



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

August 4, 2011

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Sermon Text: [Romans 8:18-25](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 65](#)

First Lesson: [Isaiah 55:10-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

### **The Christian Faith, One Word at a Time: *Longing***

It hasn't been that comfortable of a summer, has it? All the heat and humidity has made it kind of miserable at times. Have you talked to anyone who said "I just can't wait for this humidity to break or this heat to break. I'm longing for a nice cool night in a comfortable bed." I don't know about you, but when I talk to someone and they start talking about the weather, I'm never comforted by the fact that in a few months we'll be longing for this kind of heat again. If I'm going to long for something, I'm going to long for 70° year round because I'm not going to get it anyhow. I might as well long for something that's perfection, right? I never understood how that is supposed to keep me from sweating more, the fact that in a few months I'll be freezing.

When we long for something, we long for things that are important, things we really love, things we really want. I can long all I want for 70° heat, but the Lord hasn't called me any farther south than Racine. I guess he thinks I'm built for the cold.

There is a longing for something that's much better that I know I'm going to have, and by the grace of God, you can have it too. This longing that is talked about in this reading from Romans is of creation itself, personified as a person that's in the pains of childbirth or that is groaning as it waits and as it literally longs, I suppose you'd say, for the sons of God to be revealed. This longing of creation he is teaching us about because he's trying to teach us about ourselves.

As we go through this life, he's been talking about living for God and the challenges it is going to bring. Right before our reading started, he talked about the fact that we are going to suffer. He had been talking about the suffering of Christ and that we too will suffer. Suffering isn't anything we long for. It isn't anything we like. It's something we want to get rid of as soon as we can. It's something that we don't want to go through. But over the next three weeks, he talks about three things really that help us as we face suffering. This week he reminds us that the present suffering we go through is not worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us when this longing is completely fulfilled.

That longing is going to be completely fulfilled on Judgment Day. He talks about creation personified longs for the sons of God to be revealed so it can be released from its bondage, its captivity breaking down. Creation isn't how God made it. The fall into sin brought about all kinds of things that God had never created. God had never created a world that was going to endure cancer or going to endure earthquakes or

going to endure hurricanes or endure all these other natural disasters. I think when he's talking about creation groaning as in the pains of childbirth, that's what he's talking about. He's really telling you when you see all these things, they should be a reminder to you that this world is ruined by sin and the world ruined by sin is not the one that we are going to spend eternity in. As you see this in creation, he's saying to think of it as creation longing for the sons of God to be revealed.

The sons of God, believers, will be revealed on the Last Day when God separates the sheep from the goats and he judges the world so that all will see who are the believers and who are not. Before that day, you and I could have a good idea of who we might think are the believers by the words of their lips, what they confess, or by what they do. But they might just be good liars. I might be a good liar. You don't know for certain that I am a Christian. But on the Last Day, there will be no more "I think so." Everything will be revealed.

He's telling us to long for that. *"We ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies."* Our bodies have already been redeemed, body and soul. We've been redeemed by the blood of Christ, but we don't have the full redemption yet, do we? We still live in a world affected by sin, which means we are going to suffer. We live in a world that is no longer perfect. We are going to suffer because things aren't perfect. We are going to have heartache and hardships and difficulties and sicknesses and problems and tears and worries and anxiety and sleepless nights and restless days. That's the way it is going to be. But our full redemption comes when God takes us out of all the effects of sin. He takes us out of everything that troubles us and worries us and he brings us into that perfection, which is the presence of God, which is heaven.

This is really reminding us to long for that day. Set your heart on that day. Live as aliens and strangers here longing for the sons of God to be revealed and to have that glory and that perfection. You and I know that. We have the head knowledge that as Christians we can't wait for Judgment Day to come. But really, do you go through life longing for that day to be revealed? Or is that just something when you can't get around anymore, then you start thinking about dying and going to heaven and then you start thinking about longing for that day? But when you're younger and you're vibrant and you're active and you're doing this and that, do you get up every morning and think to yourself, "Is this the day? Is he coming back?" Or do you get so busy chasing your tail that you can't wait to lay your head on the pillow at the end of the day?

What is it you find yourself longing for? Putting your feet up in the recliner? Putting your head on the pillow and going to sleep? Getting a good meal? Getting a cool shower? I don't know, what is it? What is it you go through the day longing for?

Today, what did you long for as you went through today? Was it Jesus Christ's return? My guess is, probably not, right? We get so busy doing this and doing that we forget about it at times. That's why, if we are going to consider the Christian faith one word at

a time, we need to remember that this word *longing* is something that is always there for us. Our new self, the part of us that loves God, is always longing for heaven.

But we still have that sinful nature that longs for something other than a 400 point drop in the market, that longs for 401(k) statements that are going to look a little better than the ones we are going to see. We long for the things of this world, don't we?

Think about that. Put yourself on God's throne for a moment. You've lived, you've died for all these people. You've told them you have a perfect place for them. You tell them to live with longing for it. You look down from your throne in heaven and you see them chasing their tail and longing for all kinds of things that are going to be destroyed by fire. How would you feel?

Would you kind of be put off by it? Would you maybe want to snap the people to attention a little bit from time to time? Would you say maybe you need to start thinking about these things?

This is what amazes me about our God... If I was God, I'd snap people to attention a lot more often. But our God is loving and patient and gracious and he tries to lead us by the hand, and in his arms, back to our Baptism, back to the Sacrament, back to the Word and say, "Don't you guys get it? See how much I love you? See what I've done for you? See what I promise you? It's there so that it will sustain you through all your worries." We sometimes seem to just want to shake ourselves free from his arms and face all of our worries and all of our anxieties on our own. We just aren't always that bright.

But God always is. His love is always perfect. He always receives us back into his arms. He always brushes away the tears with his love. And he says, "I love you. You are my own. I bought you with my blood, and heaven is yours. Live in the world. Don't be of the world, but live in the world. Live with a heart that longs to be with me. Live for a heart that rejoices at that time to be with me in Word and Sacrament, because that's the foretaste of heaven that I've left for you, these perfect gifts of my love." This is what our God says to us.

He strengthens us and he sustains us so that we focus on the hope in which we were saved, the confidence that even though we are sinners who long for all the wrong things all too often, our God has loved us and has forgiven us and has given us the confidence that heaven is ours. Don't wait until the end to start thinking about that. Put your head on the pillow tonight and thank God that if don't raise your head from that pillow, you know you're going to heaven. Get up in the morning the next day and think to yourself, "If God comes back, that will be pretty cool because I'll be with the Lord forever." Then let that guide you as you work and as you serve him in all the areas he has called you to serve, in every one of your vocations. Serve him with all your heart, but don't set your heart only on those things. Keep that longing for the perfection of heaven as a light that's burning there in the corner of your mind that guides you and directs you throughout the day.