



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 28, 2010
Palm Sunday
[Isaiah 45:22-25](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 45:22-25](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 24](#)
Second Lesson: [Hebrews 12:1-3](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 19:28-40](#)

Find Strength in The Lord Alone

One of the first times we got together a couple of years ago when you were 7th graders, we talked about what the purpose of Confirmation Class was. We talked about what the word “confirm” means. It means to be strengthened. You are studying God’s Word so that you are strengthened in faith, so you can express your unity with the congregation, and so you can be a responsible communicant member of a congregation. You probably don’t remember that because you were 7th graders, and 7th graders don’t listen all that well. They just kind of sit there and act scared for most of the class. But hopefully by the time you are 8th graders you’ve started listening a little bit more and you’ve got that into your heads. I think you understand what the purpose of Confirmation Class was and what the rite of confirmation itself is. We’ve talked about that at length.

So if you listened to those words I just read to you from Isaiah, they should have sounded a little familiar. The word for “confirm” was in there, wasn’t it? It says, “In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.” We talked about how the purpose of Confirmation Class is to strengthen you in your faith so you can be united with the congregation and faithful communicant members. And all along I’ve been telling you over and over, and I told you this is why we are going to look up all the passages in the Bible and not just have me recite them, “We are going to look at them and see them in there, because I don’t want you relying on me.” Pastor Ott can be wrong. Pastor Ott can go nuts. Thirty years from now, I don’t want you saying, “Pastor Ott told us in Confirmation Class.” I want you saying, “This is what God’s Word says.” Because that doesn’t change, right? You don’t know how loopy I can become. You don’t want to put your trust in me. You want to put your trust in that Word of God, in the Lord, in his Word and in his Sacrament. That’s where you want to find your strength. That’s exactly what Isaiah said, right? “In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.”

So as we gather together on this Psalm Sunday and as you are confirmed in your Christian faith, you confess that you’ve been confirmed or strengthened in that Christian faith, I’m going to tell you what I’ve always told you. I’m going to tell you the same thing I’ve told you over and over for two years. Hopefully by now it’s in there, the ears are open. Find your strength in the Lord alone. Why? Because there is no other. Isn’t that what he said? “I am the Lord, there is no other.” There are a lot of things, like we’ve talked about, that we are tempted to make gods, things that we are tempted to

love more than God, but they're not gods just because we make them a god. Just because we love them more than God doesn't mean they have any power or any ability to help us.

Think of all the people that have made themselves a god and they loved themselves. Terrell Owens, "I love me some me;" there are a lot of people that live with that motto. Whatever they decide is right is what is right. Whatever they feel is pleasing is what is good and right. And if someone else, even a god, wants to tell them any different, tough. They aren't going to listen.

Don't do that! That's wrong. Not only that, it's stupid. Isn't that what we talked about? What affect, what change can any of us make on anything? Men, have you been able to change women or even understand them? Women, could you do the same thing? Yet we want to consider ourselves gods? We can't even understand each other. As sinners, we aren't that bright. So to find our strength in ourselves is pretty silly.

Find your strength in the Lord alone. Why? Because he has promised you. He says, "By myself I have sworn." He can't swear by anything stronger than God, right? So that's why he has said, "I have sworn by myself that this is what I am saying in all integrity and all truth. Before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say, 'In the LORD alone are righteousness and strength.'" So what did he just promise you? What did he just swear to you? That in him you will be made righteous, right?

All those sinful things we do, all those times we love ourselves more than we love God, all those times we chase after our own tail because we think we know better, God took all of them and threw them on Jesus and Jesus lived perfectly in our place and then died in our place on that cross that we are going to focus on this coming Friday. That's where you find your righteousness. God demands that you be righteous. He doesn't change that just because you can't do it on your own. He says, "Be perfect as I the Lord your God am perfect." He says, "Be holy as I the Lord your God am holy." He doesn't just wink and say, "Just kidding." He's not some doting grandparent that thinks it's cute when we screw up. He hates it when we screw up. You know that.

But because that's what he demands, that's what he gives us in Christ. In his Word and in his Sacraments, he washes away our sins. So now when God looks at us, he doesn't see all the things that make us filthy rotten sinners, which is what we all are. Instead he sees that perfection that is Jesus because you've been clothed with it. That's why we put you in white gowns, as a reminder that you are clothed in Christ's righteousness. You've got nice new clothes under there I'm sure. You girls probably drove your parents nuts picking out those dresses, didn't you? But we are still covering them up to remind you that you are not covered by your own righteousness. You are covered by Christ's righteousness. Don't ever forget that. Stand in his righteousness alone as you walk with God throughout your entire life.

Today, on Palm Sunday, we are reminded of another truth...this word of warning that our God gives to us. He says, "All who have raged against him will come to him and be put to shame." When Jesus entered into Jerusalem, they threw the palm branches in front of him and their cloaks and they said, "Hosanna, blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." Their mouths were there saying, "I believe. I believe. I believe. This is the greatest thing in the world this Jesus. He is the best."

You are going to stand up in a little while and you are going to say the same things, right? "I do. I do. I do. I ask God to help me." And all those things. You are going to vow, "I would rather die than fall away from Jesus because he is the greatest thing ever." But just like some of those people on that day who said all those things, it didn't take too long for some of them to say "crucify" later in the week, right? Why? Because instead of following and finding their strength and righteousness in Jesus alone, they started listening to other teachers that were a little loopy and told them, "We have to get rid of him. This is the best thing we can do to honor God." So if you start following any false teachers or false teaching from your own sinful nature, God is saying "There is a possibility you can fall away from me." So he's saying, "Don't." Those who have raged against him will be put to shame.

When we see how we have offended our God, we are put to shame by what we have done in this life. Lord willing, we then return to God and find forgiveness. But if we don't turn to God, if we don't remain in Christ and find in him our strength all the days of our lives, we will be excluded from the blessings that he has won for you and that you are confessing you trust him for. Many people have stood in front of God's altars and said, "I believe. I believe. I believe." And some of those people have already fallen away.

So one of the tasks that God gives to you guys is to remind them of how important "I believe. I believe. I believe" is and to be God's voice that calls them back to their Lord and Savior. You say, "We're just kids. We can't do that." What did I just tell you? Find your strength in the Lord alone, not in yourself. Quit focusing on yourself. Focus on God and you can do incredible things.

When I was your age, the idea that I'd be standing in front of a full church like this and talking to people terrified me. I don't like public speaking. But when you find your strength in God, you can do things you don't think you can. That starts already now for you guys.

So find the strength in the Lord alone to correct people when they are wrong, to lead people back to Christ. Remember what I told you earlier this week? Today, when people shake your hand and say, "There, you're through with all that." Ask them politely to turn around so you can kick them in the rear end and then tell them you're not done with all that yet. Growing in Christ is a lifelong experience, not just until you put a white gown on and a flower and get confirmed.

Find your strength in the Lord alone all the days of your life. Then you will be found righteous. Then you will exalt.