



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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December 26, 2010
1st Sunday after Christmas
Sermon Text: [Hosea 11:1-7](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Hosea 11:1-7](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 2](#)
Second Lesson: [Galatians 4:4-7](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23](#)

God Loves His Sons

Therefore He Disciplines Them
Therefore He Warns Them

When you see that sign that says “Wet Paint,” what is your first impulse? You want to touch it, right? You want to see if they are telling you the truth. That’s how we are by nature. We are surrounded by a lot of warnings, aren’t we? Warnings that at times seem to be kind of foolish and ridiculous.

Did you get any gifts yesterday that came with warnings? If someone gave you a hair dryer, did it have a warning that said “Don’t be in the tub and use this electric device”? You get those kind of warnings. Maybe when you were shopping for Christmas you ran through the drive through at McDonald’s because you needed some coffee because you were so tired of the crowds and so tired of everything else. You get your coffee and you look at it and there is a warning label, “This is hot. Don’t pour it on your lap” or something like that is what it says, right? We’re surrounded by all kinds of warnings because we want to touch the sign that says “Wet Paint” or when we see a line on the ground that says “Stupid” on the other side, we always want to cross the “Stupid” line and do something foolish. That’s just how we are by nature. That should be no surprise because that’s what our Lord tells us we are like by nature, right?

Here we have this prophecy from Hosea that contains the fulfillment that Jesus fulfilled that I tend to think you and I wouldn’t notice if the Holy Spirit wouldn’t have told us this is a prophecy of the Savior. But surrounding this are all these warnings that God has for his people because even though we know that our God loves us more than anyone else, we are tempted to love other things more than we love God. So our God has to sit us down and say “That’s foolish, but I’m going to warn you about it anyhow because I love you that much and I care for you that much.” So we are his adopted sons through faith in Jesus Christ and here are his warnings for his adopted sons.

We are adopted because of what Jesus is, and it was because of the one and only Son that he called us out of Egypt. He gives a warning not to love others more than we love him. That’s basically what it comes down to. It sounds simple enough, but it is a struggle for you and for me.

“Out of Egypt I called my Son.” The people of Hosea’s day would have saw this as how, when they were still this fledgling nation, this nation that actually developed from Abraham, God brought them out of Egypt and led them out of Egypt through Moses.

God blessed them and made them into a great and powerful nation through all those things. God took care of them in ways that were amazing. God did all kinds of things for them. But in our Gospel today, we heard the Holy Spirit tell us that when Jesus went to Egypt because Herod was going to kill all those kids, that this was the fulfillment of what the prophet said, "Out of Egypt I called me Son." If the Holy Spirit says it, I'm not going to argue with him and say "No, that's not what you meant earlier." It's just another reminder that God is God and we are simply just simple human beings who aren't always going to understand God.

Think of this great important truth that God saw to it that every prophecy about the Messiah was fulfilled in Jesus. That includes the prophecies that tell us what he was here to do. That the baby that was born in Bethlehem came to be nailed to the tree of the cross and came to live perfectly in our place and die in our place and then rise again so we would know that we are now his adopted children, as Paul reminded us in Galatians this morning. He sent the Spirit into our hearts to lead us to believe that what Jesus did for everyone, he has done for us personally. Now we are his adopted sons, not a sexist term, but we have the full inheritance of the first-born Son. Each and every one of us. It means we have heaven as a free gift from our God.

Our God who does so much for us is concerned that we don't repeat the mistakes of many others. So he warns us. He talks about the mistakes of his people that he called out of Egypt, that he led. He talks about how he lifted the yoke from their cheeks; raised it up from their cheeks so they could eat is literally the picture that is painted there. Think about how God had that special relationship with the Israelites that he had with no other nation. He sent the prophets primarily to them. They went other places at times, but he had that special relationship with them. He called them by name. He chose them.

It's the same thing he has done for us. As we heard yesterday, we are born not of natural descent nor of human decision but born of God. His Spirit worked faith in our hearts and made us his adopted children. He has done all the work that is necessary to make us his own. The warning comes when he says to the Israelites and to us that sometimes we don't realize that he is the one that has done everything. Sometimes we want to look at ourselves and pat ourselves on the back at what great and good people we are and how much God must love us. Sometimes we are just like the Israelites. We turn to Syria. We turn to the Baals. We offer incense to other images. We would say we don't do that, but the point for us is, do we at times love other things more than we love God? The answer of course is yes. We don't always want to admit it. We don't always want to be confronted with the things we love more than God. The chief things we love more than God is ourselves.

We've been here a lot. If you've been sitting in the same pew, you have a crease worn into the pad over the last few days, right? We were here for the kids' service, then we had Candlelight worship, then we had Festival worship, now, the next day, we are back here again. How many of you that were here this morning sat there as you were getting up thinking to yourself "Really? I have to go to church again? Shouldn't God be happy

that I've been here a couple times already this week? Isn't that enough? Why is God demanding more of me?" Any of you struggle with that? I have to believe some of you did.

Think about that thought. I know that thought crosses into all of our minds. "Isn't that enough for God? Why should he demand more?" As though when we worship we are doing God a favor. That's kind of backwards, isn't it? When we worship, God comes to us and feeds us with his Word and Sacrament. It isn't as though "Now I put in my time. Now God should be happy and get off my back." This isn't about punching a clock like you're in the workforce or something. This is about God coming to us and nurturing us with his Word and the Sacraments, showing us his love. That's why sometimes we don't realize that God leads us with the cords of human kindness, with ties of love, because we're thinking we are doing the work and we're doing him a favor. We're kind of screwed up.

But maybe you couldn't wait to get back here. Maybe you love worshiping God and you enjoy that so much, but now here comes Satan whispering into your ear, "God, I thank you that I'm not like these other people that are here because they think they're doing you a favor. I'm here because I love you." So even when we do the right thing, Satan is here telling us to love ourselves as though we're worthy of God's love more than someone else who isn't here or who wasn't here or whatever the case may be. Somehow we think we deserve his love. God loves us because he is God, because he is love.

Sometimes we are tempted to love other people more than we love God, aren't we? At this time of the year, are we tempted to love our children more than we love God? Do we find greater joy in seeing the kids' faces brighten up when they see the gifts or open the gifts than we find knowing the gift God has given us? Sure, we're tempted to find greater joy in that, aren't we? It is in effect the sense of loving our children more than we love God. There's nothing wrong with doing it, but can it become something we love more than God? Certainly.

I'm not sure, I actually didn't get over here an hour ago, but I don't remember seeing cars in the parking lot waiting to get the front row like I did for the kids' service? Is it that we came to worship God or we came to worship our children? It can happen, can't it? Sometimes we love other things more than we love God? But say that to someone and you'll get a dirty look, won't you? I kind of just did.

The truth of the matter is, we are no different than the Israelites. God comes to us with his loving kindness and with his grace and his mercy and his forgiveness and he says to us "I love you. I forgive you. I sent Christ to do all this for you." We thrill when we hear that, but we wander off and go back to loving ourselves or loving other things more than we love God. We do it time and time and time again. There isn't a single one of us here this morning that doesn't do that.

But here's the key. Don't find your comfort in the fact that you're just as great of a sinner as the person next to you. Find your comfort in the truth that God loves you in spite of the fact that you're a sinner like the person next to you. Find your comfort in that God gave his very body and blood to take away your sins, that he keeps reaching out to us in this love. He keeps reaching out to us and holds us with his arms even when we don't realize it; the arms of his Gospel and of his mercy and of his forgiveness. He does it through Word. He does it through Sacrament. And he gives us so many opportunities today. He lifts the yoke so that we can be fed through Word and Sacrament in so many different times and in so many different places, on our own or with other Christians. He does it again and again and again. He warns us, "Don't neglect this food." Don't neglect Word and Sacrament because Satan isn't taking a day off. Satan doesn't take a vacation. He is continually using our own sinful nature and the world around us to attack our trust in God and lead us to love something more.

So the greatest thing we can do is be on the offensive. Immerse ourselves in God's Word and Sacrament and see his love and treasure that love. And where we have failed our God and loved other things, don't make excuses or don't say everyone does it. Simply say, "Lord, have mercy on me, a filthy rotten sinner." Our God forgives us for the sake of Jesus Christ.