



Morrison Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

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January 31, 2010
4th Sunday after Epiphany

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First Lesson: 1 Kings 17:7-16

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 78

Second Lesson: Romans 10:18-11:6

Gospel: Luke 4:20-32

This morning's worship will not have a Sermon. Instead we will have four devotions, one devotion to introduce each of the Readings and the Psalm.

**Jesus reveals himself as the anointed Savior,
not only of the Jews,
but of the entire world.**

This year during Epiphany, we have seen the Father proclaim that Jesus is the Anointed One at his Baptism. We have seen Jesus reveal himself as divine by his changing water into wine. Last week we heard Jesus say that Isaiah's prophecies of the Messiah were fulfilled in him; words that we will read again in this Gospel this week. Today we see that the One who was revealed to be the promised Savior is not the Savior of God's chosen people, the Jews, alone. He is also the Savior of the entire human race, Jew and Gentile.

No one likes to be the person that brings bad news to someone else. I can't imagine being a doctor who has to deliver the painful diagnosis or being the person who has to deliver the bad news that there has been an accident. People do this regularly, but I have a hard time thinking that anyone finds enjoyment in the task. Elijah had just delivered some bad news to wicked King Ahab. He told him that the Lord was going to send a drought on his land. When Ahab saw that the message of Elijah was correct and that the rain no longer watered the land, he called Elijah the troubler of Israel. Serving the Lord faithfully brought difficulty into the life of Elijah. The Lord sent him away from the king and delivered food to him with ravens. Later, when the brook he was living by dried up, God sent him to a widow in Zarephath. God provided for this prophet by miraculously blessing a Gentile woman.

God may well ask you or me to share some bad news with someone at one point in time or another. He may ask us to admonish and rebuke someone close to us. That is never fun work. But it is incredibly necessary. What we can learn from Elijah is that God will be with us and bless us even if others become upset with us. We serve to honor the One who lived and died to take away our sins. The love he has shown us compels us to do things that are at times very difficult. It requires strength. This strength comes to us as we grow in the Word and Sacrament. The Spirit blesses us with the love for others that looks past the hurt that we might have to endure and sees the eternal consequence of loved ones who do not turn away from their sin.

Our First Lesson is 1 Kings 17:7-16:

⁷ Some time later the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. ⁸ Then the word of the LORD came to him: ⁹ "Go at once to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow in that place to supply you with food." ¹⁰ So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, "Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?" ¹¹ As she was going to get it, he called, "And bring me, please, a piece of bread."

¹² "As surely as the LORD your God lives," she replied, "I don't have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die."

¹³ Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small cake of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴ For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD gives rain on the land.' "

¹⁵ She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. ¹⁶ For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.

This week's Psalm of the Day is Psalm 78. If we are to tell others about who God is and what he has done for them, it only stands to reason that we will have to know who God is and what he has done for us. We need to hear the Word so that we can share it with the next generation and members of this generation who do not live in the peace of trusting in God.

Know God's plan, one generation tells the next. Speak God's Word with those whom you are close to in the home so that you will get yourself ready to always give an answer for the hope that you have. The message we share is not new and improved and ever changing. It is things from old, what we have heard and what our fathers have told us. So learn it, live it, share it.

Psalm 78:

Refrain: Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

O my people, hear my teaching;
listen to the words of my mouth.

I will utter things from of old,
what we have heard and what our fathers have told us.

We will not hide them from their children;
we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the LORD.

Refrain

The LORD decreed statutes for Jacob
and established the law in Israel,

so the next generation would know them,
and they in turn would tell their children.

Then they would put their trust in God
and would not forget his deeds but would keep his commands.

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son
and to the Holy Spirit,
as it was in the beginning,
is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Refrain

Our Second Lesson ties together the First Lesson, Psalm and Gospel. God wanted his people to share the message of who he was and what he had promised. Leaders like Ahab failed to do this, so God sent his prophets to other people, like the widow of Zarephath.

In our Second Lesson, Paul tells us what happened on this smaller scale also happened to many others of his countrymen. They had a special relationship with God. They were the chosen nation from among all nations, yet God had told them that he would share his message of salvation with all people. One of the reasons he did it was so that his chosen people would return to him. Sadly, many did not return. Yet God always has a remnant that has not rejected his grace, or undeserved love.

We are the fulfillment of these verses. God revealed himself to us when we did not seek him and we had no understanding. We are not God's chosen nation, yet he seeks to make the first chosen nation envious because he has given us the gift of faith. Be careful that you do not repeat the folly of many in Israel. They felt being God's chosen people was enough. They felt that listening to God or his prophets was not really necessary. This foolish arrogance caused many of God's people, who had so many advantages, to press the express button on the elevator to hell.

Watch yourself. Do not become spiritually arrogant and think that having family members who have long been in this congregation is a replacement for a living and active faith in Jesus. Do not feel that the fact that you were once confirmed guarantees that you can never fall away. God does not reject any who are his, but many who are his put out the Spirit's fire by failing to walk close to Jesus. A living faith in the One who lived and died to take away all sin is replaced by a fading memory of instruction classes; step away from the elevator door and return to the God who, in grace, saved you.

Our Second Lesson is Romans 10:18-11:6:

¹⁸But I ask: Did they not hear? Of course they did:

"Their voice has gone out into all the earth,

their words to the ends of the world."¹⁹Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says,

"I will make you envious by those who are not a nation;

I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."²⁰And Isaiah boldly says,

"I was found by those who did not seek me;

I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me."²¹But concerning Israel he says,
"All day long I have held out my hands
to a disobedient and obstinate people."

¹I ask then: Did God reject his people? By no means! I am an Israelite myself, a descendant of Abraham, from the tribe of Benjamin. ²God did not reject his people, whom he foreknew. Don't you know what the Scripture says in the passage about Elijah—how he appealed to God against Israel:³"Lord, they have killed your prophets and torn down your altars; I am the only one left, and they are trying to kill me"? ⁴And what was God's answer to him? "I have reserved for myself seven thousand who have not bowed the knee to Baal."⁵So too, at the present time there is a remnant chosen by grace. ⁶And if by grace, then it is no longer by works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace.

Our Gospel begins with the last verse of last week's Gospel. Jesus is in the synagogue in his hometown of Nazareth. He had read a messianic prophecy from Isaiah. All the people were amazed at him and how well he talked. Yet they were also walking in the well-worn path of "familiarity breeds contempt." In fact, that might well be the modern day equivalent of the Proverb Jesus quotes. They were so familiar with Joseph's son that they were infuriated with his claim. Sure, he could talk well, but this was the guy they knew. He could not possibly be the promised Messiah. He was Jesus from down the block. When he went so far as to say that God would prefer to do incredible things among the Gentiles because Israel rejected his Word, they became really upset. So they took him to the edge of a cliff, with every intention of throwing him over the side. But Jesus' time had not yet come. He walked through the hostile crowd, and they could not stop him. He went to another place and proclaimed the Gospel there.

Do not let false familiarity with the Gospel breed contempt for it. Genuine familiarity with the Gospel will always be amazed that God would love filthy rotten sinners like you and me. False familiarity with the Gospel forgets the seriousness of the Law and is bored with full and free forgiveness through Christ. False familiarity looks for some new and improved wisdom, like what an unbelieving science teacher offers when he mocks those who believe the story of Creation. Or it looks for the kind of wisdom that a false teacher from within the church seems to have when he twists everything you have learned from the Bible to make it more palatable for post-modern man.

Watch yourself carefully. Examine yourself carefully with the mirror of God's Law. Wipe away the tears of guilt with the gentle cloth of God's love in Christ. Cling to the truths you know. Jesus loves all. Jesus died for all. The Spirit has led you to trust that Jesus is not merely Joseph's son. He is your heavenly Father's Son who came to save you.

Our Gospel is Luke 4:20-32:

²⁰Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, ²¹and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his lips. "Isn't this Joseph's son?" they asked.

²³Jesus said to them, "Surely you will quote this proverb to me: 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in Capernaum.' "

²⁴"I tell you the truth," he continued, "no prophet is accepted in his hometown. ²⁵I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. ²⁶Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. ²⁷And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed—only Naaman the Syrian."

²⁸All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. ³⁰But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.

³¹Then he went down to Capernaum, a town in Galilee, and on the Sabbath began to teach the people. ³²They were amazed at his teaching, because his message had authority.