



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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April 3, 2011
4th Sunday in Lent
Sermon Text: [Romans 8:1-10](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 37:1-11](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 42-43](#)
Second Lesson: [Romans 8:1-10](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 20:17-28](#)

Controlled by the Spirit

Your Mind is Life and Peace
You are Able to Please God

We are quite proud of all of our freedoms as Americans and I think that's not necessarily a bad thing. We enjoy many freedoms. We can protest against what we feel are injustices in our government. We can do all kinds of different things to recall. As a Christian, we can still do all those things without necessarily sinning against someone else by crossing God's line. That's a wonderful blessing we enjoy as Americans. Yet, we need to be careful that we don't transfer what we enjoy in the political aspect of our life with the spiritual aspect of our life. What God hammers home to us again and again in Scripture and what he lays in front of us today is that we are never free spiritually. We are either controlled by the sinful nature, controlled by Satan, or we are controlled by God. We are never really our own when it comes to our spiritual life. Sometimes that's kind of hard for us to wrap our head around, but isn't that true about a lot of God's truths?

There are a lot of God's truths that I can't wrap my head around. I can't wrap my head around that God is three persons in one God-head. I can't wrap my head around how God says the bread and the wine is also the body and blood of Christ. It's simply a matter of faith. God says it. Therefore, through the Spirit's power, we believe it.

But this is truth that God has stated in Scripture. We are not our own. We have no freedom. In fact, we are born spiritually dead, as Paul wrote to the Ephesians. And in the words right before what I just read to you is that section of Romans 7 that you might remember where Paul talks about "the good that I want to do, that I do not do. The evil I do not want to do, that I keep doing. Who will rescue me from this body of death? What a wretched man I am." I love my God. I want to do what is right. But I still can't do it even though I love my God. Then he concludes by saying, "but thanks be to God through Jesus Christ." Then he starts Chapter 8 with these wonderful words for us. "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."

Notice a little later he says, "the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us," by Christ Jesus. They are not met by us. They are met in us. We've been declared not guilty. We have no condemnation for our sins, not because of anything that we do. It's all been done for us and been done in us.

That's why we rejoice that we are not our own. That's why we rejoice that we are controlled by the Spirit of God. In that Spirit of God living in us and working in us, we are told there is life and there's peace. So conversely, whenever we are struggling in this world, whenever we are struggling with difficulty and we don't feel that peace, I think God is telling us he is guaranteeing us it's because the sinful nature is getting the upper hand and we are living more according to the sinful nature than we are according to the Spirit of God. That's what our God is telling us.

Think about this. It's all what God has done in us. It's nothing that we do. Initially, we don't want to hear that. There's a part of us that always wants to give ourselves credit for something. There's a part of us that says, "Yeah, but I go to church all the time and I serve and I do this, so God must love me for that." God loves you most certainly, but God loves you because he's God. That's who he is. That's what he does. Grandmas give you stuff you're not supposed to eat when mom isn't looking, and God loves you no matter what you do. That's just who they are. That's what they do. This is the truth. This is the glorious truth.

Whenever we want to start giving ourselves credit, it's the sinful nature rearing it's ugly head again. It says, "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires." So whenever we are struggling with what today's readings have been talking about, selfishness, when we think it's all about us and we think other people should be doing more to make our life easier and why aren't they noticing that I need this and I need that, that's probably not the Spirit of God telling you to think those thoughts. That's the sinful nature. That's Satan. The sinful nature still rears it's ugly head and wants to lead us away from relying completely and absolutely and only on God. Anytime Satan can get us to start relying on ourselves, there is going to be an absence of life and peace in our hearts, isn't there? Do you ever find peace in your heart when you are relying on yourself and on what you can do? If you do, you're a fool because Satan is going to be right there telling you what you didn't do and how you haven't loved perfectly. All this idea that others should be loving you more than you loving them is the sinful nature.

It says that "the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace." The mind controlled by the Spirit is the mind that has God living in us, and he lives in us through his Word and his Sacrament. The more time we spend with the Word and Sacrament, the more we become like Christ and the more we want to do what Christ wants us to do.

The sinful mind, on the other hand, is hostile to God. "It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so." It wants nothing to do with God. The person controlled by the sinful nature cannot do anything that pleases God. "All our righteous acts are like filthy rags" Scripture says.

But when God works in us, then we can begin to please him. We can begin to live for him. We can begin to do this to thank him for our gift of salvation. That means that we live in this love not only for our God but for one another and that we live in life and peace with one another. This is pleasing to our God. Yes, we can disagree about

things and we can rebuke one another when we have sinned, but we can do it knowing that we're doing it because God loves us and we love this person. When the Spirit lives in us, we can hear these admonishments and these rebukes in the spirit in which they should be given...as someone who is concerned for us and wants us to be close to their God. That's what our God desires. He wants us to be close to him. The Law can't bring you close to him, but the Spirit can.

When we point each other to the Word and to the Sacraments and to God's forgiveness and God's grace, then we have that life and peace that God wants us to have. Then we please God as we serve him in the way that he has called us to serve, not in the ways that we have determined by our own thoughts. Controlled by the Spirit of God, we search the Scriptures. We seek out what his will is for our lives. Then we put it into practice. We don't just rely on what we've always seen. We don't just really on "it seems to me." Controlled by the Spirit, the Spirit living in us, the Word of God guides us in our life. The more that happens, the more there is life and peace.

It is just so frustrating at times as people who love God and want to serve God that we still have to fight against that sinful nature, isn't it? We want to enjoy God's peace. We want to live in thankfulness to him, but our sinful nature, our own sinful nature keeps rearing it's ugly head and leads us into thoughts that are wrong, words that are wrong, actions that are wrong, and that takes the peace out of our lives. It's just a never-ending battle that you and I are engaged in. A battle against our sinful nature. And when you and I think that we can handle it on our own without God's help, we are destined to failure. But when you and I lean on God and on his promises and on his Spirit and on his Word and on his Sacraments, God works in us the peace that we always say passes all understanding and enables us to love one another and forgive one another. It enables us to admonish one another and to be admonished in Christian love. It enables us to be the body of Christ that God wants us to be as we mature in the faith and as each part does it's work. That's what God has called us to do. Whenever you're finding it hard to do it, I guarantee you it is because of your sinful nature.

So return to your baptism and find God's grace where your sinful nature was drowned. Return to God's promises where you find his forgiveness and his love. God will strengthen you so that you can live to his glory.