen. Come, Lord Jesus*” (Revelation 22:20).

Now not everybody who wants to go to be with Jesus is frustrated. I think maybe there is another group of people. Let me illustrate it. Last week would have been my father’s 68th birthday. He died many years ago. Whenever that date rolls around, I think a little bit more about him. The other key time of course is at holidays. It changes you as you

get older because when I get to Thanksgiving or Christmas, I look and I see a different table than my children do. My children look around that table and they see all the people who are there. I look at that table and see all the people who aren't. Where my father used to sit, now there's my son. Where my grandfather used to sit, there's my daughter. My brother-in-law, all those people have gone. My children see that table, this existence, stretching into eternity and so do you. Or should I say so did you.

When you are young, you have a tendency to hold onto this world so tightly for all that you are worth, but it doesn't take very long for God to send little reminders of how this world cannot stay the same. And so what happens is that maybe God will take a grandparent from you and it hurts because you love that person. God takes one of those fingers with which you are holding on to this existence so firmly and he pries it away. You are still holding on to this existence, but not quite as firmly. With every disappointment and with every painful situation God takes another finger and he pries it away from this existence. We hold on, but each trial, each temptation and each tragedy separates us from an over-fond love of this world. Then finally he takes the last things away from us. Maybe it is a spouse or a child or our health and finally, we get to the point where we say, "Lord, you can take me. I'm ready."

You are not home. This is NOT where God intends you to stay. Far from being meaningless, your pain, your struggles, your trials are magnificent. They are magnificent because God is using them to accomplish something in you that he can accomplish in no other way. To separate you and me from thinking somehow this world is where it's at. He leads us to that point where we finally say, "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus."

One last thing we should clear up before you and I can say with confidence that we want to go home. In a few minutes, we are going to be reciting the Apostles Creed. I want you to think for a minute—what do you believe is the most difficult phrase for a Christian to believe? I am not talking about an unbeliever. I am talking more than likely about you—a conservative Christian person. If you need to be reminded of those words, you will find them on page 41. But as you go through, I want you to think just for a second—what is the most difficult phrase?

I believe in God the Father Almighty—I'm going to guess that we really don't struggle with that all that much. My guess is that you wouldn't be here if you did.

I believe in Jesus Christ, born of the Virgin Mary—once again, although the world would quibble with a virgin giving birth, I would guess that most of you, maybe all of you, would say, "Jesus, born of a virgin—no problem."

I think the last, most difficult phrase to believe comes right at the end of that last paragraph—I believe in the Holy Spirit, the forgiveness of sins. Sometimes when we are all alone, that still small voice comes to us and it takes us back to our past with its shame and its guilt, and the devil seeks to take something that it not his. That is our peace and our comfort before our God. Have you seen enough of Jesus to know that he has clothed you? Do you know that he has re-clothed you with perfection? Have you seen enough of Jesus to eagerly welcome him home to know that there is now

nothing that separates you from him as it says in Revelation 6? *Then each of them was given a white robe* (Revelation 6:11)—that white robe symbolizes the perfection that Christ earned on that cross. And he has used that white robe on some pretty poor characters throughout the history of the Bible. I would guess that some of those characters look a whole lot like you and me in our private lives. Because he has taken that white robe and he wrapped it around that drunkard Noah. He took that white robe and he wrapped it around that whining Elijah. He took that robe and he clothed that child abuser Manasseh and that adulterer David and that blasphemer Paul. And he has taken that white robe and he has wrapped you up in it. And you are pure and you are holy and no one can now unclothe you because your status before God is now good.

Jesus Christ is really not in that room visibly anyway and he is not going to ask you when you are ready to go. But there will come that day when he will take you by the hand and, ready or not, you will leave this world. And you have nothing to fear because your Lord loves you and he wants to take you and show you some things. And it will take all eternity to do so.