



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 31, 2010
New Year's Eve Worship
Sermon Text: [1 Peter 1:22-25](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 51:1-6](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 90](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 13:6-9](#)

Timeless Truths for Failing Flowers

We're Falling Flowers
God's Word Endures Forever

Does someone want to tell me what this is? Any clues? Any ideas? Can you see it? Are you still awake? It took me quite awhile to find one, so don't get mad at me Bev. It took awhile to find a Poinsettia that had died. It's a Poinsettia leaf. You see them all up there. This one looks a little different than the ones that are up there, right? Do you know what these are? They were over there too. That's where I found the Poinsettia. These are some of the dead Lily flowers that were back against the wall where no one could see underneath. That's what they look like, right?

Did you catch what God just said to us through Peter? He said "Don't look at this and see a rotted Poinsettia flower or a dead Poinsettia flower. Don't see a dead Lily leaf." What did he say you should be seeing here? Didn't he say it's you? The grass withers, the flowers fall, all of men's glory is like the flowers of the field that wither and falls. It's not a fun thought, is it? That's us...falling, failing flowers. We like to think we're "all that" right? The turning of a calendar is just like every year when you have a birthday. You have to stop and reflect. We don't like to do that as time marches on. We like to think we're all still about 18 or so, right? We like to think we still have that ability, that strength, that capability. But as time marches on, it becomes obvious that is not the case. We just do not want to confront it. That's why I have a sister-in-law that has turned 29, what is it now, 19 times, 18 times, something like that. We don't want to be confronted with time marching on because we can see these things happening in us. We can see how, because the world is sinful, because Adam and Eve sinned and because we ourselves are sinful, we aren't what we think we are. We aren't what we once were.

We cut evergreens down to remind us of God's eternal love for us. We put them in our houses at Christmas time, right? But about now, aren't they getting to be more reminders of you and me than they are reminders of God? Are you vacuuming up more and more of the pine needles every day? Are they falling off more and more? They are a reminder of what Isaiah said we are, right? We're failing, falling flowers. We don't have the strength. We don't have the glory. We don't have what it takes to be able to stand before God and say, "God, you owe me heaven. God, you owe me something." Our efforts to do anything to appease the wrath of God, they aren't even going to get to be shriveled flowers, are they? We have nothing. We can't offer to God nothing. That's why these truths that God proclaims to us this evening, even though he reminds

us that we're falling, failing flowers, that's why they are so important for us because they are timeless truths for failing flowers. The timeless truths are who God is and what he has done for us.

He talked in the verses right before what I read to you about how God chose us and God saved us through the life and death of Jesus Christ. When he says "Now that you've purified yourself by obeying the truth," it's just another way of saying "Now that you believe Jesus is your Savior, here's the truth." This promise of God that Jesus lived in your place and died in your place to take away all your sins, that's never going to pass away. That's never going to shrivel up and die like we will. We don't want to admit it, but it's the truth. Because we've been born again. When we're born the first time, we're destined to shrivel up and die. That will still happen to us physically because of sin. But we've been born again of imperishable seed, not of perishable. Notice what he said did it...through the living and enduring Word of God. Not perishable but imperishable through the living and enduring Word of God.

Let's say you have to go to town yet and get milk because you don't have milk. If you walk in there and there's a section of milk that says, "Drink by December 31, 2010," and right next to it is a whole section of milk that says "Will never ever perish, spoil or fade." Which one are you going to fork over your money for? Unless you're a complete idiot and in a hurry, you're obviously going to take what is imperishable, right?

Do you understand that when God talks about us being born again of imperishable seed not perishable and through the living and enduring Word of God, just a little bit later, about two verses later, he says to us "Like newborn babes, crave pure spiritual milk now that you have tasted that the Lord is good"...he is telling us we can get imperishable milk. That is the Gospel message that is in the Word of God. That is what he is telling us to get.

So the question is, do we get it? Do we make time for it? Do we get into the Word? Or, do we just have a superficial acquaintance with it? I have a tool box at home. I have a hammer. I know what they are used for, but there is no way in the world I can use them like a lot of you guys can. I just don't do it that often. I don't have practical ongoing experience in handling those tools. I can't compare to a craftsman who has that same hammer or that same tool in his hand, right? If we only have the Scriptural knowledge or the faith of a 14-year-old, we aren't really going to be a craftsman at handling the imperishable Word of God, are we? We are going to face life without the confidence our God wants us to have. We aren't going to have his promises at our ready. We aren't going to have that confidence that focuses on God. We are going to be distracted by the worries, the struggles, the concerns of day-to-day life in a sinful world. And because we aren't experienced craftsmen at wielding God's Word, we're going to suffer a lot more than our God would have us suffer.

He's made these promises so that we turn to him. He's made them so that we focus on him. He's made them so that we can handle them and use them to build one another up. That's why he puts us together in congregations so that we encourage one another

and strengthen one another. But we seem to think the only thing that we do together is have coffee or eat food or watch sports events together. This gathering together around the Word or using the Word in one-on-one situations with one another, that's something for someone else. That's not for us. God's plan is that you do it. His plan is that I'm supposed to be here equipping you for works of service. I'm supposed to teach you how to use these tools. Then you're supposed to be using them with your families, with your friends, with your neighbors, with your acquaintances. That's God's plan. If you want to argue with him, go ahead, but you're going to lose. His plan is always best.

So the question is, how are you going to do it? How are you going to get into it? We offer all kinds of ways to help you do it, but let's say you can't make it to any of the Bible studies that we offer and they're all at inconvenient times. It's a possibility I'll grant it. Then do it on your own. Downstairs in the basement, there's a sign up sheet for the first 32 people that sign up, for the Daily NIV Bible. It has three readings grouped together on each page for 365 times. It has a reading from the Old Testament and a reading from the New Testament. It has a reading from the Psalms and a reading from the Proverbs, all on one page, two pages, or however long the readings are. You sit down in 365 settings of reading it. Whenever you start, 365 times later you'll be done with reading the entire Bible. Hopefully the Spirit works in your heart as you do that and you start to see there's something more you'd like to know about and then you start asking someone else and you start growing and you start learning and you start getting into this stuff that is imperishable. Maybe this is the place for you to start. If you don't like doing it with others and you want to do it on your own, do this. But whatever you do, get into the Word. Don't just keep going on. Crave that milk and immerse yourself in that milk and get better at using it.

I guarantee you that if I go home and start using those tools every day, it's not going to happen, but I guarantee you that if I did it, I would get better at it. I guarantee you that if you go use God's Word, daily, God's Spirit will bless you and you'll get better at it.

(The next page contains Pastor Ott's "written sermon" for anyone interested in reading it exactly as written by Pastor Ott.)

all generations rise and fall, teach us to think earnestly on the immensity of your goodness. Help us to enter the new year Son and walking in the way of his peace; through Jesus Christ our with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Isaiah 51:1-6
pursue righteousness and who seek the LORD: Look to the rock from quarry from which you were hewn; look to Abraham, your father, with. When I called to him he was but one, and I blessed him and made him multiply comfort Zion and will look with compassion on all her ruins; he will visit her, her wastelands like the garden of the LORD. Joy and gladness will be heard and the sound of singing.
Hear me my nation: The law will go out from me; my justice will be proclaimed. My righteousness draws near speedily, my salvation is on the way, and my arm will be raised to the nations. The islands will look to me and wait in hope for my word, the heavens will vanish like smoke, the mountains will be removed, and its inhabitants die like flies. But my salvation will last forever, and my righteousness never fail."

Luke 13:6-9
"A man had a fig tree, planted in his vineyard, and he went to look for fruit. So he said to the man who took care of the vineyard, 'For three years I have looked for fruit on this fig tree and haven't found any. Cut it down! It is wasting my soil. I will let it alone for one more year, and I'll dig around it and fertilize it. If it doesn't bear fruit, then cut it down.'"

**God, our help in ages past,
hope for years to come,
be our guard while troubles last
our eternal home!**

"Hades of Night"

Hymn 69

1 Peter 1:22-25
Cleanse yourselves by obeying the truth so that you have sincere love for each other deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable but of imperishable, through the living and enduring word of God. For, "All men are like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fade, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you.

Timeless Truths For Fading Flowers
1. We're fading flowers
2. God's word endures forever

so which would you buy? milk that expires or milk that never expires? you have the choice

Get into word! Daily Bible readings v. OT NT Ps Proverbs
for each day of year on one page, convenient way to read Bible in 365 sittings.
I can't have a hammer tool box, I know what they are for. But stand use them like carpenters in a craftsman with word not just superficial acquaintance not 14 year olds faith.
PRAYER in context exper.

- M: I will exalt you, my God the King; I will praise your name for ever and ever.
- C: Every day I will praise you and extol your name.
- M: It is fitting, O Lord, in the final hours of this year, to express our gratitude for the countless gifts of grace we have received from you.
- C: You have been faithful to your promises and loving toward all you have made.
- M: You clothe your creation with beauty; you feed even the birds and tell us that we are much more valuable than they.
- C: You know what we need, and you give us all good things.
- M: Clothing and food, safety and health, possessions and money, even life itself—all these come to us from your generous hand.
- C: We thank you for these blessings, and we ask that you continue to grant them to us.
- M: We thank you especially for your Word and Holy Supper, which strengthen our faith, shield us from temptation, and equip us for service.
- C: Increase our commitments to these precious gifts, so that we may continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- Special prayers and intercessions may follow.
- M: Hear us, Lord, as we bring you our private petitions.
- Silent prayer.
- M: Almighty and eternal God, you have been gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love. As you led your people Israel with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, so lead us by the light of your Word that we may live our lives to your glory and be prepared to die in your peace.
- C: We ask these things in the name of Jesus. In his name we began this year; in his name we bring it to a close. Amen.

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LORD'S PRAYER

THE SACRAMENT

M: Praise to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In love he has blessed us with every spiritual blessing. He sends the Holy Spirit to testify that we are his children and to strengthen us when we are weak. Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ. To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and thanks and honor and glory for ever and ever.

like newborn babies crave pure spiritual milk...