



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

February 22, 2012

Ash Wednesday

Sermon Text: [2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 59:12-20](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 130](#)

Second Lesson: [2 Corinthians 5:20b-6:2](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 18:9-14](#)

A Wounded Savior for a Wounded People

During the Midweek Services this year, we are going to be looking at “Sacred Head, Now Wounded.” As I’m preaching on the Second Lesson, the word “wounded” is in the theme a couple of times. If you looked in the Bulletin, you saw it there, right? The theme of the Sermon is “A Wounded Savior for a Wounded People.” That’s what the whole Lenten series is about. So I have to talk about wounds, right? That theme has a poetic license if you stop and think about it. One of the truths of Ash Wednesday is that you and I are not wounded. Our sins have killed us spiritually. This is the truth. This is the great truth of Scripture. If a 7th Grader or 8th Grader gave me this answer in class, I’d challenge them on it. You and I are far more than wounded.

We have black in church. The sign of mourning. We use the visualization of the Imposition of Ashes to remind us of the severity of our sins. If there wouldn’t be sin in the world, there wouldn’t be death. But there is sin, and there is death. And spiritually, as God tells us, “By nature you were dead in your transgressions and sins.” (See [Ephesians 2](#).) He didn’t say you had a head cold. He didn’t say you were wounded. It wasn’t a sprained ankle. It wasn’t even a high ankle sprain. You were dead in your transgressions and sins.

What truly is amazing as we consider these truths is how our God acts to take dead people; from his point of view, it’s a break he can set, it’s a sprain he can wrap, it’s something only he can fix. You and I can’t fix it. You and I can’t fix our sins. Our sins separate us from God. But our God, he is the one who has acted so that we can say to one another and we can say to those who don’t know Christ, “We implore you, on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God because God acted to make peace between him and us.” Our sins made us his enemies, but his love and his mercy took away that sin. This is what we see on Ash Wednesday.

We see a lot of things we don’t want to see. In that whole Confession of Sins that we used in the beginning, if you go through that whole long list, did you find any of those things that you thought to yourself, “No, that’s not me. I don’t do that. That person behind me, now that person should be talking about this. Not me. I’m pretty good on this.” If you did, you’re lying to yourself. We don’t look out for other’s interests the way we do our own. We are selfish. We sin in our thoughts. We sin in our words. We sin in our actions. That makes it so that there is no way we can draw near to God. He has to act. Our sins have killed us. So God had to make him, who had no sin, to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God because we are not the

righteousness of God on our own. It's not fun and it's not enjoyable to see, but you and I need to see it. We need to look clearly and honestly into the mirror of the Law and see ourselves for what we are. When we realize just how deep the wounds of our sins go, when we see that there is nothing that we can do to atone for our sins, then the message of Christ and him crucified in our place becomes the most precious thing we'll ever hear. When we see that God, who by all rights should send us to hell, should squash us like a bug, and who should wash his hands of us and be done with us, that he didn't do that and instead he sends himself into this world, and he puts all of our sins on himself. He had no sin. He should never have had to go through the things he went through. But he was wounded because of our sin. God took the spear point of his wrath, his wrath against your sins and my sins, his wrath against the sins of the world, he took the spear point of that wrath and he wounded Christ. It killed Christ. He lived perfectly in our place. He should never have had to face death. Yet he went to the cross willingly because his wounds paid for our sins.

That's what makes it so that there is this sense of urgency in a very real way in Lent. We are reminded that this isn't something that we should put off until later. We don't move being right with God down our to-do list until we get to a more convenient time. Our God says to us "We implore you." And he says "Now is the time of my favor. Now is the day of salvation." Don't wait for another day. Resolve to struggle this Lent to stay close to your Savior. Resolve to be absolutely and completely honest with yourself and see the times when you love yourself more than you love God and more than you love other people. Struggle against those sins. The only way you can struggle against them is by being close to that head that was wounded for you, that Savior who lived and died in your place, that Savior who loved you so much that he gives us this gift of his very body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins so that we, who have been humbled, who have been crushed by the weight of our own sins, are lifted up by the loving arms of our Savior, who says "Depart in peace. Your sins are forgiven. I took them away." That's what Lent is all about, and anything that any of us finds beneficial in our struggle to keep our eyes focused on Christ, that's a good thing.

For all of us that are here, it's going to be something different for each of us. Maybe for one person it is group study. Maybe for another it's individual study. Maybe for another it's time spent in praying through our new directory, going through all those pictures and praying for your fellow members as you look at their faces. Find something and recommit yourself to this struggle and know that as you struggle, the victory is already won. Christ has done it all. You stand as a forgiven child of God. Rejoice in that truth.