



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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

September 30, 2007

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

1 Timothy 2:1-8

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Amos 8:4-7

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 38

Second Lesson: 1 Timothy 2:1-8

Gospel: Luke 16:1-13

### **God Wants All to be Saved**

Wants and needs—the theme of worship this morning—talking about how our relationship to money says something about our relationship to God really spins off of wants and needs. The Seventh Commandment, the Ninth and Tenth Commandments about stealing and coveting, sins against those Commandments begin when our wants become greater than our needs. We heard about it in the First Lesson. The people whining about having to set apart a day for the Lord when they would rather be back there selling the grain as soon as the Sabbath is over because they want money more than they want to worship the Lord. They want more money so they sell the sweepings with the grain—what they get off the floor—so they can get a little more profits, so they can squeeze a little bit more out of other people.

In the gospel Jesus reminds us to use worldly wealth for a purpose, and that purpose is to share the gospel so that we have heavenly friends, not just so that we can serve money. We sin against that when our wants become bigger than our needs. God has promised to meet all of our needs in Christ, and yet so often you and I lose track of our needs because we are focused on our wants.

This morning, the Second Lesson that we are looking at from 1 Timothy doesn't seem to tie in with this because it is Paul again giving instructions to the young pastor Timothy, but in a very real way it does, and in a way that we probably don't think about. We think about our wants and our needs probably all the time. But in this section, when the Holy Spirit has Paul write to Timothy and tell him, "Here is what I want you to do as a young pastor," he opens up God's mind to us so that we see what God's wants and needs are.

The second part of that statement you know, right? What does God need from you and me?—absolutely nothing. He is the Creator. He gave us life. We have nothing we can give to him. He needs nothing. He is God—all powerful, all knowing, eternal—all those things. He needs nothing. So you would think he must not have any wants. Isn't it fascinating to hear what God wants?

When Paul urges Timothy to teach people to pray for those in authority so that we can lead peaceful and quiet lives, he says, "I want you to do this because there is a very specific thing that peaceful and quiet lives hopefully should help us as Christians accomplish. It should help us accomplish the spreading of the gospel." Because when it comes right down to it, this is God's want. God wants all to be saved. God's list of wants has your name on it and my name on it and every name that ever has existed on

it. He needs nothing. He doesn't need you and me to be in heaven so that it will be better. He needs nothing. But he wants us.

Isn't that a fascinating thing to think about? When you write out your list of wants in life, goals in life—every now and then we are told to do that, right?—what are your goals for the next five or ten years? They are usually tied into financial stuff, right? If God sat down to do that, all he would do is write your name, my name and every name. God wants all to be saved.

As his infinite wisdom has led him to save us, his infinite wisdom has also led him to say to us, "It's in your court. The ball is in your hand. I've done the work, and now I am giving you the message to proclaim." So he tells us this morning through Paul, as Paul reminded Timothy and he reminds us, "Pray for it." Pray for Godly leaders. Pray for things so that we can lead peaceful and quiet lives so that we then can focus more intently, not on our wants, but on something that is a need for us. That is to proclaim the saving gospel of Christ to ourselves and to others.

Remember we started looking at 1 Timothy last week. Timothy is a young pastor Paul had left behind and he is writing to teach him. He is going to give him these trustworthy things. Last week it was "don't think you have to be me. I am the chief of sinners. Just know that God's grace will sustain you and enable you to serve faithfully." This week he says, "Here is what I want you to do. I want you to spend time, not only praying for those that are in authority over us, pray for those that you are serving, but also urge them to pray not just for themselves and their own wants and their own needs, but pray for kings and those in authority with the expressed purpose that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. I want you to pray about it. I want you to teach others to pray about it, because peaceful and quiet lives have a purpose for us. God wants us to be saved and this enables us to focus on God and not have to worry about running and hiding as we serve or worship God. It will enable us to serve him faithfully and proclaim his Word faithfully."

Think about that—peaceful and quiet lives. Those in authority in our country—we are blessed with living in a country where it's not those in authority that always threaten us. Sure there are things that they allow that present challenges to us and our faith, but they are not forcing us to do things that are against our faith. Certainly we want to keep praying that this remains the case so that we can serve God faithfully and that we can live our faith so that others can see it. There are also a lot of other things that threaten the peace and quietness in our lives, isn't there? Things that happen in your life so that your mind doesn't get quiet and when you lay your head on the pillow, there are a thousand words and a thousand thoughts running through your head faster than an Olympic sprinter and you can't get your eyes to have peaceful sleep. There are things that you and I worry about and get anxious about. There are things that make you and I forget God's promises and that he will provide all of our needs.

Another thing that we are reminded to do is to pray to God to take away these worries and all these focuses on our wants, and help us to trust that he is going to meet our needs. We can pray, "Lord help me to have a peaceful and quiet life because I am focused on you and your promises." The more we can cultivate a prayer life that

focuses on praying that God will bless us so that we can live our faith, not just bless us with the things that we want, the more we start treating God like the almighty God who loves and cares for us deeply and intimately instead of a wish list or a Santa Claus; the more our prayer life will be blessed by God; the more God will respond by giving us those peaceful and quiet lives because he has already answered us.

When we pray for peaceful and quiet lives in our daily lives, he has already given us the answer. It is there in the Word. It is there in his promises. It is there in the water and the Word at Baptism. It's there in the wine and wafer, the body and the blood of the Lord's Supper. There are his promises. "Even though you have wants that are bigger than your needs, even though you have turned away from me, even though you don't always pray for things that are for the good of the kingdom and your prayer life gets filled up and cluttered up with personal requests and maybe even at times you slip over to demands of me (God), even though you have done all that, I love you and I have taken away your sins. Even though you don't serve me faithfully, I promise to meet every one of your needs."

The answer to our peaceful and quiet lives, the answer to our prayer for God to work up the proclamation of salvation to everyone is right in front of us. It's there in the Word and it is there in us. The more time we spend in the Word, the more we will pray for what God wants us to pray. The more time we spend in the Word, the more time we will have the answer to a prayer for peaceful and quiet lives, because the more we will be focused not on ourselves, but on our God. Then the more we see how much he loves us and how he has taken away our sins, the more our hearts will not only need to tell others about it, the more our hearts will want to tell others about it. The more we will seek to tell others who Christ is, not only in our words, but also in our action. There are people that we know who know that there are things that make our lives less than peaceful and less than quiet and they are watching to see how we handle it. If they know we are a Christian and they are not, they want to see what a difference being a Christian makes, if any. And you and I are proclaiming our confidence in God's salvation as we face the things that make us worried, as we face the things that make our pulses race. We don't say, "Oh, they are not a problem." But we can say to people, "It's a problem, but with God's help, I can face this problem. With God's help, he will sustain me through this, and how do I know this? Why can I be sure of this?" When we are questioned, we can proclaim his salvation. "Because God loved me enough to leave heaven and live perfectly in my place as God demands of me, and he loved me enough to die for all the times that I have failed him. I can be absolutely certain that he wants me to be saved and that he wants me to have a life of confidence because he has given me this gospel and he has told me to cling to it like someone bobbing in a sea holding onto a life preserver." It is the one thing that sustains us. It is the one thing that strengthens us.

Then we can tell people, "I want you to know it also. I want you to know this confidence, this peace that passes all understanding. I want you to have it. I want you to rejoice in it because God has already provided your salvation. He lived in your place. He died in your place." The more we grow in faith, the more that isn't something "I know I should do; I know it's something I need to do," but it becomes something "I want to do because I have a God who loves me in spite of myself."