



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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August 19, 2012

Pentecost 12

Sermon Text: [Hebrews 5:11-6:3](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [1 Kings 19:3-8](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 34](#)

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 5:11-6:3](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 6:41-51](#)

Go On To Maturity

Through constant use of solid food
So you distinguish what is truly important

Last Sunday a lot of us got together and had a real nice chicken dinner here at church. It was really good. I'm guessing some of you maybe took some chicken home and ate it during the week. Or maybe you made up some other chicken, or a steak, or a burger, or some fish sometime during the week. I'm just betting that none of you went from last Sunday until right now without eating. You ate something during the week, right? Did you eat any of the stuff with a little spoon covered in plastic, and that fish or steak or burger ground up real nice and fine and whirled together? Did you eat out of a little jar that you stuck that spoon into? Did you eat any whirled peas or things like that this past week? Maybe a couple of you dipped a spoon in when you were feeding your infant and had a little bit of that baby food, but I'm betting that none of you pulled your chair up to a table and sitting in front of you were a couple of those little jars and your wife said, "Hey, there's your supper. Dig in."

Would that have nourished you? Would that have fed you? I suppose so, but it wouldn't have been that exciting, would it? That kind of mush gets kind of old. In fact, when I visit some of our members when they are back to eating that mush, that's one of the things they tell me they miss. They miss eating some solid food.

When you think about things like that, it gets kind of easy to see what our Lord was saying to us through this letter to the Hebrews this morning. When he tells us to leave behind spiritual mush and move onto spiritual solid food, he doesn't really say "It sure would be nice." He doesn't say "I would sure appreciate it if you would do it." He doesn't say "It's up to you if you want to get stronger in your faith or not." He says, "No, do it." There is no debating whether or not God has said he wants us to grow in faith.

Go on to maturity he says, right? Leave the elementary teachings. Don't just focus on them. Go on to maturity. "Solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil" he tells us. There is just no denying it. This is what God says. This is his will, that we go on to maturity. He even tells us how to do it. He tells us to go on to maturity through constant use of Word and Sacrament so that you can distinguish good from evil. So you can see what is really important and what is unimportant. That's what God is saying to you.

Like I said, I'm betting all of you ate something since the last time you worshiped together, whether or not it was last Sunday, right? But I would probably bet there are some that haven't picked up the Bible since last Sunday or read from Scripture since last Sunday, right? I grant you that we have time issues. I grant you that we are busy. I grant you that there are all kinds of things demanding attention for our time. But here is God coming and saying go on to maturity. He doesn't give it as a multiple choice option. He says to do it. Make it as important in your life as pulling up a chair or grabbing a bite in the car or eating on the run. Do whatever it is, but make sure you make time for it. That's what your God is saying to you. I'll grant you that we have busy-ness issues, but you have to grant that God says "This is my will for you."

Look at what the writer to the Hebrews says here. We've got much more to say about this. Do you know what the "this" is here? Read the beginning of Chapter 5. One of the things in the letter to the Hebrews, if you remember from reading it, it talks about how Jesus is superior to the angels. He is superior to the mosaic covenant. His life and death is superior to all the laws and all the regulations. The sacrifice he offered was greater than any sacrifice any high priest ever offered. One of the themes is that Jesus is the Great High Priest. In the section right before this, he had talked about how Jesus is a priest not in the order of Aaron, but he is a priest in the order of Melchizedek. Do you remember Melchizedek? The king of Salem? His name means king of righteousness. Abraham gave to this priest Melchizedek an offering, a tenth, after he had defeated the enemies.

A priest in the order of Melchizedek. He says, "Man, this would be great for you to understand Jesus more fully, more deeply, and have a greater understanding of it. I'd love to teach it to you, but I can't because you are too slow to learn. By this time you ought to be teachers, but you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's Word all over again. You need milk, not solid food." That's why he tells them "go on to maturity" through constant use of Word and Sacrament so you can distinguish good from evil.

Yeah, we are busy, but we find time to eat. Most of the time we find time to sleep. We find time to do a lot of things that are of no lasting value. Spending time with the Word of God, whether it's through the Meditations books, whether it's through reading Scripture on your own, whether it's through gathering together with other Christians, that's what our Lord calls us to do. That's the one thing that is truly necessary. Isn't that what he said with Mary and Martha? "You're worried about many things, but Mary has chosen the one thing that is needed." That was to sit at the foot of the Savior and listen. Whereas Martha was scurrying around waiting on the Savior. The service we offer to God, yes, it's a blessing to others, but it's nowhere near as important as the time that we spend at the feet of our Savior listening to him.

Our God has graciously given us many opportunities to spend time listening to his Word even when we are so busy. If our busy-ness involves being in a car, our Lord has graciously now provided us with Bibles on CD or Bibles on cassettes and Bibles on our MP3 players where we can redeem the time of some of our busy-ness with driving

around and get into the Word. He has provided us with Bibles in every font, every print size and every setup you can imagine nowadays. He has provided us with Meditations booklets where we can sit and read God's Word and have someone explain a little passage to us. He has given us the People's Bibles that we can read and get the flow of the whole book. He's given us time that we can spend with other Christians. He tells us in his Word that as iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another. You can certainly grow in faith all by yourself reading Scripture. God's Spirit is that powerful. But there is something about listening to other people who have had other experiences apply God's Word and say "Here's how God's Word has helped me and here's what I see in this section and this is how it's been a blessing to me." There is something about it that sharpens us more than when we just read it on our own.

We have numerous opportunities here to study God's Word. In a couple of weeks we'll start up all the Bible studies again. Hopefully you'll be able to join us at one of them, but even if you can't, you can still read God's Word on your own. Constant use. That doesn't imply anything. It says explicitly what God says...that this is important. This is what we need to do.

It's interesting to me at times... I've heard feedback from people that I teach too many Bible classes. As a pastor, the Latin word for shepherd, the shepherd feeds the sheep. What feeds the sheep is not busy work. It's not involving more people in busy work. It's feeding them with the means of grace, the Word and Sacraments, and leading them deeper into the deeper truths, the more mature truths, the solid food, and leaving behind spiritual mush. The way you do that is by digging into Scripture.

In John 10 it says God's sheep love his voice, love to listen to his voice. In order to listen to it, you have to have someone sharing it with you. In order to get deeper into truths, you have to have someone teaching it to you. If you look at Ephesians 4, that's exactly what God says he gives pastors to do so that the body of Christ may be built up. It's pretty clear what it says there.

Then through this constant use of solid food, we are told that we can distinguish good from evil. That might not sound really right. We'd say, "If I know the basics, I know the Ten Commandments, I know good from evil." If I hand out a true/false statement for everyone to mark and it says "you shall murder," I'm pretty sure you are all going to get it right. It says "you shall not murder," so don't murder. That's distinguishing good from evil. But where the rubber hits the road is not in true and false statements that are on a sterile piece of paper. Where the rubber hits the road is where we live in our daily lives.

As we live in our daily lives, Satan attacks us constantly. Over and over and over he attacks us. I have seen people who knew "you shall not murder." I've seen people that were very active way back when it was still Lutherans for Life. Very active in Lutherans for Life and saying that abortion is murder, which God says it is, that's true. They would have gotten that true and false statement right every day of the week. Yet, when that person's granddaughter became pregnant, grandma counseled her to get an abortion because having that child right then and right there would ruin her life.

You can have a head knowledge of basic truths, but it's constant use of Word and Sacrament that the Spirit uses to build us up, to live in us so that we can apply not just good and evil but what is important and what is unimportant and make the right decisions and live our faith in our day-to-day life. That's where it's hard. The more we are in Scripture, the more we are making use of the Sacraments, the more the Holy Spirit lives in us, and we think and look and act through the spiritual corrective lenses of God's Word. It permeates our thoughts and it changes the way we look at things. The more constant use we have of Scripture, the more our faith is a day-to-day thing and not just a going-to-church type of thing. That's what God's plan is, so that we can distinguish good from evil, so we can distinguish what's important from what is unimportant.

A lot of times I hear us spending a lot of time talking about things that in the whole scheme of things just aren't as important. We talk about symptoms. We don't talk about root problems. We get worried about there not being enough people involved in things so we have to find ways to get them involved. We have to at times use the Law to shame them into getting involved. Then we pat ourselves on the back because now more people have gotten involved. But in reality, I don't think the angels in heaven are rejoicing. I think there is probably a tear running down because we aren't using the Gospel. We aren't doing what God has told us to do.

The symptom is at times inactivity. The solution is having people growing in their faith. The symptom is deficits. The solution is having people growing in their faith. The solution is having people more closely connected to Jesus Christ. The constant use of God's Word will see that and understand that and will do it. Yes, there is a lot of stuff that needs to be done so that we can proclaim the Law and Gospel and have a Word and Sacrament ministry in a congregation. There are a lot of things that need to be done that are not directly related to it. But the more time we spend in Word and Sacrament, we see those things as means to the end of proclaiming Law and Gospel and we don't see those things that enable Law and Gospel ministry as the end itself.

We are here to proclaim Law and Gospel. We are here to connect people to Jesus. We are here to have people see that Christ took away their sins, even their sins of despising his Word and not moving on to spiritual maturity. Jesus Christ lived and died for that sin as well. The more we understand that, the more we grow in appreciation of that, and the more we live that and apply it and distinguish good from evil in our daily life, the more incredible things God will do among us. We'll move on from treating symptoms to treating the real problem. We'll find ways to get the Shepherd's voice to the sheep. As a congregation, that should be the number one priority we have. Amen.