



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

www.mzluth.org

January 4, 2009
2nd Sunday after Christmas
Hebrews 2:10-18
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Micah 5:2-5a
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 148
Second Lesson: Hebrews 2:10-18
Gospel: John 7:40-43

The Author of Salvation Calls us family Frees us from Satan's Slavery

Do you know anybody that is arrogant? When you hear the word "arrogant," is there a face that pops into your mind? That person, maybe when you were in college, that whenever you went out some place they absolutely assumed they were God's gift to the opposite sex and no one could resist them. They were just annoyingly arrogant about it. Or maybe the person, whenever you bring up any topic they know the topic better than Cliff Claven would. They know everything there is to know about it and they tell you everything there is to know about it. It's annoying because two-thirds of the time you've figured out they have no clue what they are talking about. Do you know anyone like that whose arrogance is just like a nail being driven into your head with a hammer? Keep their picture in your mind for now. We'll come back to it a little bit later.

For now I want you to think about something else. Have you ever watched a sport, let's say basketball, and you saw someone do something that you just shook your head at and said, "I can't believe I just saw that." Way back when I was young, seeing Dr. J do things like that or maybe Michael Jordan or nowadays maybe Kolbe or LaBron. You see them do something and say, "How in the world can anyone do that?" You just shake your head and say, "I can't believe what I just saw." Do you know what I'm talking about, that kind of thought, that kind of feeling?

Any of you have that kind of thought or that kind of feeling this morning when you heard these words from Hebrews 2? "I can't believe what I just heard." Is there any kind of awe and wonder when you hear what it says here? God became one of us. God calls you and me brother. God calls us family. Isn't that absolutely amazing? Think about it, God becoming one of us; at one of the last soup suppers, didn't someone see something furry scurrying around on the floor in the basement? Someone reacted with kind of a high-pitched "hello." Anyone remember that at all? You see a mouse and some people react through fear and anxiety and get a little scared. Can you picture yourself becoming a mouse for the next 32 years or 33 years? Running around in the rafters in the church building, living on the crumbs the kids leave behind after they have their soup, avoiding those sticky traps Bev puts all over in the basement; have you stepped on one of those yet? Can you imagine becoming a mouse and doing that? Can you even fathom that?

Okay, you don't like mice. How about a cockroach? Would you like to become a cockroach for the next 32 years? How about another living organism? You know in the summer when you go by still water and there's that green stuff growing on the top of it? I don't know if it's the green stuff that smells or something else in the water, but you know that stink that comes in the summer of still water? That's a living organism, right? How would you like to become that pond scum for the next 32-33 years?

That doesn't even begin to scratch the surface of Jesus becoming one of us, does it? You and I compared to pond scum, you and I compared to a mouse, you and I compared to a cockroach; it doesn't even scratch the surface that God became one of us.

Okay, now back to that picture of that person in your mind. Who is the most arrogant person you know? Right about now don't you have to say, "It's the person I saw in the mirror this morning because I don't even stop and think that God becoming one of us is that amazing and I kind of just take it for granted. I've heard it before. I know that truth. It doesn't move me like a basketball play anymore." Is it because we are so arrogant that we at times think God owes us this? Is it because you and I at times, as human beings become so arrogant, we think we have something to offer up to God that he should give us something back? We never do that, do we?

We just got done with a season of the church year and had a lot of extra services, right? We had Advent, midweek Advent, Christmas Eve, the children's program, the candlelight service, Christmas day, New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and then the services on Sunday. In your lifetime, have you ever had this kind of thought flash through your mind? "You know, I went to church on Wednesday or at that service or at that service. I'm kind of tired and I don't think I want to go this morning. God should be happy that I went once already this week." Did you ever have a thought like that go through your mind? Do you realize that's the height of arrogance to think that God needs you to come and worship him? To think that God needs this from you and you have actually done something for him by coming to worship? Isn't that giving us a little too much credit?

This is why I think at times we don't just sit back and marvel that God calls us brothers, that God calls us family, that he became one of us, because I think the sin of arrogance and overestimating our own ability is one that is prevalent in each and every one of us. When you and I see exactly what we are and exactly how much God hates what we are; God hates sin. As I said the other day in a Sermon in the Book of Psalms, he says he also hates the sinner. Yet, this incredible truth that Hebrews 2 brings out so clearly and so beautifully that Jesus calls us family, that Jesus willingly became one of us, that the author of our salvation became one of us; that's the kind of thing that just – when we realize all these truths about who we are and who true God from all eternity is, leads us to sit back and say, "I can't believe what I just heard. I can't believe how much love my God has for me. I can't believe that he would do that because I wouldn't do it for a day. I wouldn't switch places with any of those rodents or plant-life forms for a day, even if it meant anything for anyone else." Yet, that's what our God did for us.

When you see that he did this, the natural question in our minds, that inquiring minds I think would want to know is why? The letter to the Hebrews lays it out pretty crystal clear also for us this morning, doesn't it? The only reason that Jesus became flesh, the only reason that he entered into the human existence at Bethlehem and became the Christ-child and lived as one of us was so that he could destroy the devil, the power of the devil, the one who holds the power of death – that is the devil. So that he could free us from our slavery to the fear of death, because we know that by all rights we should have been punished when we die. We should have been sent to hell. But because Jesus became one of us and then lived perfectly under the law in our place; no arrogance, no hint of arrogance in his entire life, but perfect love for God, perfect love for people, perfect love put into practice in perfect actions day after day after day. Satan's claim on us as sinners is broken because the perfection that he demands of us he gives to us. He gives it to us through the gift of faith. Whether that faith was worked in the Word or that faith was worked through baptism, that faith is the gift that God gives us. Not our doing, but God's gift that he gives us that destroys the devil's work. We don't have to live in fear of punishment because all of our sins were punished on the cross of Calvary. All of our sins that deserve eternal damnation, they were poured out on Jesus. He suffered. We were made perfect through his suffering as he tells us in here. This was done because he loved us and he wanted us to be forgiven.

This is why, in a season like this, the season of Christmas, a Psalm like we sang this morning is so fitting. Think back to it. What were the three words that were repeated over and over? Praise the Lord. We just look at what God has done. And it's not now about what we do to live to thank him. It's simply we sit back and say, "Praise the Lord. Look at what he has done." Now the more and more we recognize who he is and what he has done, the more we will want to serve him in our daily life, I'll grant you that. But it isn't about coming here this morning and learning how we are to serve God in our daily life. It's about coming here this morning and looking at who God is and what he became and what he did for us. He took away our sins. When you see that spelled out so beautifully here in Hebrews 2, there's nothing left for us to do but just sit back and say, "Praise the Lord and everything that's around us. Praise the Lord. Live for God and thank him."

But above all, just recognize this incredible love that he has for us. It goes beyond our understanding, but it changes our lives.