



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

July 4, 2010  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Sermon Text: [Romans 13:1-7](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Psalm 33:12-20](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 148](#)  
Second Lesson: [Romans 13:1-7](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 22:15-22](#)

### Honor God's Gift of Government

Has it ever happened to you at a birthday party where your mom gave you that look or that elbow when you were so excited over the gift that you had opened and you were all fired up about it...or maybe you weren't...maybe you couldn't wait to get to the next gift because you didn't like that one...but did you ever get that look or that elbow or whatever it was and your mom communicated to you, "Hey dummy. You better go say 'thank you.'" Has that ever happened to you? Sometimes we're so excited or so disappointed that we forget our manners that we were taught. We sometimes are maybe so excited that we focus on that gift and forget all about saying thank you.

Today, as a country, we talk about July 4<sup>th</sup> being the birthday of our country. So I suppose you could say maybe we need to nudge each other and give each other that look to remind ourselves not just to say what a great and blessed country we have, which I believe we do, but to look back at who has given us this gift of government, who has given the gift of all governments, and consider how we are to honor God for his gifts that he gives us through government.

They are many and they are incredible blessings, but this morning we want to remind ourselves that it is a gift of God, and God has certain expectations on how we are to say thank you for that gift he has given us. He lays it out pretty straightforward for us.

Was it this way for you when you were growing up? When mom or dad would use your middle name, you knew you had to sit up and pay attention because you were in trouble? Did that ever happen to you? So what does it mean when God says the same thing three times within about two sentences? Did you notice that?

Look at what he says at the start of our text: *"there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted"* (Romans 13:1-2). Three times in pretty short order the Lord says to us "governments are put there because I put them there. Can you get that through your heads?" Do you think he's trying to emphasize something because we are not inclined to view it that way?

Think about who Paul was writing to...he was writing to the Romans. About this time, the Roman emperor is Nero. Nero is just plain bonkers, right? He's just kind of nuts. He's going to end up being the one, when he burns down Rome so he can build

something, he's the one that blames it on the Christians. He's the guy that lit up his parties at night by impaling Christians on poles and lighting them to light the party. He is the guy that is just plain nuts and yet Paul says "submit yourself to the governing authority because God put them there." It's kind of an amazing concept, isn't it?

Government is there because God has put it there. Whether it's the national level or the state level or even the local level, those people are serving there as a blessing to us from our God. That's an interesting concept.

Last week I talked a little bit at the beginning of the sermon about being on that Concert Choir tour when we went down to Florida. When we went to Florida, we sang a couple of songs that were dealing with the nation and things like that. In the middle of one of them, as the rest of us hummed, two guys took turns reading this section of Scripture. I always thought it was kind of like saying to the people of the South "You guys were wrong when you rebelled against the Union in the Civil War." It sounded to me like every time when they read this we were rebuking them for seceding from the Union in the Civil War. I couldn't deny anything we were singing or saying. It was all very true, but it just seemed odd to me. But I suppose those words would fit, right? He who rebels is rebelling against what God has instituted. It's a form of saying "God, I know better than you. I have to take things in my own hands because evidently Lord, you are an idiot." So do those words apply to our founding fathers?

On the History Channel all weekend, I've been seeing George Washington nonstop. I've been seeing things about the Revolution over and over and watching it unfold. It's been interesting. I enjoy that stuff. I feel that I've been blessed through what happened in forming our country. But those who are rebelling against what God has instituted? Does that apply in every case? Or when it says there's taxation without representation, like it says in 3 Corinthians, then you can rebel? As Americans, we seem to treat that as though it's Gospel truth, that it's from the Bible. Well, it's not. It's from our history. Did our forefathers rebel against what God had instituted? I don't know how you can read this and look at it any other way, can you?

But more personally, do you and I rebel against what God has instituted? Do we look at our national leaders and say, "They're a bunch of idiots! I don't know how they could have ever been elected." Do we attack the personal character and integrity when we talk with one another about some of our local elected officials that have been instituted by God? If we do so, and when we do so, aren't we saying "Lord, you're an idiot. You should have put someone else there." And when we say that, there's a three-letter word for it, isn't there? Sin.

Think of what it would be like if we didn't have these governing officials instituted by God on any one of the levels. I've always admired people willing to give their time to serve on the local level because I kind of know what it's like to be in a position of leadership or authority. You're not always appreciated. I see that even in congregational life. I hear people in our congregation at times talking about "that council" or "those voters. I don't know what they are doing." But when you make a

stand and you take a position and you do what God has put you there to do, sometimes there are people that always know better but don't seem to get involved.

I'm not saying that we have to agree with everything our government decides. But God is pretty clear on how we are to thank him for the government he has put here, right? If we don't agree, he doesn't say we have the right to rebel. He doesn't say we have the right to disrespect or dishonor. He says "If you want to thank me for the gift of government, if you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." He says we are to do that not only because if we don't we might be punished, but he also says to do this because of conscience. This is how in our relationship to God we say thank you to God for this gift, the gift of government that he has put here...by honoring them. Even if we disagree with them, do it in an honoring, respectful way. But to run people down and to attack their character? We have no right to do that. That is sin before our God.

Because of conscience, we want to view this as a way that we thank God for all of his gifts, not just the gift of government. We thank him for the gift of him living in our place perfectly and how Jesus submitted himself to the governing authorities perfectly and constantly at every place and every time. When he was put under oath by the Sanhedrin or when he was called on to answer by Pilate, he did it because they were the governing authorities and he submitted himself to them. He did it perfectly because you and I don't.

Then he carried all those times that you and I don't to the cross. He took away all of our sins. Now he says "In love to me, view the government I have placed over you as a blessing. They aren't going to be perfect because it's made up of sinful human beings. No group made of sinful human beings is going to be perfect. That's obvious, isn't it? All we have to do is look at each other or look in a mirror and we can see that is going to be true. But view them as a blessing from God.

Think of the chaos and the anarchy if we didn't have police or government, if we didn't have those who serve for the public safety...if every time there was a fire we had to go round up the neighbors and put it out on our own. We are blessed by those who serve us through our government. God has seen to it that they will be a blessing to our physical welfare. They might not always be perfect, but they are put there by God to be a blessing for us. So honor God by honoring his gifts, including his gift of government.