



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church
www.mzluth.org

August 16, 2009
11th Sunday after Pentecost
1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 11-13
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Exodus 16:2-20
Psalm of the Day: Psalms 145
Second Lesson: 1 Corinthians 10:1-5, 11-13
Gospel: John 6:24-35

Be Careful That You Do Not Fall

You stand in a privileged place
You stand with a faithful God

I haven't thought about it much lately. It's not that time of the year when you have to stop and think before you walk out our back door. If you walk out our back door, quite often in the winter or in spring when things thaw, the sun doesn't hit that back entry all that well, so if you come out that door without thinking and go down the steps in a hurry to get some place, to the car or to school, you often get there first of all by bouncing on your rear end a couple of times. There is ice there and if you don't stop and think about it, you can go straight down.

Sometimes even when you are thinking about that at that time of the year, you are walking down the sidewalk, and you get distracted. A car honks its horn or a dog barks at you or something and you look up and you hit black ice. You still can lose your balance and look like a fool and hope no one has a camera trained on you, or you go straight down. It's even worse though when you are on the road and you're driving. It could put you in the ditch if you don't see it and all of a sudden it's there.

When our God says to us, "if you think you're standing firm, be careful so you don't fall," I think he is reminding us that as we go through our lives, there are a lot of things in life that happen, because we live in a sinful world, that are like hitting a patch of black ice. They come up unexpectedly. You don't know they are going to be there. You hit them and it throws you for a loop. Sometimes it knocks you down. Sometimes it does even more than that.

I think when he says, "be careful and continue to lean on that spiritual rock, Christ," he reminds us that as human beings, we have a natural inclination, like we've seen in the Gospel and in our First Lesson today, to maybe at times make demands of God that he keeps promises he has never made to us. Then when he doesn't keep these promises that we think he should have made that he has not made to us, we can get mad at him, blame him, turn away from him, and lose that spiritual rock which is Christ and lose those blessings on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So it's a good thing for us to remember to be careful and stand firm so that we don't fall.

Just like the Israelites, we stand in a privileged place. We stand next to that spiritual rock. We stand on that spiritual rock. We stand knowing the fulfillment has come upon

us. We know who we are; that we are sinners. We know who Jesus is; that he is true God who came down and lived in our place and died in our place even though we are filthy rotten sinners. He has given us the gift of full and free salvation.

These warnings that Paul wrote about to the Corinthians, they knew them and the history of their forefathers. They knew how God had taken them out of slavery in Egypt. Yet we saw this morning how once they were out of that slavery in Egypt, where they had to make bricks with no straw and they had to do all that and then gather their food and cook their food, when they looked back on it when they were in the middle of something else that bothered them, they talked about it as the good old days. "Remember the good old days when we sat around in Egypt and had all the food we wanted and pots and meats everywhere." They forgot about the fact that they were slaves and the oppression that they were living under.

But now they were a little hungry. They were a little hot. And they were a little tired of walking, so they start grumbling against God. They make a demand of God that he hadn't promised them. He promised that he would give them what they need. They wanted more. So God gave them quail at night and he gave them manna, the bread on the ground, the flakes they could make into a meal and make into bread. He told them, "Don't take too much; just enough for the day. I will keep providing for you day after day. In that way you will learn to put your trust in me and then you will know that I am the Lord. I am the one who brought you out of Egypt. I am the one who will take care of you." The people say, "Yeah, that's nice God. That's nice God, but I am going to take enough so I don't have to go out the next day and do it." So what happens? It stinks and it's full of maggots and they are upset again.

Sometimes God warns us over and over and over, and we think we know better because we look at what we can see, and we don't focus on the promises God has made to us. You and I can do the same thing. We hit the difficult times that come from living in a sinful world. We lose loved ones. We lose jobs. We lose relationships. We lose all kinds of things. We lose our patience. We lose our purpose. Sometimes we seem to think that God should have done something differently even though we know we stand in this privileged place. We are redeemed by God. We are covered in his life and his death, and we are forgiven. We have eternal life. We don't wake up in the morning and say, "Hey, this is great! I'm going to heaven." We wake up in the morning and go, "I have this wrong, this wrong and this wrong today, and I don't even want to get out of bed."

So if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't let the black ice that shows up in your life and trips you up, and it will come, don't let it trip you up. God has clearly said "through much suffering we are going to enter the kingdom of God." He didn't sugar coat it. He told us life in this world at times is just going to flat out stink. We are sinners. We are surrounded by sinners. And we have the effects of sin all around us. God still puts us in a privileged place so that we have blessing upon blessing, but sometimes that's not enough for us. We want more.

Sometimes we have to just step back and focus on this privileged place that we have. We know that when we put our head on the pillow at night and go to sleep, all the things that we have done that have offended a holy God that day, through faith in Christ, they are wiped away. When we wake up in the morning, no matter what fears and anxieties that morning may bring, we don't go through it alone. We stand in a privileged place because we have a faithful God at our side as we face all of it. We forget that at times. We focus on what we are going to do and we forget God's promises. He promises that he will be with us always until the end of the age. He promises that he'll take care of us and meet our needs, not our wants, but our needs. Sometimes we have to take our eyes off our wants and see how our greatest need has been met in Christ and then stand with Christ.

Look at the promise he makes to us here. God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. The way to stand firm so that we don't fall isn't to never go and do anything or avoid all the problems that we think we can. It's to face them head on and know that we are leaning on Jesus Christ. If you walk over rough ground and rocky terrain and you're worried about falling, you probably take along something to hold on to and use as a walking stick or something so that you don't fall. People may mock Christians and say that they use Christ as a crutch. So be it. Have you ever really stopped to mock someone who has a broken leg and it's in a cast up to their hips saying, "What kind of weakling are you? Why are you using a crutch?" The fact of the matter is you and I have more than a broken leg. We are filthy rotten sinners who can't face things on our own. We need God at our side. I can't pull up my bootstraps and say, "I'm going to face all of Satan's temptations on my own." If I did that, I'd be an idiot. I can be an idiot enough in other areas. I don't need to be an idiot in that area. I need to rely on Christ to stand firm next to him. I do that through his Word, getting to know him better and better. I do that through the Sacraments, going back to my baptism every day as I repent of my sins. And you and I do it when we come and kneel at the Lord's altar and receive his very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins.

Our faithful God has given us all kinds of things to lean on. We can either be fools and try to do it on our own, or we can lean heavily on the one who loved us enough to live and die in our place; the one who loved us enough to open heaven to us in spite of how evil and wicked we can be in our heart of hearts.

Our God loves us in spite of ourselves. That leads us to love and rely on him and to love and help one another. That's the blessing that we have. It's part of the privileged place that we stand in. We not only stand with our faithful God. We stand with our fellow believers who can comfort and encourage us and support us so that we don't have to face the garbage that we face in this world alone. We face it with those who love us that we can't see (God) and those who love us that we can see (one another).