



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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January 22, 2012
150th Anniversary Worship
Sermon Text: [Psalm 115:1](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 61:1-3](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 115](#)
Second Lesson: [Ephesians 2:1-10, 19-21](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 10:17-22](#)

Not Unto Us

If you were here last week, the Sermon text was “Speak, O Lord, your servant is listening.” We talked about the difference between hearing and listening. I don’t know if you remember that at all. We said it’s usually a problem with spouses. I did hear my spouse this week, but I’m not listening to her. She told me “Whatever you do today, don’t talk about football. There are still too many open wounds among the people.” But I’m going to talk about football.

Did you ever watch a football game and see a guy make an average, ordinary play. The offensive coordinator is just trying to see how the defense reacts. They run a simple run off tackle. They gain three yards; no big deal, no great shakes in the whole flow of the game. But the guy who makes the tackle gets up and doesn’t go to his teammates and high five them. He runs 30 yards away from everyone else so everyone in the stands and everyone on TV can look at him. Then he gyrates like there is some electric current from someplace unseen going through his body. Did you ever see that? He’s just doing what he got paid for, right? When the gas station attendant gives you your change, do they do a dance because they got it right? The guy is just doing his job, but he’s just going overboard and going nuts and celebrating what he is doing.

We are kind of prone to that in certain ways, aren’t we? We want everyone to notice when we do things well and when we do things that work out well. We want to be noticed. We want to be appreciated. We want to be thanked. We don’t dance like 380-pound defensive tackles. But in our hearts we probably do, right?

Especially when you get together like this, like this whole year, as we look and celebrate everything that God has done through us for these 150 years, there’s always the danger in our hearts that we’ll say, “Yes, yes, God has done it all.” But then we focus much more on what we or what our forefathers, what those who came before us, have done and forget that it’s God that worked through all of us. All the things they have done before us, to this day, has been a blessing from God’s hand. All the labor and the effort they put in when building buildings, in doing all the different things to maintain the ministry of this congregation are wonderful blessings from God. But if all we ever do is focus on them and talk about them, we are kind of like that guy doing that weird-looking dance, aren’t we? We are missing the point. It’s all about God. It’s not about us.

I think there is a part of us that really thinks it's sometimes all about us. This week it was driven home for me. You 7th and 8th graders that are in my school confirmation class, I love you to pieces and I'm not picking on you, but I'm going to use what you did this week to teach a truth. Don't get upset. Last week we had a test. We've done it once in the workbook. We've corrected it and then had it on a quiz. So this is the third time through this same exact question. I'll read you the question. It was multiple choice. There are three possible answers. I'll read it to see if you get it.

We are talking about stewardship and serving God faithfully. That's what this lesson was about. So the statement was:

When believers serve Jesus and each other faithfully...

- A. God is so pleased that he gives them all heaven as a reward.
- B. Unbelievers in the world will see this and be attracted to the Lord also.
- C. When believers serve Jesus and each other faithfully, they will become happy and rich with no troubles at all in life.

Which is the right answer...A, B or C? The right answer would be B...Unbelievers in this world will see this and be attracted to the Lord also. Let your light shine before men...[Matthew 5:16](#).

How many kids are in the class this year? There are 28 of them sitting there, and at least sometimes that many are paying attention. But after we have gone through it three times, this is why I say there is this inborn nature in us to think we deserve something from God or that we've done something for God because 7 of these dearly loved souls by Christ put A - God is so pleased that he gives them all heaven as a reward. We can't get heaven as a reward. We don't deserve anything from our God. But I think that's so much in our sinful nature that it makes sense to us from time to time when we aren't really paying close attention and thinking about it with our new self.

Especially in an anniversary year...look at what all our forefathers did. They certainly deserve heaven as a reward from God. No they don't. God works through sinful people. Not a single sinful person deserves heaven as a reward. It's all a gift of God's grace. The ability to serve him on this side of heaven and the ability to live eternally on that side of heaven is a gift of God's grace.

That's why we want to remind ourselves, not to us O Lord, not to us, but to your name be the glory because of your love and faithfulness. It comes from Psalm 115. You have that much figured out. It's written right in your Bulletin. Did you know that Psalm 113 through 118 are called the Egyptian Hallel? Hallel is the Hebrew word for "praise." You can kind of hear Hallelujah in there, right? These Egyptian praise psalms were used at one of the three main festivals of the worship life. If you think about everything you remember from your reading of Leviticus and listening to the three festivals of the church year that the Israelites celebrated, which one would come to your mind? My guess is Passover, right? That's the one we are most familiar with because it's connected to Maundy Thursday and Good Friday and Easter. Psalms 113 and 114 and

by the time of Jesus' ministry on earth, this is what they had put together and they read before the Passover meal. It talks about the Lord taking them out of Egypt...the Passover. Then Psalm 115-118 were sung after the Passover meal.

Now think about that just for a minute. The night our Savior was betrayed by one of the guys sitting there, they sang together, "Not to us, O Lord, not to us but to your name be the glory, because of your love and faithfulness." As Jesus later in the evening prayed, "Lord, if it's your will, take this cup away from me. Not my will, but your will be done." Do you think maybe these words were echoing in his ears? "Not to us, not to what I want, Lord, but to your name be the glory and the praise"?

Think about God's wisdom in leading people to use this Psalm as a part of their Passover celebration. If you were a child of Israel and you are there in Jerusalem, you've gone there for that major festival, and Jerusalem is just bursting at the seams because people have come from all over to celebrate one of the big three. You are kind of walking around town thinking, "Man, we are something else", aren't you? Your chest is a little puffed out. "Look at us! God loves us like he loves no one else in this world. Everybody comes from all over the place to be here. We are it!" Do you think there might have been a tendency to get a little bit full of themselves and forget that it was God who brought them out of Egypt, and it was God who had given them every blessing they had? Can you see the Lord's hand in this as it slaps them in the face as they have those bitter herbs to remind them of that slavery and as they eat the unleavened bread because God's deliverance was so close at hand that they didn't have time for yeast to rise? That reminder is it's not about us, it's about God. It's about his love and his faithfulness. His love and his faithfulness delivered them from bondage in Egypt. His love and his faithfulness had promised the Savior that would deliver them from their sin. We read about that suffering servant in Isaiah. It all was a reminder that it's not about them. It's about God.

So as we celebrate our anniversary this entire year, what a wonderful reminder for us. We who are sinners could offer nothing to God unless he first removed our sins. And he has through the life and death of Christ. He has made that forgiveness our own through water and the Word, through wafer and wine. He does it week after week after week, throughout the week as we gather together, throughout the week as we go our separate ways and serve our Lord in whatever way he has placed in front of us to serve him in our life's work, in our family work, in all of it. It's all not unto us but to your name be praised because God's love and faithfulness has put these opportunities for service in front of us.

God's love and his faithfulness has blessed the times we have served him. He has blessed the Word we've shared with our family members. He has blessed the Word we've shared with each other in our worship services and in the times we gather to grow together in God's Word. He has blessed us in so many ways and through so many different people through so many years. We can thank God for every last one of them. We can also say "Lord, thank you that you've worked through all these people."

Today you'll get to go over to the school, Lord willing, and you'll get to look at historical displays that look pretty neat. You'll get to see all kinds of stuff that will remind us we can have fun in the Son, in Jesus, as his grace shines on us and continues to shine on us for however long he leaves us as a congregation. But as you do all of this and as you see all of this and as you have a good time, make sure you pause to say "Thank you Lord. I don't deserve this. Thank you for putting these people around me. And thank you for giving me your Son."