



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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

September 9, 2007

15<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Hebrews 13:1-8

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Proverbs 25:6,7

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 119a

Second Lesson: Hebrews 13:1-8

Gospel: Luke 14:1,7-14

### Let Brotherly Love Continue

It was an interesting Bible study we had this morning on the Flood. The Flood—something we think we all know so well and we found out there are a lot of things in there that we really don't know as well as we thought. But the one thing I think the Flood highlights is what we see. In all of our readings this morning it focuses on how the sinful nature shows itself by lacking humility, the encouragement to be humble, and to not let the sinful nature get the upper hand. Before the Flood, God said every inclination of people is evil all the time and after the Flood, he said the exact same thing. Because that sinful nature still lives in each one of us, it's a struggle to live in true humility—to put other's interests ahead of your own, to live in a way that glorifies God as you keep all the Law that he says. And all the sins against the Law that he lists in Hebrews 13 here, they really all stem out of the selfish sinful nature.

That is why he encourages us to keep on loving each other as brothers or literally, let brotherly love continue. That is his urging for us. You have been forgiven. You have Christ living in you. Let brotherly love continue. Let that love show itself in your daily life. He says to us, do the right things for the right reasons. He really points us to the Second Table of the Law. He takes us through the Fourth Commandment—remember your leaders who spoke the Word of God to you. A little bit later in this section he talks about honoring them. He talks about the Fifth Commandment—don't forget to entertain strangers, show hospitality, show help to those who need it, those who are in prison, those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering—the Fifth Commandment. The Sixth Commandment—marriage should be honored by all. Don't misuse God's gift of sex and marriage. The Seventh Commandment—don't steal. Keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have.

He really addresses all of these Commandments that deal with actions in the Second Table of the Law. As you look at them, when we fail to do this, quite often it is because we are being selfish. If I show hospitality to others and help others and give of my time to visit prisoners and help those who are being mistreated, my sinful nature stands up and screams at me and says, "That means there is going to be less for me!" That trip you wanted to take, you won't be able to do that now. That movie you wanted to see, you won't have enough money to go see that if you help out this person and share some of what you have with them. Our sinful nature doesn't want us to do these things because it is afraid that it means "if I give something away to someone else, that means there is less for me."

If you are honest with yourself, has that thought ever crossed your mind when those kinds of opportunities have presented themselves? Have you ever thought to yourself, “If I give to this or to that, that means less for me. I have these plans. There are these things that I really want to do.” Our sinful nature really wants it to be all about me.

Marriage should be honored by all and the marriage bed kept pure. Did you ever think about that phrase?—the marriage bed kept pure. What is he talking about? He isn’t saying that as husband and wife make sure you have clean sheets. That isn’t it at all. But God said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and the two will become one flesh” when he instituted marriage in Genesis 2:24. The two become one flesh is talking about the sexual union. God says sex belongs between man and woman in marriage—between husband and wife—not before marriage and not outside of marriage. If you are using it before marriage or outside of marriage, the marriage bed hasn’t been kept pure and you haven’t honored God’s gift of sex and marriage. You have sinned. And God tells us that he will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

Think about that in our society. That money that you want to save so you can go to that movie and you don’t want to share it with someone else, when you get to that movie, how many times out of ten are you bombarded with images that lead to lust and sexual sins? How many times as you watch television and you watch the commercials, counting the commercial breaks, how often are they using sex to sell something? We are constantly bombarded with this and it’s all about your need to make sure that you are happy. Sexual sins really come about because we have made an idol out of our own pleasure for ourselves. Our sinful nature has reared its ugly head. Struggles with pornography on the internet are making pornography and sex an idol that we worship more than what God has said is right. These are the struggles that we face in this world and that keep us from carrying out this command that comes from the Second Table of the Law—honor marriage. It comes about because we are, at the very basis, very selfish. “I deserve this. I deserve that.”

Again, think of how often we fall and we don’t do the right things. God is telling us that this is the way you show brotherly love—help others, honor the gift of sex and marriage, don’t love money. It’s the Seventh Commandment that God speaks to us here. Do the right things. Keep your lives free from the love of money. I’ve heard more people twist Scripture when they say money is the root of all evil than probably any other part of Scripture. God has never said that. God has said that everything belongs to him, so money itself can’t be evil. He always warns us against the love of money. Money is a gift that he gives us. It’s not evil in and of itself. He gives it to us so that we can take care of our family. He gives it to us so that we can spread the gospel. He gives it to us so that we can help the poor and needy. Remember those who are mistreated so that we can help those who are in prison, so that we can entertain strangers. That is why he gives us our possessions. But the devil is constantly working to get us to love those more than we love God.

Think about it in your own life. How many times have you been balancing your checkbook and see that things aren’t going exactly the way that you want them to go or you are facing another bill for a car repair or the refrigerator needs to be replaced or you

have to make another payment on the braces or you have to pay off the car or this loan or that loan and you aren't sure how you are going to do it and you thought to yourself, "If only I was closer to God, I wouldn't worry so much."

Has that thought ever crossed your mind in your life? Or is it "If only I had more money, I wouldn't have these problems." So when we are facing these difficulties, who do we love and look to for help?—Benjamin Franklin or the Triune God? We are pretty selfish at times, aren't we? Money can do things for me, so I need more.

God urges us to do the right things, to put money in its proper perspective, to help others and do all these things, but to do them for the right reason. And the right reason he lays out pretty clearly before us. God has said to us, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." I can't understand why he would say that to us, because as I look at my life in the light of just these couple of Commandments we have touched on briefly, I'm not close to being perfect. Sure, I might find someone, somewhere who is worse at it than I am, but that doesn't really give me any comfort now, does it?

What gives me comfort is that God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you." Even though you have turned your back on me, even though you love money, even though you have been selfish and kept things for yourself instead of helping others, even though you haven't used God's gift of sex and marriage properly, even though you love money too much, even though you don't always honor your leaders who have spoken the Word of God to you, God has said, "I won't leave you; I won't forsake you." Why not?

Because he loved us enough to live in our place and die in our place to take away every one of those sins that we so often commit against every one of those Commandments and all the others. He'll never leave us or forsake us even though we often come up with the most silly excuses to defend our sins and say, "You just don't understand, and but this and but that," God lovingly and patiently leads us, at times through our fellow believers, to stop making excuses and just say, "Lord have mercy on me, a sinner." Or to say, "Lord, I have failed you in these ways over and over, and I am sorry. I struggle with this sin or that sin Lord and I want your help to do better, but Lord, I am so thankful that you have taken away my sins. I can stand in front of you. I know that your body and blood was given and shed for me because I have received it in the Sacrament and you have looked me in the face, Lord, and said, 'go in peace, you are forgiven.' That is why I can say the Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"

So when I give of myself to help others, I'm doing it to thank God for heaven. So when I use marriage the way God has intended it to be used and sex the way he has intended it to be used, I'm not missing out on all the fun of life. I'm thanking God that he has given me heaven. In any case, God knows us better than we know ourselves. He gives us these commands not because he wants to take the fun out of our lives, but because he wants to bless us. He wants to keep us from falling into things that are going to bring us pain and heartache and suffering. I've sat across the table, I've looked into the eyes of that kind of pain and suffering and heartache and it comes because sometimes we are so selfish we think we know better than God. God is not doing it to be mean. God is not doing it to be punitive. God is doing it because he wants to bless us and he

knows what is best for us, so he says, “Do this. Don’t do that. Have this thought life. Don’t have that thought life. Love in this way. Don’t love yourself.” And the better we are at doing this, because he has taken away our sins, the more blessed we are going to be in our life, the more we will have the fruit of the Spirit in our lives because our faith will be growing because these kinds of actions only come from a growing, maturing faith. So the more time we spend with Word and Sacrament, the more we are able to let brotherly love continue.

Think about the last sentence in this reading. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever* (Hebrews 13:8). This also gives us all the reasons to do the right thing. It wasn’t as though after Adam and Eve fell into sin in the Garden of Eden, the Father, the Son and the Spirit were together and said, “Okay, one of you is going to have to go to earth and live and die in their place and go through hell to redeem them. Son, it is going to be you.” He is the same yesterday and today and forever from all eternity, from before the world was created. He knew how sinful we would be and he knew what he would have to do to pay for our sins to redeem us. And he did it! He absolutely did it! So he is going to love us through and through, all the way to the end. That love for us will never change.

That ought to spark our interest. That ought to thrill us to the tips of our toes and every follicle of hair more than seeing a picture of Benjamin Franklin on something green on the ground. That “Benjamin Franklin” is here and then gone, but God’s love for you in Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.