



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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December 2, 2009

Hymn of the Day: 703 (My Soul in Stillness Waits)

Midweek Advent Worship

Luke 11:27-28

Pastor Randy Ott

My Soul in Stillness Waits

My soul in stillness waits. I would say that, for the most part, we aren't real good at waiting and we aren't real good at being still. Did any of you get a little itchy with those long interludes in between the verses in the hymn we just sang? Were you thinking, "Come on, we have to sing. Let's go! Why are we just listening to music? We should be doing something." We aren't real good at being still and waiting patiently for the Lord and meditating and reflecting on his Word, are we? It probably explains why the Lord put us in his New Testament era and not in the Old Testament era. We would have really stunk at waiting around for a Messiah to come, right? That's why he has us living now, because we've seen the fulfillment of all the promises.

Especially at this time of the year, don't we just get going, going, going, chasing our tail from here to there, lining up to elbow each other to buy junk that we don't want, for people we don't like. We find ourselves running from here to there and everywhere going to parties to be with people we don't want to be with, but we feel we have to, rushing here, there and everywhere. My soul in stillness waits, at this time of the year? Who are we kidding?

But there is a blessing for us when we take the time to be still and wait for the Lord and reflect on who he is and who we are. We need to reflect on all these incredible promises that he has made. So over these three weeks of the Midweek Advent services, we are going to take the time to wait in stillness and reflect on a section of the Gospel of Luke that is not touched upon in any of the three-year series that we usually follow in our Sunday readings.

The words that I just read to you are probably fairly familiar to you, but they are never a part of our Sunday readings. We are going to use the Gospel of Luke and these things that are in Luke 11:27 and following to take a look at all four of the verses of this Hymn we just sang which is loosely based on the O Antiphons. This year we are also going to look at the O Antiphons in our Christmas Advent concert. So Lord willing, we will get familiar with what Christians have treasured throughout the ages in the days leading up to the celebration of Christmas.

This evening we focus upon waiting in stillness for the spring of joy, the root of life, and seeing how God directs us, even though there are a lot of good things we can focus on at this time of the year, he really urges us to focus on one of the best things. That's his

Gospel that comes to us through his Word. In it he tells us we are going to be blessed. So he urges us to wait, despite loud cries that are all around us, and then wait for one everlasting complement.

What we read from Luke said “after Jesus had said these things.” I guess we should figure out what “these things” are. Jesus had just cast a demon out of someone. He had shown his power. He demonstrated his divine power by casting out a demon. But those who didn’t like Jesus no matter what he did said, “That’s not divine power. It’s by Beelzebub that he’s casting out these demons. It’s by the prince of demons that he drove out that demon.”

Jesus then addressed those complaints and said, “A house divided against itself isn’t going to stand. Beelzebub can’t cast out demons. That house would shatter. You understand that much. You know that makes no sense.” And he is powerfully teaching them and showing them the foolishness of their claims and the foolishness of their unwillingness to accept who he claimed to be and who he demonstrated himself to be – the promised Messiah, the Son of God. And as he is doing this with great power as he teaches the Word, a woman gets so excited about it all she has to finally cry out, “Blessed is the mother who gave birth to you and the one who nursed you.” What she said wasn’t wrong at all, was it? Isn’t that what we sing when we sing the Song of Mary? That Mary is blessed among women? It comes right out of the Gospels. She is considered more blessed than all women that have ever lived because she gave birth to the Messiah. It’s not that what she said is wrong or bad, but it’s kind of like Mary and Martha when they are getting ready for that dinner. Mary chose what was better and Jesus said, “There’s really something even better than what you are talking about.” Here was this loud cry, not a bad cry, but it was taking the attention off of where it really should have been.

That doesn’t sound like this time of year at all, does it? There are a lot of loud cries at this time of the year demanding our attention, aren’t there? Getting ready for this party, going to this place, doing this thing, going from one place to another; there are a lot of voices at this time of the year that cry out for our attention. Family, our vocation, our friends, the needy, all the demands or requests put on us to support the needy at this time of the year – none of them are bad things. None of them are necessarily wrong things.

But our God reminds us that if we want the true spring of joy, the true root of life, it isn’t found in any of those things. It’s found in him and in his Word. Blessed are they rather that hear the Word of God. Of all the choices that we have to make at this time of the year, one of the best choices we could make is to wait in stillness for the Lord. And as we wait, listen to his Word. But we aren’t that good at it.

Have you ever noticed at this time of the year how much more quickly we become sharp with one another over little things that aren’t that big of a deal? But we feel so stressed at this time of the year, pulled in every direction, they can be something that makes us snap at someone else or snip at them or cause us to make some snide comment; things

that by all rights we should just smile at and walk past. We don't do it. We don't wait in stillness. We wait in sharpness. At times we just attack.

In all the demands that come upon us, we end up putting some of them ahead of God and his Word. I always know when I've hit the nail on the head preaching the Law in a sermon. Usually I hear later in the week, not firsthand but from someone else, that someone said, "You've got to stop talking about that so much." I can't tell you what that is or else I would be told that again, but there are certain things it seems like at times we love more than we love God at this time of the year as we are chasing ourselves around. We show up in droves for those things and yet, when it comes time to wait in stillness and hear God's Word and praise our God and think about whom he is and what he has done, we don't have time for that; it kind of reveals where our heart is at times.

As we sit in stillness this night and we contemplate our Savior, one of the things we need to contemplate is that he perfectly kept the Third Commandment in our place. He loved God's Word and worship where you and I at times do not. He did it perfectly because you and I do not at times. Quite frankly, we will not. He took the perfection that God demands of us, accomplished it, and gave it to us. He took all the times that we love other things more than we love God and his Word and he carried them to the cross and lived and died for them. He becomes that root of life in dying and in rising as we just sang. He did that for us because he loves us so incredibly much and he is so incredibly patient with us.

Our God is able to wait. Our God is able to wait in stillness for us to turn back to him and away from all the times that we are chasing our tails. Our God's love for us in Christ is absolutely amazing. That's why this patient love promises us a word of blessing that as we spend time in his Word, he will bless us. "Blessed are they rather who hear the word of God and obey it," or literally it's "guard it," keep it and make it a part of them, make it a priority and defend it and have at it and stay at it. The more time we spend in that Word, the more blessings our God brings to us.

Yesterday we had a funeral here. After the funeral, after we heard God's Word, we did what all good Lutherans should do. We got together to eat. But even before I had the first bite of food, before we said the blessing and asked God's blessing upon the food and the time we were going to spend together, one of the family members came up to me and thanked me for the service and said, "That was very calming." And I smiled and said, "That's what God's Gospel does, doesn't it?" It brings us calmness and a peace that nothing else in this world can bring. The knowledge that those who die in the Lord are with the Lord is the blessing that comes to us through the spring of joy, the root of life, through the Word of God that Jesus has given to us.

Think of all the things we do at this time of the year. All the different get togethers we go to; we might go to them and we might leave them and come back and say, "I enjoyed that." Or "That was fun." But have you ever once walked out of one of those get togethers and said, "That really calmed me." I am not buying it if you tell me you did. We rush around and get so wound up and so worried. When we get there, we might

enjoy it, but it didn't calm us. It didn't bring us comfort. It didn't bring us peace. It might have brought us fun. But God's Word brings us calmness, joy, peace, comfort, strength; all the things that we need for our daily life, they come to us in that Word.

So, don't rush through the interludes. Use them as a time to reflect on those beautiful words of that hymn as we sing it every week in the Midweek services. Then let God's Word, that spring of joy, that root of life, take hold of you so that it may produce abundant fruit in your life.