



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

October 23, 2011

Different Gifts, Same Grace - Week 5

Sermon Text: [Joshua 1:6-9](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Joshua 1:1-9](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 71](#)

Second Lesson: [1 Timothy 3:1-13](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 10:1-4](#)

### You Are a Leader for Christ

Did you ever wonder what some of the reality shows on TV are doing to us? You can watch them and enjoy them, but some of the things you see on them, where people are voted off the island or out of the household or whatever, do you notice some of the lessons that are kind of being drilled into us subliminally at times? You lie. You cheat. Whatever. That's expected. That's normal. That's just the way it is, right? If you want to get ahead in one of those shows, that's what you do.

If you want to get voted off quick because you want to get home, what's the best thing you could do to get voted off that show quick? Be a leader. Try to influence other people that are around you. Try to lead them toward a goal because then you are viewed as a threat and you have to get rid of threats on those shows, right? Those kinds of shows might be entertaining, but if you're a leader, you've definitely painted a target on your back. And there are going to be those that want to get rid of you before you can draw a following to yourself.

Having a target on your back...I wonder if that's kind of how Joshua felt on the day that God came and said this to him. Moses had led God's people for over 40 years and now he was dead. Joshua had been with Moses every step of the way outside of Egypt as his right-hand man. He had been there. He had been at his side. He had seen everything that had happened. He saw how Moses was run ragged by the people. He saw how Moses came up with a solution from his father-in-law to deal with some of those issues. He saw how the Lord had performed great miracles through Moses. Water out of rocks and all this other kind of stuff. Parting of the Red Sea. And he had seen how the people had reacted to Moses and often blamed him when things didn't go exactly as they wanted.

Now God comes to Joshua and says "Tag, you're it. You're the next leader." Do you think there was a little trepidation in Joshua here? I have to believe so. Whenever God says, "You are a leader for the Lord," there's a little bit of trepidation in any of us. You kind of question yourself, "Do I have the ability? Do I have the strength? Do I have the knowledge? How will I be received? How will I be perceived?" Joshua had to think all of those things, didn't he? So when our God comes to us and he says, "You are a leader for the Lord," notice what our God does.

The theme of what God said to Joshua isn't hard to pick out, is it? Three times he says "Be strong and courageous. Be strong and very courageous. Be strong and

courageous.” But that strength wasn’t based on Joshua at all, was it? He had come to him first of all with some promises. “I’m going to give you every place where you set your foot, just like I promised Moses. As I was with Moses (that guy who knew the Lord face to face...talking about big shoes to fill, that’s Joshua), I will be with you. So be strong and be very courageous.” But that strength was to come from God’s promises, right? It wasn’t just to come from Joshua’s natural leadership ability. Evidently he had some because when they came out of Egypt and they were heading towards the Promised Land, the first people that attacked them were the Amalekites (which is what was going on with Mordecai and Haman last week), and Joshua was the general that led the army and defeated the Amalekites. He had been there at the right hand of Moses. He had done a lot of these things. But God does not point Joshua inside of himself.

God is not just saying “Be strong and courageous and only look in yourself.” He’s not Rob Schneider in an Adam Sandler movie standing up in the bleachers saying “You can do it; just look inside yourself.” He says over and over “Look at me.” Did you hear what he said? He said “Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth. Meditate on it day and night.” The strength and the courage Joshua was to find was to be in God and his promises. Those promises are found in that Word, not just spend a little time with it every Sabbath, but meditate on it day and night. Let it change you. Let it shape you. Let it strengthen you. Let it comfort you. Let it encourage you. God’s leaders in God’s plan are those who spend the most time in his Word because that’s where they’ll find the strength to do the things that at times get very discouraging.

Joshua had to feel some discouragement. God says “Be strong. Do not be terrified. Do not be discouraged.” God says that to him because he knows that’s what Joshua will be at times. The mark of a Christian is not that we never struggle or that we never worry or that we never are discouraged. The mark of a Christian is where we turn when we struggle, when we are discouraged, and when we worry.

This past week, I don’t know if you kids remember it, we read [Psalm 61](#) in chapel on Wednesday. It’s not in our Hymnal; I wish it was. It’s a Psalm of David. A beautiful Psalm. Beautiful! It’s got a wonderful phrase in it that I just love. David...another guy who was a man after God’s own heart, right? All the other kings, if they were good, they said they were like David. If they were bad, they were like someone else. David, a man after God’s own heart. That’s how Scripture describes David, right? In this Psalm, David says “When I was faint, I cried out to a rock that is higher than I.” When I was faint...even David grew discouraged and grew weary.

You, as a leader for God, will at times grow weary and grow discouraged. Your mark as a faithful leader is, where do you turn when you are weary and discouraged? If you turn inward, just to yourself, you are missing the mark. The strength and the courage we have comes from our God, to the rock that is higher than ourselves. That’s what our God says. That’s what our God points us to. That’s our God’s message to all of us who are leaders for Christ. “Be strong and courageous, not your own strength, but the strength that comes from my means of grace; from my Word, from my Sacrament, from

water and wine, from the Baptism that covered you with Christ's righteousness." All too often you and I want to think that we have to look to ourselves and that we can do it ourselves. Sometimes we even think God must love us more than he loves others because we do things for God. Don't ever forget, God doesn't love you because of what you do for him. God loves you because he is love, because he promised and then sent his son to live and die in our place to take away every one of our sins. He loved us when we were not on his side, when we could not sway him or convince him that he should love us. He loved us perfectly and absolutely. Those are the promises we go back to time and again in his Word. That's where we find our strength.

Okay, maybe you're thinking "That's all well and good pastor, but I'm not a leader for Christ." Well, God has all kinds of different leadership roles for us in our various vocations in our life, in all the areas that we serve him, doesn't he? If you're a father or a husband, you're a leader in a family, right? If you're a parent, you're a leader for your children. If you have friends that come to you at times for comfort, advice or encouragement, you're a leader for Christ at that point in time for them, aren't you? There are a lot of different areas in our various vocations where we will be leaders for Christ, where we will want to lead with his strength and his courage. Even at the times when we are not leaders, the times when we function as followers, it's good to know what God says about Christian leadership, isn't it? So we recognize that both leaders and followers are sinners who will make mistakes, and when leaders and followers repent and turn away from those mistakes, we forgive one another and encourage one another and comfort one another and strengthen one another. We'll be better followers when we understand "you are a leader for Christ" more fully and more completely. We will have a patience that we don't always have. God will strengthen us and give it to us so that we can do what our God has called us to do.

He has called us to use our various gifts, as we looked at this morning, so that the Body of Christ may be built up so that each part does its work so we grow in the Gospel and then go with the Gospel. As we do all of this, our God is glorified. That's the task he's given us. He gives us leaders to help us carry out that task.

By God's grace, as we grow in our faith, we will find that strength and that courage that is not our own, and we will do what our God has called us to do because we see it clearly in his Word.