



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 25, 2010

Thanksgiving

Sermon Text: [Luke 12:22-34](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Deuteronomy 26:1-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 100](#)

Second Lesson: [James 1:16-18](#)

Don't Take God for Granted

What are you going to give thanks for today? If someone asks you that question, what is the first thing you are going to answer? Health, family, that you still have a job...a lot of different things might come to mind. How many will you list until you list the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ?

That's a given, right? We understand that. We don't have to say that. We understand that's the greatest thing that we are thankful for, right? Right. The point of what Jesus is telling us today is, don't take the most important things that you have for granted. Don't get so comfortable with the fact that you are forgiven, so comfortable with the fact that your sins are taken away that you don't rejoice anymore at this glorious truth.

What he paints for us today is a picture of what happens when we just take things for granted and we focus on other things. It leads to things that truly crowd being thankful to God and love for God out of our lives because it's hard for thanksgiving to live in a heart that is full of worry and fear. And that's exactly what our Lord tells us this morning. If we want to be rich towards God, if we want to be thankful towards God in all that we do, watch where your focus is. When it's on just the things of this world, there's a lot of be worried and fearful of, right? North Koreans start lobbing shells at South Koreans. You start wondering, is there going to be another war? Another front opened? You all of a sudden realize that "Gee, I guess the Bank of Ireland has an effect on my retirement portfolio this past week." You look at all these things in this world and there are so many things you can get worried about. Our God tells us not to worry about them.

He's not saying don't plan, don't think, don't make plans, but he is saying don't cross over into sinful worry so that you obsess about them and forget about what is truly important. That's what he is telling us.

At the beginning of what I read to you he says, "Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life." "Therefore" is taking us back to what he had just talked about. What he had just said is "This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich towards God." (See Luke 12:21.) What he had just done was told the parable of the rich fool.

Jesus was teaching his disciples and some guy in the crowd had called out to Jesus, "Tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." Jesus said, "Who made me an

arbiter between the two of you?” Then because he saw the greed in this guy’s heart, he told the parable about the rich fool and tells us don’t be so worried about the things of this world that we become greedy and worried about that kind of stuff. So then he says that rich fool will lose his life that very night. He had built all those big barns to take care of his great harvest, and his life was going to be demanded from him. “This is how it will be with anyone who stores up things for himself but is not rich toward God.” So he says, “Therefore, I tell you, don’t worry about your life, what you are going to eat; or your body, what you are going to wear.” And he tells us, don’t do that because when you do that, you can’t be rich towards God. When you are focused on these things, it crowds thanksgiving and God out of your heart. It’s pretty clear to see.

When I’m focused on the things I’m worried about, when you’re focused on the things you’re worried about, things you’re concerned about, you aren’t thinking about God and the good things he has given you. You aren’t thinking about whatever is beautiful, whatever is noble, whatever is true, whatever is admirable. You’re not thinking about these things. You’re thinking about all the things that worry you. God and being thankful to God becomes an afterthought, something that’s taken for granted. And it even becomes something that you start blaming God because you don’t have the things you want. God has given someone else something and he’s taken something from you. That’s what you think to yourself. So why should I be thankful to God? You’re focused on the worries of this life and not on the good gifts God has given you. That’s why Jesus says to seek his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. We have every reason to trust that God will give us what we need.

Jesus tells us about the ravens and the lilies of the field and how God feeds the ravens even though they don’t have barns and how the lilies of the field are more glorious looking than Solomon and all that happens to them is they are cut down and thrown into a fire. If God takes care of them like that, he’ll certainly take care of you. It’s almost like Jesus has shown us that if you want to live a life that’s rich toward God and you want to be thankful to God, first of all, here’s what you don’t do. Don’t worry. Don’t be afraid. It’s kind of like when you are teaching a kid to tie their shoes. Sometimes you have to show them what they are doing wrong. “You’re making a knot here instead of making a loop here.” You have to show them the wrong way first and then show them the right way to do it.

Our God is saying, “Here is the wrong way...to worry about all the things of this world. Here’s the right way...seek his kingdom and then trust that he’ll give you what he has promised.” If he takes care of the birds and he takes care of the lilies of the field, he’ll take care of you.

Jesus didn’t come to this world to live and die for the birds or the lilies. He came to live and die for you, to take away your sins, your selfishness, your sinful worry, your sinful fear, your anxiety. He came to take it all away. I don’t care how well you can excuse it and say, “Yeah, I have to worry about these things. You don’t understand.” I am told all the time that I don’t live in the “real world.” I’m sick to death of hearing that I don’t live in the real world. I hold the hands of the dying. I counsel the people that are

struggling with all this stuff. Tell me about the “real world.” The real world is full of idiots, sinful idiots who think they know more than God. The real world needs to learn that God’s love for you isn’t conditional on what you do, and God’s love isn’t withdrawn from you because you’ve had things taken away from you. God’s love for you is so perfect and so complete and so absolute, you can trust it completely and absolutely, at all times and in all ways. And if your senses are telling you, “I don’t have that much to be thankful for because my life isn’t as good as Joe Blow’s,” get your eye off Joe Blow and get it back on God.

Jesus Christ lived for **you**. He died for **you**. Now tell me God doesn’t love you. Seek first his kingdom and these things will be given to you as well. We don’t have to live in fear because God has said, “I am going to give you a purse that doesn’t wear out. I have given you a purse that doesn’t wear out. I have given you a treasure that moths can’t destroy, that job reports can’t diminish. Your portfolio, the one I have given you, is the forgiveness of sins and eternal life through Jesus Christ. And I have promised that I am going to give you everything you need to live, not everything you want.” The things that you and I at times want would lead us away from God. So God says, “No, not now. Just trust me.”

When you lay your head on your pillow tonight, you can know that you have a God that loves you perfectly and absolutely. Even though you at times have worried about insignificant things, in Christ, that sin is forgiven. So he says, “Don’t worry, just trust me, because where your treasure is, that’s where your heart will be.” The greatest treasure you and I will ever have is the forgiveness of sins through Jesus Christ and the Triune God’s promise to be with us, comfort and strengthen us every day of our lives until he takes us to heaven.