



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

June 29, 2008

7th Sunday after Pentecost

Matthew 11:25-30

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Exodus 33:12-23

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 145

Second Lesson: Romans 7:15-25a

Gospel: Matthew 11:25-30

Find Rest When Burdened

In true (not self) knowledge

In Jesus' easy yoke

This past Thursday evening, we had worship service, the same service that we're having this morning like we do every week, and the service was kind of tough. The sermon especially was really tough for me to get through. As I was talking, there was this loud noise through the whole sermon. It kept whining in my head the whole time and it was really hard to concentrate, really hard to keep preaching. About half way through the sermon, I realized that it was kind of a loud sucking sound. It was my sermon. It just wasn't that good Thursday night, and it annoyed me, and it bothered me. When I walked back down the steps, I was irritated. These people came on a Thursday evening to sit down and hear God's Word presented in an understandable manner, in an organized manner, and I gave them something that was less than that. At least that's what I thought.

You start beating yourself up when things like that happen, don't you? I should have spent that extra few hours working on it and making it make more sense so that these great truths of our God could have been heard better. It's kind of like what we just read from Paul, right? "The good that I want to do I do not do, but the evil I do not want to do, that I keep on doing." I knew it could have been better, but I just didn't make it better. Then you deal with guilt, and that guilt at times can be a burden. It can be a weight that bears you down. You might not have had it from preaching a poor sermon, but I'm sure you've carried guilt in your life, haven't you? Or you've had it weigh you down?

There are a number of ways to deal with guilt, isn't there? We can ignore it. Eventually it goes away. We can find other ways of saying it's not that bad. But this morning we find a way of dealing with the guilt that burdens us and weighs us down that is much different than ignoring it or finding someone that's worse than we are.

God comes to us and Jesus says, "Find rest for your worried souls in me." Don't find it in your own knowledge, your own self knowledge. Find it in true knowledge. And find it in the yoke that Jesus tells us to carry because it is an easy yoke. It's a light yoke. Jesus desperately wanted people to know that the burden that they were carrying of the guilt of their sins, or the burden they should have been carrying but maybe they weren't because they denied their own sins, he was there to take away.

The words that start our text start out with “At that time Jesus said, ‘I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children.’” At that time, what had just happened was Jesus had sent out the twelve and they were preaching. Jesus then continued to preach and teach and he was up in Galilee and the people came to hear him. The people came to see him, but they came to see him because they were looking for miracles. They wanted a nice side show, a nice circus so to speak. And Jesus had performed miracles. He had taught with authority and they were amazed at the power of his words. But remember, this is the area where he grew up and in Galilee a lot of the people probably thought, “I know him. I know some of his cousins. I know who he was and how he grew up. How can he possibly be anything more than just a good teacher?” So Jesus had just challenged the people to rightly consider his ministry and who he was, and the people didn’t want to. They wanted a side show. They didn’t want a Savior.

So in their hearing, after they had basically rejected him, Jesus said, “I praise you because you haven’t revealed to these ‘wise and learned people’ who think they know it all, but instead you have revealed it to little children, people who have the heart of little children—the Spirit works in their hearts and they listen and they believe in spite of what their own reason might say to them. No one knows me,” he says. No one knows the Father. You could almost hear in the minds of his listeners a lot of the people saying, “I know you. How can you be the one who claims to reveal the Father?” They didn’t have that simple child-like faith. They had their own knowledge, their own wisdom, and it was tripping them up.

It’s kind of sad, but it’s a sadness that maybe at times comes into our own lives as well. Do you ever think that you know enough about God? If you are a man, maybe you think going to a Bible study and learning more about God, that’s children’s work or women’s work? Do you think you are wise and learned enough? Do you think that’s only for kids? Do you ever have that crowd into your thinking? “I know this. I’ve heard that story before. I know all there is to know.” When that thought enters our mind, and it will, it is sin. You have sinned. I have sinned. We sin in this way by thinking we know all there is to know and we are in danger of neglecting true knowledge—the true knowledge that centers in Jesus and his life and his death in our place because we begin to think we have some kind of self knowledge that maybe is beyond this. We might not go in the same direction these people did who thought they could keep the Law on their own, but we are always in danger of self knowledge of thinking we know enough and we don’t need to grow closer to Christ because God himself has said, “Grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.” God has said, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly.” God has said, “As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.” And he encourages us to do that for one another as we walk together as a body of believers. That’s what he has put us together for, so that we can help one another to be little children who have hearts that are open to hear and believe what God says whatever our reason might tell us.

Scripture will tell us things that are not reasonable to you and me who think we have this wisdom. We will say, “How could God do this?” Or, “How could God do that if he is a God of love?” We don’t always focus on his love being centered chiefly and ultimately

in how he takes away our sins when we don't deserve it. When you and I deserved hell, when we have done nothing but earn hell, he loved us enough to live and die in our place. That is ultimate wisdom and ultimate love. We rejoice in it, but we forget about it when we want to demand that God show love to us in a certain way, in a certain area of our life and when he doesn't, then we have the audacity of accusing him of being unloving. Little children will go back to say, "Jesus loves me. Jesus died for me."

Quite often what you and I need to do is go back to those simple truths. When we have sinned, Jesus loves me. Jesus died for me. I don't need to make excuses. I need to go to him, cast my sins on him, and know that he has taken away all of my sins, not just the ones that are troubling me, but all of them, because then I find true rest.

Jesus talked about rest for our sin-burdened souls. He talked about a yoke. The front of the bulletin cover has an interesting picture of a yoke which I think helps us understand this really well. See the one water bucket and the yoke that would go across someone's shoulders and then you carry that around. You couldn't go to the kitchen and get a nice cold cup of water on a hot day. You had to go pull the pail up from the well, fill up the buckets, put the yoke across your shoulder and bring it back. You might have to do it more than one time. You carry that thing around on a nice hot, humid day for a while and that is going to get a little bit wearisome, a little bit burdensome and a little bit troublesome. You are going to get worn out.

The yoke that was wearing the people out in Jesus' day was the Law—the demand to be perfect as God is perfect, if not, you will go to hell. The Jews of Jesus' day even called the Law, the laws of Moses, the "yoke of the kingdom." It's what you had to carry to enter into God's kingdom. If you had to carry that around day after day and think, "The only way I can get to heaven is by doing this perfectly," you are either going to despair or you are going to start watering down the Law because you are not going to carry it perfectly. You are going to start finding loopholes or create your own loopholes or find someone that is worse than you are and say, "At least I'm better than he is." They were doing all of those things at those times, but they weren't ignoring the basic truth of that burden that was there. They were sinners and they needed an answer to that sin.

Jesus says, "Come to me when you are burdened by your sins." When you finally wake up and see that you aren't perfect, when someone has come to you and showed you your sin and you see that you need something to take it away because you can't do it, Jesus says, "Come to me. My yoke is easy. My burden is light." His yoke is that he carries it all. He took all of our sins to Calvary. He died for them. He lived perfectly in our place so that where you and I have failed, where you and I have chased other things, where you and I have doubted God's love, where you and I have despised his Word, Jesus did it perfectly in our place. Then he carried all of those things, not in a bucket on each side of him but on his back, to the cross, and he died for them. He says, "I have done everything." There is nothing that we carry. He has done it all. He even is the one that sends the Spirit into our hearts to lead us to believe this incredible truth. So when you and I are burdened by the fact that we have not done the good that we ought to like Paul said, when we are burdened by the facts that we have failed as a husband, a father, a mother, a wife, a child, whatever our role might be, where we have

failed God again, we go to his yoke and his burden, and it washes it away. It's easy. It's light because he has done it all. He tells us, "I did it for you while you hated me. I did it for you while you didn't love me, so don't look to yourself one little bit for this confidence of forgiveness or of my love, look to me."

Think of the implications of that incredible truth. He is talking here about our sins that weary us and burden us. Maybe they don't always weary us and burden us. Maybe we need people to use the keys like we talked about in Bible study this morning, and come and wake us up, but when we have been woken up and we have seen our sins, we hear this truth that Jesus has taken them away.

If God loves us that much to do that for us, the most important thing that can be done for you or for me, when we face the other things in life that are wearisome and burdensome that are the results of sin—the heartache, the hardships, the losses, the grief, the uncertainty, the worry, the doubt, the anxiety—as we face those, we know that the one who loved us enough to carry our sins to the cross will be with us. He doesn't promise to be with us and do the things that we would have him do, but he does promise to do for us what is best for us eternally.

If he loved us enough to die for us, how can we doubt that he loves us enough now? That is the proof, that is the certainty, that is the guarantee that he will be with us with his easy yoke to make our burdens light.