



## Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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

December 16, 2009

Midweek Advent Worship

Luke 11:37-53

Pastor Randy Ott

### **My Soul in Stillness Waits**

My soul in stillness waits. The first week we got together, the only week we got together, we talked about how we aren't real good at waiting in stillness. We get anxious and jumpy and we can't sit still. We can't even sit through a musical interlude in a song that's teaching us to wait in stillness without getting nervous or anxious or thinking, "Come on; let's get moving." We saw how Jesus turned to praise that came from a misguided woman that was so excited about what Jesus had said and done and turned that to focus not on his mother but on the one who believes in him. He cast a demon out of a man and the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law were upset with him and accused him of casting out demons by the prince of demons, Beelzebub. Jesus taught them that that was silly, that a house divided against itself cannot stand.

He continued on in Luke 11, after teaching all of those things, to talk about how this generation that he was dealing with was so wicked because they continually demanded signs even though he was speaking God's Word to them in its truth and in its purity. But they still wanted a sign. He said, "The only sign that will be given is the sign of Jonah." As Jonah was three days in the belly of the fish, so he would be three days in the belly of the ground. But they still wouldn't get it because their eyes did not have light in them. He talked about light and darkness in the section of Luke that we would have looked at last week (if there hadn't been a blizzard).

Now as he got done talking about all that and talking about how they were in the darkness yet and they didn't see the light even though it was right in front of them, one of the Pharisees comes and asks Jesus to come eat with him. It seems like an odd request after everything Jesus had just said and done, but Jesus, in his desire to reach out to those who were lost, because of his love for those that even rejected and plotted against him, went there. He had this one-sided discussion that I just read to you. What you and I can learn from these six woes that he spoke on the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law, what we can learn from that is that we can wait because we have a certainty that they didn't have. They didn't have the key to knowledge. You and I have the key of knowledge and we can wait in stillness because we have a certainty, a sureness.

Think about how many times you become anxious and fret and get jumpy and worry. It's when you don't know how things are going to turn out. When you are unsure of things, you get all wound up. If you don't know how the doctor's visit is going to go, you

are really jumpy ahead of time, right? There is that anxiety, that nervousness, that nervous energy that maybe gets you pacing or things like that. Here our God is telling us that we can wait in stillness because we have a sureness. He shows us how we really should have no sureness at all, but he tells us that when we have the key to knowledge, we can wait in stillness because we have all the certainty in the world.

When he goes to eat at this Pharisee's house, he didn't give his hands a ceremonial washing. We aren't talking about washing with soap and water like your mom always told you to do. He's talking about a ceremonial washing, a sprinkling of water to say "now you are set apart and you're clean if you had come across anything that made you unclean unknowingly." Jesus comes back to that a little bit later. This is not a command of God. This is nowhere in the Law that God had given through Moses, the ceremonial law, the civil law or any moral law. It was a tradition of the Pharisees and the teachers of the Law.

So the Pharisee is thinking that is what you have to do to be right with God because that's what he does. That arrogance of the sinful nature always assumes "If I do it, it must be the best way to do anything." We of course would never have that cross our minds in our lives – that arrogance of thinking only my way is the right way.

He looks at Jesus surprised, but notice he doesn't say a word. He looks at him and it says that he was surprised. So then Jesus answers the thoughts of his heart before he speaks any of them. Jesus answers them and says, "Woe to you, you guys who are so concerned about the outside of the dish and cup and forget about the inside of it." He says "What's inside of you is greed. You won't share what you have with others unless you can do it to make a show in giving a tenth of your herbs and things like that, but what's inside of you is greed. You want it for yourself. Yes, you might sprinkle your hands, you might sprinkle the outsides of these cups, but inside you are nothing but a whitewash tomb." When he says "Woe to you, you are an unmarked grave," that's about as insulting as you can get because if you came across a dead body and came into contact with it without knowing, it made you unclean and you couldn't go to the temple. You couldn't go and do these things. That's why a whitewash tomb was also an insult. It looked good on the outside but on the inside, it brought separation from God uncleanness, ceremonial uncleanness. So he's really telling them, "You guys are so concerned about all these things, but you are missing the point."

It's kind of like Jesus is telling us here are all these things that are in your hearts that really should be a deadbolt that locks us out of heaven. Greed, arrogance, pride, wanting the first place in the temple and the courtyards and the highest greeting and to be acknowledged for everything we do. If we aren't acknowledged, then we are going to pout and not do it anymore. Jesus is saying, "That's another deadbolt that's just snapped shut when you have that in your life." This hypocrisy of going through the motions and then thinking that makes God love us more when our hearts are really far from him; the hypocrisy of saying, "Look at me and what I do. Sure, I'm not perfect, but I'm here at least, even though I might not always pay attention. At least I'm here." And

thinking that means God must owe us something; that's another deadbolt that has snapped shut.

"You experts in the Law, you load people down with burdens they can hardly carry and you yourselves will not lift one finger to help them." What that is really saying is you are so busy preaching the Law and the stern measures of the Law that you think you can meet but you don't, you have just showed them. You neglect to talk at all about the Gospel, about the promised Savior. You are so focused on the Law, you missed all of the Old Testament Gospel promises that the Lord would be our righteousness or the prophet that would come and reveal the key to knowledge. You think you have the key to knowledge because you are harping on people with the Law and then you don't ease their burden by also proclaiming the Gospel to them.

Think about how at times we do that. Someone gets caught up in a sin that we don't think we would commit and we look down our nose at them and say how horrible that person is and "that's so terrible and so awful." The way we look down on various sins today as though they are unforgiveable, I think it's usually because we don't think we'd commit those sins. The idea that "that person should be at church with me or at communion with me, that's just not right;" that's doing exactly what Jesus is talking about right here. That's another deadbolt snapping shut.

The lack of humility that our sinful nature delights in, the arrogance our sinful nature delights in, the silencing of God's voice of the Gospel to those we don't think are worthy of that Gospel so all we speak to them is the Law; these are all deadbolts that should lock heaven to us time and time again. The demands God makes on us to be absolutely perfect inside and outside, in thoughts, in words and in actions lock the door to heaven for us. A lot of it comes because when it comes right down to it, we have a lot of hypocrisy. We know the good, but we still do the evil. That's who we are. That's what we are. And another deadbolt snaps shut.

So as you hear Jesus speak all these woes on these people, it's intimidating for us and it's frightening for us and it might not lead us to think we can wait in stillness because it seems to bring about more uncertainty. "How can God love me? How can God forgive me? Look at who I am." Then we have to take our eyes off ourselves and put them back where they belong, back on Jesus.

Look at Jesus as he meets with these people. As he talks to them, he speaks these words in love. I think that's hard for us to imagine. When we admonish or rebuke someone, there is a part of us in our sinful nature that says, "Yeah, that's you. I'd never do this." Or "that's you, and you should have some problems now because of what you have done." We don't always admonish in full and faithful love. Jesus does. When he speaks these woes, he's not trying to rub their nose in it. He's trying to shock them into seeing that they are separate from God, and they are lost and condemned creatures. He's reaching out in love to the people he knows are going to plot to betray him and hand him over to the Romans because they aren't able to kill him themselves. He knows these are the people who he is talking to. Yet he goes and reaches out to them

because his love is so absolutely perfect. There is no hypocrisy in any of his actions. He spoke helpfully. He spoke in humility.

He did all the things that you and I fail to do. He did it in our place because God demands of us absolutely and positively no hypocrisy. No words at variance with deeds. You and I know that that's where we live, at the corner of words and variance with deeds. So we need someone to be perfect in our place.

That's why Jesus' love perfectly healed the demon-possessed man, taught the crowds there that day, and taught the woman who mistakenly praised his mother instead of him. He reached out to all of them in love because his love was absolute and his love was perfect. That's why he becomes the key.

His last woe to them is the convicting one. They had taken away the key to knowledge because they would plot against him and try to keep people from coming to him and try to force people away from him. "You yourselves have not entered and you have hindered those who were entering." That's why he speaks this woe to them. He is the key to knowledge. He is the key to understanding the certainty that we have. He was perfect in our place. He took all of the sins of those people that killed all of the prophets from Abel to Zachariah and took them all on himself, that includes our sins, and he carried them to the cross. So now we can wait in stillness because we know for a certainty that we have been forgiven. The outcome is certain. We have seen the end of the movie. We've read the end of the book. Our side wins. Jesus defeats Satan. And as we remain in Jesus, we win.

So that gives us a sureness, a confidence, a peace, a stillness that nothing else in this world can give to us. That's why it's good that we stop and dig into his Word and consider these truths and find in this busy time of the year the peace that passes all understanding.