



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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July 26, 2012

Pentecost 9

Sermon Text: [Numbers 27:12-23](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 23](#)

Lesson: [Hebrews 13:7-8, 17-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 6:30-34](#)

Do As The Lord Commands

In the face of disappointment
As a response to God's faithfulness

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Did you ever have to say "do as I say and not as I do?" If you are a parent, you've probably said it once or twice, or at least you probably should have. We are good at giving directions and we are at times upset when they don't follow them. That's kind of odd when you stop and think about it, because how good are we at taking commands and directions from someone else?

Think about it... did you ever go to the doctor and the doctor tells you to take some medicine or do something and you don't? I visit people all the time after the doctor tells them to take this pill. "I don't want to take that pill because I might get addicted, so I'm going to cut it in half and only take half of it." Then they wonder why the medicine isn't working quite right. Did you ever do that? Did the doctor ever tell you "you should really lose some weight"? It hasn't quite worked for me yet.

We aren't always good at doing what someone tells us to do. We'll even acknowledge that they know better than we do. And now, when you stop and think about it, when our God comes to us and tells us what to do, we know as a matter of faith that he isn't telling us to do anything that is bad for us. Anything he tells us to do or not do is said to be a blessing for us. Yet, here is the Holy God, who doesn't even have to say "Do as I say, not as I do" because he does exactly what he says should be done. He does it all. He's holy. He's perfect. He loves perfectly. He comes and tells us things to do and we don't always do them. We might have our excuses. We might have our rationalizations, but you and I just don't always do what the Lord calls us to do.

That's what makes what I just read to you from Numbers 27 so absolutely amazing. Moses did as the Lord commanded him. The first sentence of the last paragraph of what I read to you... "Moses did as the LORD commanded him." He did it without whining. He did it without offering up excuses. He did it without offering up rationalizations.

Look at what the Lord told him to do. The Lord said "Go climb that mountain and take a look at the land you've been journeying to for 40 years, but you aren't going into it." Moses did as the Lord commanded him. He climbed the mountain. He looked at the

land. He saw the land flowing with milk and honey. For 40 years he has been leading a rebellious and nasty people, leading them through the wilderness. He led them through rebellion after rebellion. He led them as they blamed him for everything bad that ever happened to them. He led them and led them and now got on the verge of the land, and God says “Just go look at it, but guess what? Your toes aren’t getting dirty by that dirt. You are going to be gathered to your people. You are going to die because you did not regard me as holy at the waters in the Desert of Zin at Meribah Kadesh.”

That’s when the people had rebelled again against Moses and God went to Moses and said, “Take the staff that you had performed those miracles with. Take it out of the Holy Place. Take it out of the Tabernacle. You take it out and in front of the people, hold that staff and speak to the rock, and water will come from that rock.” God says that Moses did not regard him as holy. What Moses did is when the people rebelled and were attacking him and attacking God, he got angry at them. He didn’t speak to the rock as the Lord told him to do. He struck the rock with the staff. The Lord still sent water graciously to take care of his people in their time of need. But then he told Moses, “You’re not going into the Promised Land because you did not regard me as holy and do what I told you to do.”

For 40 years he had to put up with this people that wanted nothing to do with God. He sought to serve God faithfully. Now instead of speaking, he strikes, and God says, “You can’t go in.” How much cheese would you need to go along with all of your whining if that’s what God said to you? I can understand the whining, can’t you? “But Lord, I’ve served you faithfully! It’s these people, they didn’t listen!” God said, “You didn’t regard me as holy because you didn’t do what I said.” So now, Moses is told to climb a mountain and look at what he couldn’t possess.

What’s really interesting is that this comes right after some people had come with a question of inheritance when they get into the land. Shouldn’t their family get some land even though all the male descendants had died in that family. God said, “That’s right. Give it to some of these daughters.” So they had this discussion on inheritance in the land of some people who died in the wilderness, no doubt people who had rebelled against God and died in the wilderness. God says to give them the land. Then right after that, he turns to Moses and says “You go climb up and look at it.”

Here is Moses settling a dispute about an inheritance in the land, and God reminds him again of how he had failed him. But God continues to act in mercy and love towards Moses. He tells him he would be gathered to his father. So even in the face of the disappointment of not entering the Promised Land, Moses clung to God’s other promises. He would be gathered to his fathers.

This is what I think is so amazing... that Moses doesn’t make a defense or blame the people. Somewhere along the line I’m sure in his mind he probably did. Here you notice the first thing he says after God told him to go climb that mountain and look at the land. He says, “Lord, these people are a rebellious people and they’ll need a

leader. If you don't give them a leader before I walk off, they are going to tear each other apart and they'll be harassed and helpless"... like Jesus said in our Gospel, like sheep without a shepherd. Moses had compassion on the people. Why would he do that?

There's only one reason I can think of... because Moses, as God's spokesman, saw time after time after time after time after time how the people rebelled against God and God remained merciful. Yes God disciplined them. Yes God chastised them. Yes God made them wander for 40 years. But he did not abandon them. So his heart goes out to God's people because God had been faithful to his people time and time again. So Moses, as a response to God's faithfulness to his people, says "Lord, you have to appoint a leader ahead of time and we have to do this so everyone sees it, otherwise these people will just tear each other apart because they don't really have that deep regard for you." They weren't as focused on God's faithfulness as Moses was. In fact, they spent so much time just whining and complaining about stuff that they often forgot about God's faithfulness.

You can kind of see what happens, right? Where your focus is, there your heart will be. As you and I go through life, we are going to face lots of disappointment. We are going to face lots of heartache. We are going to face a lot of people that disappoint us and people that turn against us, people that in a sense rebel against God by rebelling against us. There are going to be things that make our life difficult, things that are going to make us want to say "God, you're not being fair." But think of how often these things come about because of our own sin. We've made a poor choice and now it's come to bite us in the backside. Our first reaction often is to blame someone else, point the finger in other directions. It's not always simply to say "Lord, have mercy on me. I have sinned." Learn from Moses to do what the Lord says and just accept and humbly acknowledge your own sinfulness.

Then learn from Moses to be focused on God's faithfulness so that you can be concerned about those who have hurt you, so that you don't talk about them or point fingers at them or talk about them behind their back. That you don't delight in seeing them suffer, but that you have a genuine heartfelt love for them like you see Moses here have for the Israelites.

The Israelites' rebellion had a direct responsibility for him not going into the Promised Land. Yes he sinned, but it was in response to what the people did over and over and over to him. I can understand Moses' sin, but God doesn't say understanding sin means it is acceptable. Sin remains sin against our God whether you and I can understand it or not, whether you or I decide God is fair or not. In fact, if you and I want to play the game of God, "you should be more fair," we are playing a fool's game because if God is fair, you and I should rot in hell for all eternity because we are filthy rotten sinners. There is no denying that. There's no rationalizing that. The only thing that keeps us in the faith is the faithfulness of our God, who loves and forgives us and sends us Christ and sends us the message time and time again. Even when we don't have time for the message, he continually reaches out for us. He wants his voice to be

heard by his sheep. So he patiently calls out even when his messengers become impatient. That's God's faithfulness.

So when you and I focus on that faithfulness instead of the difficulty or the hurt or the problem, then we can do what the Lord commands, like Moses did. But when we focus on the problems we can see, when we focus on the difficulties, we will be shoulder to shoulder with those Israelites, rebelling against God, blaming God and really living a miserable existence because we will be depriving ourselves of the confidence and the comfort that we receive from God's love for us in Christ.

He loves us and is patient with us when we become impatient with him. He loves us and reaches out to us when we run away from him. He continually, patiently and urgently urges us to love one another, be concerned for one another, to reach out with the Gospel of Jesus Christ to one another because that's the highest calling he has given. He's entrusted it to people like us.

So the question now becomes, where is our focus? That will determine whether or not you and I do what the Lord commands. Amen.