



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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September 18, 2011
14th Sunday After Pentecost
Sermon Text: [Romans 11:33-36](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Exodus 6:2-8](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 34](#)
Second Lesson: [Romans 11:33-36](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 16:13-20](#)

The Christian Faith, One Word at a Time: *Awe (worship)*

I don't know if you follow football or not, but this past week something was on the ESPN news and the talk shows all the time that I kind of thought was interesting. Wide Receiver Chad Ochocinco, kind of a prima donna, "all about me" kind of player when he was Cincinnati, this year he plays with the Patriots. The Patriots had a great game last week. Their offense was humming and all that. Chad Ochocinco only caught like one pass for 13-14 yards, something like that, so people were kind of wondering if he was going to be belly aching that he didn't get more yards or this or that. Is he going to carry on and throw a tantrum and say "Look at me, look at me, because you didn't look at me enough because they didn't throw me the ball enough" or things like that. I think it was on Monday morning that he tweeted (because he loves social media). He tweeted something about how in awe he was of the offense and the quarterback and all the things they did. Then the rest of the day, the former Patriots that are now commentators on television just ripped him apart. They tore into him. He was talking about how great the offense played and how he was in awe of how good their offense ran and he didn't say "they didn't throw me the ball enough" or any of that stuff, but these guys were saying "You shouldn't be in awe of this. You should be in your play books so you can run the plays better and maybe next week you can actually catch more than one ball." They just tore into him. I thought it was kind of interesting because just knowing his background, I expected him to pout and carry on and throw a tantrum like a kid in a checkout lane that didn't get a candy bar.

You and I live in awe of our Savior. Yes, we are busy serving him, like we talked about in Bible study this morning over in the commons, and we want to serve him. We want to thank him for his gift of salvation, but as we do it, you and I still stand in awe of him, of who he is, and what he has done. This morning as we continue to consider the basics of the Christian faith, one word at a time, looking at Paul's letter to the Romans, the word we want to focus on is "awe." You and I always want to keep in front of us this awe at the love that God has for us.

There are plenty of things that are going to happen in our lives that are going to cause Satan to want us to question God's love for us. There are plenty of things our God tells us in Scripture that you and I just aren't going to understand fully on this side of heaven. That might lead us to think that God's not fair or God's not loving or this and that, but as Paul concludes this section of Romans, he wants us just to stand in awe of who God is because when we do that as we worship God, not just when we are doing church stuff,

like sitting in a pew, but in every area of our life and every day of our life living in awe of the fact that God loves us in spite of who we are, then we'll be greatly blessed. We'll be richly blessed.

For the last 11-12 weeks we've been looking at Romans, each week, digging into it like a basic Bible doctrine course, looking at all these different words. We've seen our own sin. We've seen God's love and his grace that has taken away our sin. We've seen God's teaching on various doctrines. We've seen some teachings on doctrines that are kind of hard to understand. Looking at predestination and election and then looking at all this talk in 9-11 about Israel and the Gentiles and all of this. It's kind of deep and it's kind of hard at times.

The Word of God is like that. It's shallow enough that the youngest baby can understand "Jesus loves me! This I know" as the kids sang. But there is also stuff in it that you and I will never understand on this side of heaven. That's why God tells us to keep growing in it.

But just because you and I can't understand it doesn't mean it doesn't make sense. It makes sense to a perfect, holy and loving God. If you and I can't understand it, it's because we're sinners. If you and I can't understand it, that's an us problem, not a God problem. But we think if we can't understand it or if it doesn't make sense to us, then maybe it isn't so. We say we shall have no other gods, but quite often the god we want to make is ourselves and our own knowledge and our own ability to understand. We just need this reminder after looking at these last chapters to just stand in awe of God.

Think about it and look at what he says, "the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!" Think about the depth of the riches of the wisdom and the knowledge of God concerning his judgments. Just contemplate this for a minute...would any of you ever have come up with this plan. People that you dearly love that you have given everything to turned their back on you and hated you and you said, "You know what? I'm going to die for them so that they'll love me and that they'll be forgiven." This is God's plan from eternity. God himself would leave heaven. Become one of us. Live in our place. And die in our place. Can you imagine that? Can you fathom the depth of that? Don't just go "Yeah pastor, I know Jesus loves us and took away our sins. I know that. But over here and over there God just doesn't act the way he should." Get over yourself. You're a sinful human. You can't understand him.

But his love? There's no denying it. Look at his judgments. He said, "Okay, here is what I am going to do. I am going to punish myself so that you are forgiven." Did you grow up with siblings? Did your sibling ever get punished for something you did? Did you ever jump in and say "No mom and dad. Really, I did it. Please punish me instead." Even better...did your siblings ever get punished for something they did and you jumped in and said "Mom and dad, no really, don't ground them. They really want to go to this stuff, so ground me instead." Ever? Anyone? Anyone?

Of course not! We're sinful. We're selfish. That doesn't enter into our thought process, does it? Yet this is God's thought process towards us. This is his judgment towards us. Isn't that amazing? Doesn't that absolutely thrill you when you lay your head on your pillow at night to know that you've got a God that loves you that much? Every morning when you wake up, doesn't it just thrill you to know that you have a God that loves you with that depth and that can never be changed? His paths beyond tracing out...wow! You and I never would have come up with that.

"Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" If you think God isn't acting in some area of your life fairly, like we've been talking about, you have to go back to the questions that God has answered. That's his love for you in Christ. He has not answered for you the questions why he allows everything to happen. He hasn't answered for you why he allows sickness, heartache, and hardship into your life. We know that these things come because we live in a sinful world. In a sinful world, relationships are going to cause us pain. In a sinful world, our brothers and sisters, our siblings are going to cause us pain at times. In a sinful world, our friends and neighbors are going to cause us pain at times. In a sinful world, our own bodies are going to cause us pain at times. It's not the perfect world God created.

We'd like to think "God, if you love me, you will do this, this and this for me." But God's love for us is certain because of Christ. To think that you and I can tell God how he should be doing things better in his rule of the universe, that's just downright arrogant, isn't it? It's sinful. And it's arrogant. Yet at times each and every one of us here has done it, because when we hurt, we will lash out, even at those that love us. That's part of the family dynamic, isn't it? It's the same thing that we do to our God, our loving, heavenly Father.

The amazing thing still is that our God loves us in spite of the times that you and I have tried to be his counselor and tell him how he should be a better God. He loves us, and for the sake of Christ, he forgives our sins. He has given us the Word so that we can study it and see it all the time. He has given us reminders of our Baptism, the sign of the cross that we make at the start and the end of the service to remind us that we are clothed in those baptismal waters that we sang about awhile ago. He has given us his body and blood in, with and under the bread and the wine so that just in case we think that God doesn't love us, he comes and says, "How can you doubt my love? Here is the very body and blood that was poured out for you."

That's why God wants us to live in awe of him, and live in awe of him not just as we sit here, like I said earlier, but live in awe of him every day as we go through all of our various relationships in our life, every aspect of our life. All the different ways that we serve God in our daily life as a parent, as a spouse, as a student, as a child, as a friend, as a neighbor, as a citizen, as an employee, as an employer...all these different areas where we serve our God, all of them are opportunities for us to give glory to God. As we live in awe of him, we are going to want to give glory to him to thank him for the gift of salvation. That's why Paul ends up with his doxology, "For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever!" So that all these areas as we

live, as being a more patient and a more loving spouse, a more patient and more loving parent, a more patient and more loving friend, these are all ways that we glorify our God. Being a more faithful employee, being a better citizen...the list is limitless. But this is the way that we glorify our God.

Our living in awe of God is not just right here, right now, in this time that we gather in this space. Our time to live in awe of God is every waking minute of every day. And to glorify him with every opportunity he gives us to thank him for his gift of salvation. He has given it to us as a gift. His judgment and his paths are beyond tracing out, but he traced them for us. And he showed them to us. And now we live in response to that incredible love. We live in awe.