



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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August 14, 2011  
9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
Sermon Text: [Romans 8:26-27](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Joel 3:12-16](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 18](#)  
Second Lesson: [Romans 8:26-27](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#)

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

I think it was last week, or maybe the week before, I don't remember, but someone told me that they heard something about me from my mother, and if it wouldn't have come from my mom's mouth, they wouldn't have believed it. If I had said it to them, they would immediately have assumed I was lying. My mother told this person that when I was growing up, I was very, very shy and never talked.

It's true. I didn't say a lot around adults; around kids, yes, but not around adults. I took pretty seriously my dad's words that kids should be seen and not heard when adults were around.

It's not like I was always at a loss for words, but I remember one time when I was most definitely at a loss for words. It was New Year's Eve, 24 years ago. There was a party going on in the basement. I was at my wife's house. I left the basement, went upstairs and sat down and watched TV with my future father-in-law. I sat there. And I sat there. And I sat there. I couldn't figure out how to start this conversation really well because I was told, before we got engaged, I better ask him for Paula's hand in marriage. Talk about an awkward conversation to have.

Eventually I got the words out. Then I could go back downstairs and relax again. He let me marry his daughter, as you've probably noticed by now, but I didn't know how to start that conversation. I didn't know where to begin or what to do. We talked about all kinds of silly stuff. I think he really just enjoyed watching me squirm for awhile. I think he knew what was going on.

There are a lot of times in our life when we might be at a loss for words, but I think as we listen to the words that I just read to you from the Holy Spirit telling Paul what to write in Romans 8 this morning, you'd probably think that's not one of them, the area he talked about. When we don't know what to pray for, the Spirit intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express.

We don't know what to pray for? He's talking about this in connection with suffering. Remember it was talked about last week, "I consider our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us." So face suffering longing for heaven, as we talked about last week. Now he says, face your suffering with prayer and knowing that the Holy Spirit is praying for you with words that you don't even know what to say. That doesn't seem right, does it?

When I'm suffering, I know what to pray. Lord, get rid of the suffering, right? Isn't that what we cry out to our God in the prayer life that we bring to him? I don't know what to pray for, that just doesn't sound quite right. But when you consider everything that God has been telling us and everything he is going to be telling us in Romans 8...next week we are going to look at everything working out for the good of those of love him. That's something we don't understand, right? When we are going through suffering, that's for my good? We don't always understand that. But I think there is a very real truth here that we can learn about ourselves as we consider these words.

As we want to look at the Christian faith one word at a time and look at the word "praying," one of the things we should learn this morning about prayer is that we don't always know what to pray for. And that's because we are sinful human beings and God is a holy perfect God. So quite obviously, if we want to pray according to his will, we aren't always going to know what his will is, are we? Unless he's told us in Scripture about something, but if he hasn't spoken on it, we aren't going to know what his will is. When it comes to suffering, his will may very well be, because he sees the bigger picture, that we continue in that suffering for a time so that we learn to rely more on him and less on ourselves. But can you understand that? Can you grasp that? Can you wrap your head around that? I know I can't at times. I think there is a lot in our prayer life that is this way.

Think about it...every week when we pray the Lord's Prayer, we pray "Thy kingdom come." We've learned it in Luther's Small Catechism, that his kingdom would come to us and others. It's a prayer that God's Gospel would spread in this world, but I think a portion of "thy kingdom come" is also looking forward to the glory of heaven, right? Can you fully contemplate what you are praying when you are praying about the glory of heaven? Even as you are going through suffering and saying, "Lord, all my loved ones are gone. Everyone is gone. Why do you have me here? I want you to take me to the glory of heaven." Can you fully understand what you are praying? Can you understand the depth of heaven? I can't.

I just had questions last week in the New Life in Christ class about this, some really good questions. We had talked the week before about what happens when we die and Judgment Day and things like that, and someone asked me, "Will you know your spouse in heaven?" I said "Yeah, I think so. You'll know everybody, right?" But here's the part of heaven I cannot fathom. As a Christian, I'm supposed to love everyone, right? I do love everyone, and I want everyone to be in heaven. But on this side of heaven, there are plenty of people that I love that I don't like or don't want to have over for supper, right? There are plenty of people that I love and I want them to be in heaven, but I don't want to hang out with them. You know the same thing, right? You love them. You want them to be in heaven. But you don't really like them. In heaven, I'll be as thrilled to see that person as I will be to see Paula (my wife). I can't wrap my puny little mind around that. I'm sorry, I just can't wrap my head around that yet.

I can't fathom that I'll be as thrilled to see people that on this side of heaven I don't like. They are like fingernails on a chalkboard when I'm talking to them, and I am going to be

as thrilled to see them as the person that I hold most dear on this earth? I can't understand that. So when I'm praying about heaven, or the things that I don't understand, you bet I need the Spirit to intercede for me with groans that words cannot express.

Another thing we pray every week... "deliver us from evil," or deliver us from the evil one, right? Do we fully understand just how much Satan is constantly attacking us when we pray that? Do we understand how much he is taking our sufferings and seeking to keep it from being the blessing to us that God wants it to be for us because it drives us closer to him? Satan is trying to use it to drive that wedge between us and God, right?

He's constantly doing that. Do we fully understand just how much he is attacking? "The devil, that's just a kid's costume that people put on." Do you ever think that as you go around life, that he isn't there pounding on you relentlessly?

Deliver us from evil...do you even contemplate when you pray this just how often God has done this and you haven't even noticed? He delivered you from Satan's attacks and you didn't even realize Satan was attacking you.

You could go on and on with our prayer life and how we don't always understand what we are praying about. We are sinners, and sin makes us simple. We are so simple, we don't know what we don't know. I think that's a very true statement even when it comes to our prayer life.

I'm never going to understand some of those things. I could talk for the next hour; I won't understand it. You won't understand it. But what you and I can understand, from what I read to you from Romans 8:26-27 this morning, is just how deep God's love is for us as we are suffering, as we are struggling, as we are twisted up in knots on our insides because we are facing suffering in this world. Here's how deep his love is for us. He tells us "long for heaven." But he tells us "as you are longing for heaven, I know you are still in this world. I know you're facing difficulty. I want you to pray to me, but I know you aren't even going to know how or what to pray. Don't worry about it. The Spirit himself is interceding for you with groans that words can't express." The Spirit is speaking in a language that only the Father, the Son and the Spirit can understand. But the Spirit is standing for you and he is pleading your case. He is bringing your petitions that you don't even know what to ask. He's taking them to the Father. And it says the Father searches the mind of the Spirit. So the Father knows all these things even before we ask them, even before we and the Spirit ask them, and we don't even know what to ask. He already knew them.

Think of the love he has for you. No matter how often you and I, as we've gone through suffering, have gotten mad at God, gotten angry at God, shook our fist at God and said, "God, how could you let this happen?!" He says, "I still love you. The Spirit is still there interceding for you because faith still lives in your heart by the work of that Spirit."

Then comes the phrase at the end of verse 27 that ought to make us thrill. It ought to send a thrill up our spine when we hear it. It ought to be better than watching any team score a touchdown. Did you catch the phrase in there? Did you see it? Can you find it even if you aren't from New Orleans? Can you see it in there? Anyone? Anyone at all? Anyone still listening? What is the word in there? Can you find it? Someone tell me it. Paula is gone for the week, so I have a long time. What is the word that should thrill you that's in verse 27? Someone tell me it. "Saints." Didn't you hear that New Orleans clue I gave you?

Who are the saints? It isn't just the "super Christians" that are so much closer to God than us peon Christians who doubt and worry and struggle. The saint of God is anyone that has the Holy Spirit living in their heart. That's each and every one of us who believes that Jesus is their Savior. The Spirit has given us that gift. Now we are saints or holy ones of God. Look what it says, the Spirit always lives to intercede for the saints in accordance with God's will. We have someone on our side that is stronger than we are, smarter than we are, and more loving than we are, and he is always there interceding for us. Doesn't that just thrill you down to the tips of your toes?

God calls you a holy one. He calls me a holy one. I know some of you, and I know me. I know I'm not holy because of who I am, but I am because of who God is. What a thrill that is!

So as you are going through suffering...prayer, it's a wonderful gift that God gives us, but don't think prayer is just about you, and you pouring your heart out to God. Find incredible comfort in this truth. The Spirit is pouring out your heart to God in ways you could never do it. That's something, isn't it?