



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

April 15, 2012

1st Sunday after Easter

Sermon Text: [1 John 4:4-11](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Epistle: [1 John 5:4-10](#)

Holy Gospel: [John 20:19-31](#)

Presiding Minister: Pastor Waldemar Loescher

Some Things Never Change

In Christ, our Risen and Ruling Savior, dear Christian friends:

Things change and things stay the same. Look around you today and you'll see how styles have changed through the years. You see a lot of people wearing a lot of different styles from a lot of different eras. Things change, but things stay the same. It doesn't matter what style you are wearing, you're still a sinner and you still need a Savior. That never changes.

Another thing that never changes is that because we are sinners, we do what we are. We do what we are...we sin. One of the things that we often get caught up with, maybe think back to your own past right now. When you were young and in grade school and playing at recess and doing something with a classmate, did you ever get frustrated because things didn't go the way you wanted? You get mad at your classmate but you know you can't do anything because they are bigger than you are. What do you resort to? "My dad can beat up your dad." Did you ever say that in your life? Kids have been saying that as long as the school has been existing, right? It's one of the things we do. We are sinners and we get frustrated. We want to make a threat and we can't carry it out, so we go to our dad. You probably said that somewhere along the line, or at least you heard it said somewhere and that probably never changes. Kids constantly do that because we do what we are. We are sinners.

But the One who isn't a sinner spoke to us. I just read his words to you. What the Holy Spirit had John write I just read to you. Did you notice what the Holy Spirit had John say in there? He really told us "your dad could beat up their dad," didn't he? Listen to this again. "You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world." God defeated Satan. He did it a couple thousand years ago. He did it for you. He did it for me. He did it for everyone who has ever lived. Now he has given us the gift of faith. The Holy Spirit lives in our heart that we believe that what Jesus did for the world is ours personally. It doesn't matter what era we are in, this is the truth that we rejoice in. Our Heavenly Father won the victory for us. It's important that we remember that it's all about him. It's what he did. It's not what we do.

Secondly, because it's all about him and it's all about what he has done, the second thing that we know for a certainty is that it changes us and it affects who we are and what we do and how we live. That you see in this reading that I read to this morning as well.

John was the elder statesman of the apostles when he wrote these words. He was the one that was going to live the longest. He is the one that lived and became like a grandpa to a lot of the young Christians. 1 John kind of reads like a grandpa sitting down and talking to his grandchildren, telling them what they needed to know and what they needed to remember because there are difficulties as you go through this world.

One of the difficulties during the time of John that they were facing at this time was false teachers. False teachers were claiming to be from God but came in, not talking about Jesus, but talking about some special and hidden knowledge that they had and if you wanted to have this special hidden knowledge, it wasn't found in just Jesus alone. It was found in them and what they will tell you. This is what this early false teaching was, and this is something that never changes. Satan constantly attacks God's church from the inside with false teaching. This is what John was talking about.

He said "These people are coming to you. They are a threat to you. But you have to remember this...the One who is in you is greater than the one who is in them. They are of the world. What they are telling you might sound good and godly. It might sound like it's dressed up in God-type words, but it's from the world. It's from Satan. If it doesn't point you back to Jesus and him as true God and true man who takes away your sins, have nothing to do with it." That's the gist of his whole letter. Separate yourself from those people because that's false teaching and you don't want that falseness. "But," he says, "don't be threatened by them. The One who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world."

He points to what the One who is in them, the One who is in us, why he is greater than the world...because he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. The ruler of this world, the prince of this world, Satan's hold on us is our sin. Our sin should condemn us to hell. God was quite clear when he said "The wages of sin is death." There are no ifs, ands or buts about it. That's what our sin deserves. You and I are sinners. That's what we deserve. But God sent Jesus to live in our place perfectly, to die in our place to make us at one with God, to take away our sins so that we are holy in his sight. Through faith that Jesus lived and died in our place, we are now at one with God because Jesus is the atoning sacrifice for our sins. He lived perfectly because God demands perfection of you and me, and we can't give it to him. He died in our place with the guilt of all of our sins piled on him. We celebrated last week that he rose again to assure us that the battle is over and the victory is won. Death has been defeated by Christ. He did it for us.

Death and Satan have been defeated, but it doesn't mean that Satan stops attacking. Just like in the days of John, Satan attacks us today and tries to undermine our confidence in the Word of God. He tries telling us "The Word of God. That's too hard

to understand. You can't spend time looking at that. That's too hard to understand." He tries to get us to look in other directions.

Thursday night after I preached, I went home and turned on the TV. On the Discovery Channel, *Who Was Jesus?* was on...three hours of *Who Was Jesus?* I watched about three minutes of it I think. The section I watched was talking about Jesus in the Garden and how all the disciples fled when they came and how then it was also written that Peter took out a sword and cut off the guy's ear. At first I was thinking this was right along with what is in Scripture. This is what Scripture says. That's interesting. I didn't expect that. But then it said, "This was added of course by the apostles who became the leaders in the church because they didn't want it to look like they just all ran right away when they came, so they added this in here that Peter took out a sword and cut off the guy's ear" as though saying Scripture isn't the Word of God, it isn't true, it was added because the winners always write the history and they wanted to make themselves look a little better. That's when I turned. I don't need someone telling me God's Word isn't God's Word. I don't need to keep listening to that and then think I'm learning something.

The History Channel, the Discovery Channel and these kinds of shows on cable, I've had people come to me and say "Hey Pastor! I didn't know that Jesus was married to Mary Magdalene." I said, "Where did you hear that from?" "It was on the History Channel last week." How about getting your theology from God himself and not from some oddball who is on television?

Whenever Satan gets us to look at something else except the Word of God, he's getting closer to his goal, isn't he? He has taken our eyes off Jesus and he's putting it on "Well, we have to decide what they said and what they didn't say." It ends up undermining our confidence that Jesus did everything and pretty soon we are back to thinking we have to do something to pay for sin. If you have to do something to pay for your sins, you're in trouble. If I have to do something to pay for my sins, I'm in trouble. I need a God who did what he said he did, who did everything in my place, who took away every last one of my sins, because I know what a sinful wretch I am. I can't pay for a single one, and you can't either.

This is the glorious confidence we have. This is love. Did you hear when he said this in here? Not what we do for God. Not that we loved him. But that he loved us. Your confidence as you go through your daily life, your confidence as you lie on your death bed, your confidence as you stand before God's judgment seat isn't how you feel toward God. It's what he did for you. God says, "Don't focus on how much you love him." Love him, sure. Love him all you can. But don't find that as your confidence. Your confidence is the undeserved love God has given you in Jesus that has taken away all your sins. That can't be shaken. That can't ever be something that I'm uncertain about because God said it quite clearly. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins.

Satan is going to try to undermine it. Don't let him. Go back to that certain truth. The more you go back to that certain truth, the more you will love God, and the more you will be amazed that God loves you. You'll love him in return and then you'll want to do, not have to do, you'll want to do what John also talked about here.

The Holy Spirit took this truth that Our Father beat up the world's father. He says, "Dear friends, because of this, let us love one another, for love comes from God." Love one another. It sounds a lot like what we heard on Maundy Thursday, right? "By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another. A new command I give to you, love one another." God says this over and over and over because he knows we are not real good at it. He knows we are sinners. We hear this command to love one another. Because God loved us we should love others, people will see the love of God as we love those even who don't deserve it, even those who haven't earned it. As we just love unconditionally and we love one another and we love the people around us, people will see that we are different. The world doesn't love that way, but God has to tell us that over and over and over."

Here is one of the things I think we do. When we hear this command of God to love one another, what is your first thought? Do you think, "Joe Blow who isn't here this morning really should hear that because he needs to love me more. He's been really mean to me. He needs to do this loving stuff better." Do you think about how others have failed? Or do you think about where you have failed? This is how we are, right? We always think love is something we should be receiving from others and we don't think as much about how we are to love others.

Think about what this means. Love one another. He's talking about dear friends, literally dear loved ones, those who have been loved by God, those who know God. He's talking to believers. Love your fellow believers. Let your love for your fellow believers always show through in how you talk about them and how you act toward them. You have to ask yourself this morning, do we always do that?

The people who are on the outside of the Body of Christ looking in at us here at Morrison Zion, do they see that kind of love for one another that makes them go "Wow! They're different!" Or do we sound just like everyone else? Complaining about the decisions those people made at the church? Complaining about the things that teacher did to my child? Where are we? Does the love of Christ show through in all that we say, think and do?

I've been here about 10 years now. One of the things that I've seen as I've studied the history of our congregation is that it's an area where we can improve. We at times seem to find a fellow member, a called worker or someone else that becomes the focus of our lack of love and everything will be right if we just get rid of that person. That's not love. That's not what God has called us to do. That's not what God has done to us. Far from it, right?

Here is the amazing thing about our God. He knows where you and I have failed to love each other. He knows where you and I have loved ourselves more than we have loved him and more than we have loved our fellow believers, and he still sent Christ to live and die in our place. That life and death of Christ takes away the sins where we have not been loving as we should, where we have been selfish, where we have been self centered, where we have been hurtful, where we have attacked instead of defended, where we have spoken harsh words instead of loving words. Christ died for every last one of those sins. When you and I recognize that we don't deserve it and that we should go to hell because of it but God has loved us this much that he took away our sins, this moves us to want to get better, to want to love God more fully by loving one another more fully, by talking about one another in a way that reflects that love and that concern for their soul and their well being. That's what our God has called us to do. But don't ever think it's a have to. This is now what we want to do because the One who is in us has defeated the father of those who are against us. Live in that love.