



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 8, 2010
Midweek Advent Worship
Sermon Text: [Isaiah 40:6-8](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

Prepare the Royal Highway

Did you ever play with building blocks when you were a kid? When you were real little, those little cubes that had letters or something on them and you would stack them up and build something out of them...did you ever play with something like that? What were they made out of if you played with them? Wood? Plastic? Did any of you sit on the living room floor on the carpet and play with those kind of building blocks made out of Jello that mom gave you? Why not? It would kind of make a mess, wouldn't it? You couldn't exactly build anything that would last at all, right? There are certain building materials you have to use if you are going to build, even in play. Even when you are playing, you have to build a certain way or it just doesn't even work to play with it that well.

The Word of God that I just read to you, as we continue to hear these three voices from Isaiah 40...last week the voice told the prophet to proclaim that someone is going to be coming in the desert, yelling out and shouting out, "Prepare the way for the Lord by making straight paths for him, by repentance." The next voice is telling us as we prepare the way for the Lord, prepare the royal highway, we better do some real world building the right way. There is definitely a wrong way and a right way. God shows them both to us, right? He says if you are going to use the building materials of man and his wisdom and his understanding, the breath of the Lord is going to blow it all away like dust in the wind. He reminds us that if we want to do real world building, we've got to do it with God's Word.

We would say, "Yeah, we all know that. We're all confident of that. We're all good faithful Christians who know that you have to build on God's Word. That's the only thing that's truly lasting." Maybe, some of the time, but we still have a sinful nature and we still say some things at times that communicate, whether we recognize it or not, that we don't think God's Word really applies in the real world.

What I mean is this...over the last few months, I've heard over and over that as a minister of the Gospel who is employed by a church, I just don't understand what the real world is all about and that I evidently don't live in the real world. I wonder what that means. Does that mean they think I have a unicorn in my bedroom or something and I ride in a mystical magical fairy land to go to town to visit people in the hospital? I don't know what that means that I don't live in the real world. I worry about it though, because I wonder if that means then that they are saying this in front of their kids that church and pastor and God's Word is here, but the real world is over here. And how we

act and conduct ourselves in the real world (do I look make believe?), in the real world is somehow different than using the Word of God and applying his truths and his principals to life. If that's what we mean, God have mercy on our souls.

Isn't that exactly what he is talking about in here? Don't cry out, don't build on human wisdom and human understanding because it's just all going to crumble. When the death of God's nostrils come, it's gone. If you want any kind of building that's lasting in the real world, a make believe world, or whatever world you choose to believe you're living in, it better be built on God's Word. So I guess we ought to be careful of the impression that we give to people about what's real or what isn't.

I remember talking with people who said, "Pastor, you just don't understand. In the work-a-day world, you have to step on people at times. You have to be rude and obnoxious, and you have to take advantage of other people. That's just how it is pastor. You're not living in the real world if you don't think that's the case." I don't know, God is the one who made this world that we live in and he has said, "I know what's going on. I know those who are mine. I know what you're doing." He's not just making a list and checking it twice. He's watching every thought, every action and every word that we speak. He says it reflects upon him and he's concerned about what we do. He's promised to give us everything we need for life. He's promised to make things go well. So if we want to prepare the royal highway so he can come into people's hearts and lives so that the King of kings and Lord of lords can come and reign, not only in our hearts but in the hearts of others, if we are going to use human wisdom and human theories and human philosophies, we are going to end up preaching that "God helps those who help themselves."

We'll quote that from scripture even though it's not in Scripture or anywhere close to anything that's in Scripture. But I've had good Christian people sit in a Bible class and tell me that it's in the Bible. It's our human way of thinking. It's how we think we have to be. It's what we think we have to do.

That's not how our God works. God helps those who can't help themselves because we're all lost and condemned creatures, ever since Adam and Eve thought they knew better than God and wanted to build on their road in their way and use their building blocks. They looked at the fruit and said "Hey, that looks tasty and that looks good for gaining knowledge. I think we'll have some." Since then, we've all had suffering and pain and death and hardship in all of our lives. That's what happens when we build the wrong way, when we build on man's wisdom and man's understanding.

That's why our God tells us to rely on his Word, to know his Word, to truly know his Word and treasure it and make it a part of our hearts, to make it something that we rely on, that we turn to, that we say "You know what? My life would be better if only I was closer to my God. If only my faith was stronger, my life would be better." That's the wisdom our God brings to us.

Think of all the places this time of the year where we try to find fulfillment. We try to find it by finding just the right present for someone we love. We try to find it making sure the house looks just right and is decorated just so before the guests come over. We try to find it in making things go just right and perfect at the get togethers that we have or the parties that we have. In and of themselves there is nothing wrong with any of those things, but if that's the be all and end all to what we see going on at this time of the year, we're really missing the point.

The point is God, the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us and that God sends that Word into our hearts so that he can have his advent into our hearts day after day after day as we grow in our knowledge of his Word and put that Word into practice. That gives us blessings that will endure long after the gifts are put away on the shelf, long after the mess after the party has been cleaned up, long after all of our celebrations are over. The one thing that will truly matter is that we know that Jesus Christ is our Savior and that he was perfect in our place where we have fallen short and that he loved perfectly for us. He trusted God perfectly for us. That washes away all the times that we have failed to do it and let other things crowd God out of our lives.

That Word of our God, that we are forgiven in Christ, that's what will stand forever, even when this world is destroyed by fire and Christ comes again. That's our confidence. That's our strength. So if you want more confidence and more strength and if you want to do some really good real world building, be in the Word...daily.