



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

August 26, 2012

Pentecost 13

Sermon Text: [Ephesians 5:15-20](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Proverbs 9:1-6](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 1](#)

Second Lesson: [Ephesians 5:15-20](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 6:51-58](#)

### **Live the Wise Life**

Be filled with the Holy Spirit

Speak in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

What is the word that usually goes along with the word “life” when people are talking about the kind of “life” they want to have? Most of the time we talk about the “good” life, right? We probably think about living the good life. The American dream is the good life. Some of us here that enjoy the champaign of beers might think about living the “high life”. You’ve heard that advertisement from time to time and over and over.

You hear about the good life, you hear about the high life, you hear about things like that, and I think that’s changed us and shaped our society so that we look at life a little bit differently than we maybe had once upon a time. I think this idea of attaining the good life has led us to buy into one of Satan’s lies that there is a life that isn’t worth living and there is a quality of life that isn’t worth living and that God is an idiot and he didn’t know when to take someone out of this life so that we have to fix it by doing it ourselves. I think that all stems off of buying this lie about the good life.

If the Lord gives you a life you would call good, thank him and praise his name. That’s wonderful. But our God doesn’t really tell us to aspire to the good life. This morning we heard his Word pretty directly that said to aspire to the “wise life”. That’s not one that we talk about all that often, is it? Live the wise life. In your walk with Christ, live the wise life. Live as wise, not as unwise is what the Holy Spirit had Paul write to the Ephesians and to us.

This morning we have to think a little bit about what it means to live the wise life. We are familiar with the good life, but the wise life? That’s a little different. What is wisdom? In our society today, we are all kinds of nebulous about that. Whatever you decide is wise for you is okay. Whatever I decide for me is okay, and so on and so forth. But that’s not what God is talking about when he tells us to live the wise life. He gets pretty specific.

He talks about making the most of every opportunity. He talks about the days being evil. He talks about not being foolish but understanding what the Lord’s will is. The wise life involves being filled with the Holy Spirit so you can understand what the Lord’s will is, not to understand it with just a head knowledge. We all pretty much have that.

We need to understand it with a heart knowledge that applies God's Word to your daily life in a way that gives God the glory, not in a way that makes you happy or makes your life good, but in a way that says "Thank you Lord for everything you have given me."

This whole section that Paul is talking about in Ephesians is talking about how we live in response to who God is and what he has done. It's talking a lot about what we talked about last week. It's talking about growing in your faith so that you can determine what is right and what is wrong and apply it in your daily life. It's a lot along the lines of what we talked about last week. That's why he talks about understanding what the Lord's will is.

He tells us there are going to be challenges to this. When it comes to making wise or unwise decisions in regard to God's will, there are going to be challenges because the days are evil. It's not a real surprise to us that the days are evil, is it? If you pay attention to the news at all, you can see the days are evil. You can look around in your own life and you can see the effects of living in an evil world, can't you, because of the challenges you face and the difficulties you face? We don't live in Eden. Ever since Adam and Eve ate that fruit, the world has been all messed up and we have to live in it. Because the world is filled with sinners, sinners do what they do. They sin. That means evil is going to surround us at times. Sometimes it's going to rise up and try to take a hunk out of our backside. It makes life difficult. It makes life a challenge. That's why he says "live as wise."

Notice that he says to live as wise, not just some of the time, not just when it is convenient for you, but to make the most of every opportunity. As you face all the things that come from living in an evil world, the things that are going to be challenges to you, to your faith, recognize them as challenges. See them through God's eyes. And then see them as the attack on your faith that they are and find your refuge in God and his Gospel and his love and his mercy and his forgiveness.

That sounds so simple and straightforward. As a Christian, we'd be thinking, "Yeah, that's what we'd do Lord. Yeah, we'll do that." The fact of the matter is that we don't always do that. I think the fact of the matter is that sometimes when you and I are faced with challenges, when we are faced with difficulties, when we have that choice between doing something that's wise, according to God's will and that glorifies him, or something that's unwise, a solution that we think is going to fix the problem or make it go away, at least for awhile, at times you and I choose the unwise solution, don't we?

Look at what he says here. He says "Don't get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery." There isn't a bar on every crossroads in Wisconsin because people aren't going to alcohol to fix their problems. There are a lot of us here, probably, and a lot of people that we know that are doing this, right? It doesn't make us any smarter. When is the last time you saw someone drink and get smarter? It doesn't happen.

He says "Don't get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery." That clears it up for you, doesn't it? You probably used "debauchery" Thursday in a conversation, didn't

you? When I was in high school, we had a chapel where the professor went on and on for a half hour warning against the evils of debauchery. He never once told us what it was. So I went up to my professor at the next class and I said, "What's debauchery?" He told me, "No one likes a smart aleck. Go sit down." I said, "I don't know what it is, and he told us not to do it. So could you just tell me what it is?" I think sometimes we are afraid to use the word "sex". Debauchery is sexual sins that come about because someone has been drinking too much.

"Don't get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery." You make one unwise decision... "I'm going to fix my problems with alcohol"... and then it leads to another bad decision, which leads to another sin, a sexual sin. That's what it's talking about. If you listen to country music at all, you know exactly what that phrase is talking about. God says that's unwise. It's not fixing anything. It's a momentary fix that leads to even greater problems.

We know that. We have a head knowledge of that. But here is where it's difficult. Here's where it's hard to live as a wise person because we are sinners and at times we make rotten decisions. That's when God is imploring us to live as wise, not as unwise. He's saying "Be filled with the Spirit." Don't be filled with those spirits, with the champaign of beers. That's not going to fix your problems. He says, "Be filled with the Spirit." Let the Word be a part of you. Make it such a part of you that it shades your thinking without you having to think about chapter and verse. Spend so much time in God's Word and in his Sacraments that it changes you and God transforms your thought process so that you think in God's terms and not in the terms of the unwise world. That's what he's talking about.

When he says "Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs", he's saying to let this shape how you are. Make the most of every opportunity to get wiser through your knowledge of God's Word. Make the most of every opportunity to get this assurance that your sins are forgiven even though you have made horrible decisions in the past. Through the life and death of Jesus Christ, he has washed away your sin. Through the Word and through the Sacrament, through his very body and blood in, with and under the bread and wine, he says to you "I've taken that sin away." As that shapes us, as that builds us up as we rejoice in our forgiveness, we want to know our God better. We get to know him better. We seize the most of every opportunity to grow in that knowledge of him. Then we start being filled with the Spirit and thinking in God's terms.

Then the God who lives in us starts working through us. It shapes us and it changes us. It blesses us in ways that all of our solutions never could bless us. That's God's plan for you and me. You and I, we might have a head knowledge of it, but we don't always live it.

That's why our God calls us to do something else in the wise life. Not only ourselves be filled with the Spirit, but then he says "Speak to one another" in those words of the

Spirit. Part of the wise life is encouraging one another, making the most of every opportunity to encourage one another and build each other up in Christ.

He says “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs... in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” The name of our Lord Jesus Christ means that we are speaking the message of the Gospel to one another and our focus is on God and what he has done for us, not the things we do for him. Those are great. Serve God with all your worth, but talk about God, not about yourself. Talk to one another about how much our God loves us.

Again, this isn't always easy to do. Did you notice that one phrase in there that is doggone near impossible for you and I to do? Did this make you stop and ask “Is God serious here?” Did you see that phrase? “Always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Always giving thanks to God the Father for **everything**. Think about what that means.

This year when you are gathered around the table filled with turkey and football playing in the background, what are the things you give thanks to God for first and foremost? Family, health, things like that probably, right? Another opportunity to watch the Lions on TV. All those kind of taken-for-granted things, right? Can you think of any Thanksgiving celebration where you thank God for the disease he has let into one of your family member's life? Not for healing it or not removing it, but did you ever stop and thank God for letting it in? That's a little harder, isn't it?

Did you ever stop and thank God for that person who attacked you verbally at work and made your life miserable at work? Did you ever stop and thank God for that at Thanksgiving?

God isn't saying to wait for Thanksgiving for this either. **Always** giving thanks to God the Father for **everything**. Now it's kind of easy to understand why you and I need a Savior so badly, right? We don't always give thanks to God for everything, yet that's what God has called us to do. When we have these difficulties, these challenges that we face, and if we live the wise life and get closer to our God so that he strengthens us, so he sustains us, so he is our refuge, our rock and our place of safety, it's something to be thankful for because it's brought us closer to God. It has brought us closer to him, and the closer we are to him, the better our lives will be. It doesn't mean it will be easy. It doesn't mean it will be fun. It doesn't mean we are going to say “Thank you Lord. Can I have another?” It doesn't mean we are ever going to do that, but if it leads us to depend more on God, that's how we get wisdom even out of sadness, right?

Live the wise life. Speak to one another and remind each other of these truths. When we are going through these things that we don't want to give thanks for, we need someone to remind us to give thanks to God in the middle of it, don't we? I'm

convinced that's why the Lord had me marry Paula. She's willing to speak up and say "Quit your whining and just trust in God." That's what I need. I have to believe that's what you need too.

That's why God puts us here as a congregation, right? So we can build each other up so we can be Christ to one another and we can encourage one another. So we can speak to one another. And always giving thanks to God the Father for everything as we build each other up with the Gospel.

This is God's plan. Live the wise life and carry it out. Amen.