



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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February 28, 2010  
2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent  
Luke 13:31-35  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: Jeremiah 26:8-15  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 42-43  
Second Lesson: Philippians 3:17-41  
Gospel Lesson: Luke 13:31-35

### The Desires of Jesus' Heart

Jesus once said, "You can't serve two masters. You will either love the one or hate the other." Then he said, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (See Matthew 6:24). It's kind of a truism, right? The things that you love, the things that you long for, your treasure goes to that. If your heart loves and longs for watching the Packers, you'll spend the money on season tickets. If you love and long for a wonderful collection of ceramic kitties, you'll have a wonderful collection of ceramic kitties that you'll spend the money on, right? Where your heart is your treasure will follow. That's true.

It's kind of interesting that you can maybe see that in our lives as you look at what we spend things on or what we devote time and energy and treasure to. But consider what I just read to you. It's kind of interesting, isn't it? Jesus shows us where his heart is, what he longs for, and when you think about it, that's where his treasure went to. That's where his life was, leaving heaven, coming to earth to be perfect in our place. That's where he took all of our sins on himself and took them to the cross. The treasure is not gold or silver but his holy precious blood. His innocent suffering and life. Jesus put the desire of his heart, his treasure, himself, into the desire of his heart, which he tells us in what we just read from Luke 13, the desire of his heart was his longing to gather together his people, the people of Jerusalem, the Jews, like a hen gathers the chicks under her wings. The same thing is true for us. He has that same longing, that same desire for you and for me.

It's an incredible thought to stop and think about. The desire of Jesus' heart is sitting in front of you, next to you, behind you. The desire of Jesus' heart is all the souls that he has redeemed. So it's thrilling to hear that we are the desire of Jesus' heart, but we also have a warning sounded in our ears, don't we? It's said about Jerusalem, "How often I longed to gather them together, but they were not willing." As thrilling as the words are that we are the desire of Jesus' heart, so chilling are the words, "they were not willing."

It's a warning for us. If we think we are standing firm be careful lest we fall. Think of people that you stood next to, or with, in front of God's altar at one time and said, "You know, I'd rather die than fall away from Christ." Think of how many of them are not willing or have fallen away from Christ or have broken that vow and found other things in this world that they've set their heart's desire on instead of upon Christ. That setting

in mind is words that we should take to heart as we see our Savior and the depth of his love for his people.

It's said that at that time some Pharisees came to Jesus. He was up in Galilee. He was preaching and teaching there. I kind of doubt that these Pharisees came to Jesus and warned him because they were really concerned about his welfare. Maybe they were. We are not told definitely if they were serious or if they were just trying to get him to head to Jerusalem where they had more power and influence, where they felt they could be arresting him and putting him to death. In any case, Jesus takes their warning and seems to discard it out of hand as though it's just so much dribble that they don't really seem to have a concern for him. He says, "Go tell that fox;" that's an interesting way to talk about the political leader of that area at that time, that cunning fox, "go tell him I've got things I have to do. Today and tomorrow I have a definite time of things that I'm going to have to do. I have to drive out demons and heal people. I have to carry out my ministry today and tomorrow, but at the appointed time, on the third day, I'll reach my goal. But I have time yet where I am going to have to do what I have been sent here to do; to heal, to preach, to teach, to demonstrate that I am the Messiah and to teach with authority. But at that appropriate time, on the third day, I will go where I need to go. Besides, it's not going to be Herod that puts me to death. No prophet dies outside of Jerusalem. I know where I am going to die. I know why I am going to die. And it's not going to be because of your hand. It's going to be because of my decision. At the appropriate time, I will go to Jerusalem because that's where all God's representatives are put to death."

You wonder if Jesus was even thinking of things like what we saw in our First Lesson this morning where in the house of the Lord Jeremiah was seized and they wanted to kill him simply because he had dared to call them to turn away from sin and back to the Lord. How dare he point out the sin of the people there in Jerusalem. It was ridiculous.

That's kind of how we all are though, aren't we? If I point out the person's sins next to you, you are pretty happy. If I point out your sin, it's "Pastor, you're preaching too much Law lately." I don't know how often I hear that. I know when someone tells me I'm preaching too much Law, I must have hit the one they are struggling with, whatever it was. We are all comfortable when we are talking about someone else's sin, but when it's our sin, we don't want to hear it.

The Lord knows we need to hear it. We need to see what filthy rotten wretches we are, how sinful we are, and how we have nothing to offer to God so that God should let us into his heaven. The only way that is going to happen at times is when God sends someone else to look us in the eye and say "What you are doing is against God's will. Knock it off. It's going to separate you from God. Turn away from it and back to God." We can get bucky when that message comes, like the people in Jerusalem did, like the people of Jesus' day did, or the Spirit can work in our hearts and lead us to say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner."

Christ lived and died for us and he sends the Spirit through the Word, through Baptism, through the Lord's Supper so that we see our sin and turn away from it and turn back to his forgiveness. That's his longing. He wants to gather us under the protective wings of his Gospel message; that even though we are filthy rotten sinners, even though we would want to be right there throwing stones at him at times because we don't like it when he tells us that what we have done is wrong, he still loves us. He still longs to gather us under his arms even though we so often turn our backs on him. Can you even begin to picture that?

How patient are you going to be with someone who spits in your face? Are you going to keep wiping it off and turning the other cheek? How often are you going to keep doing that? I know I'm not going to do it that often. If I did it once, I'd probably be amazed. That would probably not be me doing it, that would be the Lord doing it in me because that's not my nature.

Here's a Holy God who wants to reach out to us, who loved us enough to live and die in our place, who sends us the Word, who sends us the Sacraments, and we have other things to do. We think it's not that important. We give him lip service, but our hearts at times are far from him. Yet he continually comes back again and again and longs to bring us in. He longs to protect us. He longs to say you are forgiven and heaven is open to you.

That's what he does when we come to the Lord's Supper. His very body and blood, in, with and under the bread and wine, and he says to us, "This is the depth of my love for you. This is what I was willing to do with your sins on my back so that you could be completely and absolutely forgiven." Not by your efforts, but by God's efforts.

God's longing for us is clear. We are the desires of his heart, so listen to his Word. Let his Spirit work in your hearts to see your own sin. Let the Spirit lead you not to make excuses, not to say, "Yeah, but..." Let the Spirit lead you simply to say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." That's where his desire is. That's where his life was. That's where his Spirit still is today as he reaches out to us time and time again. Don't let it be said about you that you were not willing. If those words are the words that mark our passing in God's eyes, there's no longer any hope or help for us.

Today is the day when we can turn to the Lord and find full and free forgiveness. The cool thing is, when we wake up tomorrow, it will be the same day. We can turn to the Lord for full and free forgiveness.

So don't put it off. Be right with God through Jesus Christ today and every day.