



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 13, 2011

1st Sunday in Lent

Sermon Text: [Romans 5:12-19](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 3:1-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 3](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 5:12-19](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 4:1-11](#)

Recognize You Are Not in Control

One man made us sinners

One Man made us righteous

We like to be in control. In fact, many times we just can't handle it when someone else is in control or when things are out of control. One of the scariest feelings I had in my life was in Minnesota driving into Lake City, going down the rock cut on a slushy day at this time of year when snow would show up but then melt right away, not slowing down enough at the top of the rock cut, and as I went downhill picking up more and more speed, the car went around in circles a couple of times. Finally, it tumbled over the edge of the guardrail, flipped over and slid on its roof to the bottom of the rock cut. I definitely did not like the feeling of being out of control as the car was spinning around. You're out of control and you can't do anything, but what do you keep doing? You keep trying to spin the wheel as though that is going to do any good. The car is already sliding, but you keep hitting the brakes just because all of a sudden they are going to magically work on ice when you've been spinning around in circles. But you keep trying to be in control even when you're not, right? It doesn't make anything better, but you keep doing it because that's just what you do. You don't like being out of control.

So if that's the case for us in general, we probably aren't real fond of at least portions of this reading from Romans 5, right? We don't like it, but we have to recognize that it's out of our control. The fact that you and I are born sinners is out of our control. It says, "Just as through the disobedience of the one man many were made sinners." We were sinners even when we were born. Scripture tells us that, right? "*Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.*" (Psalm 51:5). We want to say, "Hey, wait a minute now! That's not fair! I didn't do anything yet. How can you tell me I'm a sinner? That just isn't right God." Do you ever think, "God, you should be a little more fair. You shouldn't condemn me for my sins until I actually commit some." That's not what Scripture tells you.

In his inspired Word, God tells you, "It's out of your control." One man made us sinners. Sometimes Scripture says that Eve sinned first and then sometimes it says through the one man, like it says here. Their sin together and not listening to God and instead listening to the serpent, it says it made us all sinful. Notice how Paul says you can see this and it's clear to see that all were made sinners.

Here is the reasoning he uses. When sin entered the world, death entered the world. God said that when you eat of it, death is going to be a part of life. That's what we are

going to face. He tells us to look at all the people from the time of Adam and Eve until the time of Moses, thousands of years later. They were born, they lived and they died, and they didn't sin by breaking any specific command like Adam did. God said "Don't eat from the tree. You eat from it. You're going to die. And sin is going to come into the world." These other people, until God gave Moses the Law, only had the remnants of the written law in their hearts. They didn't have a specific command or it written down on tablets of stone like they had later. So for all those years, all those people still died even though, if you want to be real technical, they did not sin by breaking a specific command from God. Paul is saying, "What does that tell you?" They were all sinful because death is a result of sin. And because of Adam's sin, everyone else since then has been born in sin and whether you think it's fair or not, God says that's the way it is. And that original sin that we are born with condemns us to hell. And we say "That's not fair."

I'm telling you now, and I've told you this numerous times...you don't want God to be fair. While you are busy holding your breath and saying "God, that's not fair that I'm condemned because Adam sinned," do you have to think back very far to the last time you sinned against someone else? If you want to say, "God, just judge me on the basis of what I've done," you're still as spiritually dead on your own. You need God to come and save you because you can't save yourself. You're born in sin. That sin condemns you. The sins that you commit, they condemn you. It's out of your control. You are born into this world a lost and condemned creature. We say it all the time, but sometimes I don't think we necessarily believe what we say. But it's the truth, whether you believe it or not, I believe it or not, or someone else believes it or not, it doesn't matter. God said it. God speaks no lies. God is correct. If it comes down to the question of who is right, you or God, I'm taking God.

So, Adam sinned. Eve sinned. We are born in sin. It's out of our control. You and I might not like that part of it, but you and I should be thankful that God tells us that. Hopefully we learn that if our condemnation was completely out of our control from even before the time we were born, that should also plant a spark some place, when the Spirit starts talking to us in our head, that yes, my salvation is also going to be out of my control. It's not going to be what I do and what I can do. When I'm born, I'm spiritually dead. If I'm spiritually dead, I have nothing I can offer to God. I have no reason, nothing I can do to offer something to God. But we want to be in control, don't we?

That's what makes so many different people teach and believe that faith itself is something you can do or a commitment that you make. But if God says, and he does say, "As for you, you were born spiritually dead," dead means powerless. Dead doesn't mean a bad head cold. Dead does not mean the three-day stomach flu. Dead means dead, powerless, without life, without ability, without capability. That's us. If we, you and I, are spiritually dead, and we are, we cannot make a decision to believe in Christ.

These last two days we've been studying baptism at the Kalahari, at the Dells Family Bible Retreat. We had three Bible Studies on baptism. A number of people talked

about it, how when talking to friends or coworkers they just can't accept that baptism works faith, some of these coworkers or their friends, because they still want to be in control and make faith something they do. It's not. It's a gift of God. And God works it in people that are spiritually dead, whether they are infants or whether they are adults. He does it through his Gospel, the Gospel that comes to us through his Word or it comes to us in baptism. God makes us alive because in the Word or in baptism, he connects us to Christ.

If you want to go home today and watch basketball tournaments on your TV, if you turn it on and nothing happens with the remote and you hit the remote, you change the batteries, and nothing still happens. You go up to the TV and hit the button. The TV still doesn't come on. What is the next thing you are going to check? Hopefully if it's plugged in, right? You are going to look to make sure it's plugged in because if it's not plugged in, I don't care how many new batteries you put in your remote, the TV is not coming on, right?

In our baptisms or in the Gospel, you and I are plugged into Christ. We are connected to Christ. That means what Paul talks about here is what happens to us. As through the disobedience of the one man, the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience, through the perfect life of Jesus...that's what we are clothed with. And now, the many are made righteous.

The gift is so much more amazing than the trespass. The gift, Jesus' life in our place, Jesus' death on the cross as the punishment for our sins, came after countless millions of sins. Yet, God's mercy is still that big. His love is that deep. His arms are that wide that they embraced the whole world and he says, "I will be perfect in your place. I will take the guilt of your sins to the cross." That's what makes us righteous. It's completely out of our control. It's God doing it all.

That I like. I like that. I don't want my righteousness or my holiness before God to be dependent on me in any way, shape or form. Do you want to know why? Because I know me. I'm filthy and rotten, not just because I'm a Lions fan. I'm filthy and rotten because I'm a sinner.

And you know you. When you look back in the mirror in the morning, you aren't seeing a halo over your head, are you? When you consider your life in the light of what God's Word says, you know what you are. When you consider your life in the light of God's promise and God's love and God's mercy, you know who God is. He's bigger than our sins. His love is more powerful than our shortcomings. He loves us in spite of us and he tells us, "I will take them all away. I will do it all so that when you lay your head on the pillow at night and you're struggling with guilt, what you did and what you didn't do, and the things you wish you would have done and the things you wish you wouldn't have done, and you know that you've hurt someone or someone has hurt you and you're struggling with that, you know God has taken away your sins. You don't have to deal with that guilt the way Satan wants you to. He's the accuser. He's not your friend. He's going to come and accuse you and say "God can't love you. You're awful. You're

terrible.” Just say, “I’m baptized into Christ. I’m forgiven. The one Man was righteous in my place. I am clothed with Jesus’ perfection, so get away from me so I can get a good night’s sleep.” By God’s grace, he’ll give it to you.

We like to be in control, right? We said that, right? When I go to the doctor and I’m going to need surgery, I’m really glad he doesn’t just hand me a scalpel and say “Have at it.” I don’t want that much control. I want something a little bit better at that stuff than me to be taking care of me. How much more so with our sin and our salvation? Our God is in control. So let go of the wheel and just trust that he’ll take care of you.