



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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February 3, 2013

Epiphany 3

Sermon Text: [Luke 4:20-32](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [1 Kings 17:7-16](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 78](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 10:18-11:6](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 4:20-32](#)

Learn the Three R's of the Messiah

Revealed

Rejected

Resilient

Grace, mercy and peace are yours. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Every now and again you read something or hear a report of someone saying, "You know what? In our country, what we really need is to get back to the three R's... reading, writing and arithmetic." Basically what they are saying is that we need to get back to the basics of education and provide a good basic foundation for lifelong learning. But evidently, if you think about the three R's for a minute, one of the basics is not spelling because only one of them starts with R. Be that as it may, that's basically what it means... get back to the basics.

This morning as we look at what I read to you from Luke, it really gives us the basics of what Epiphany is all about. It gives us the basics of what our Messiah did for us. It kind of sums up the season of Epiphany really well. It's the three R's of the Messiah, the Anointed One, what he came to do. We see it play out.

He's in his hometown. We see first of all that he Reveals himself. Then he is Rejected by the people. But the most surprising thing is that his grace and his love and his mercy leads him to be Resilient as he continues on the path that leads to nothing but the agony of hell because of the sins of the people who have rejected him. That's an amazing thing about our God. That's what we see in Epiphany, and that's what we see this morning.

Last week we heard the setup to this Gospel. The verses that led up to and even included the first few sentences of our text. Jesus was in his hometown of Nazareth. As is custom, he went to the synagogue and they said, "Honored rabbi, we heard you are a great teacher. Would you share something from God's Word for us today?" He takes the scroll of Isaiah, unrolls it, and reads about how when the Messiah comes, he would proclaim freedom for the captives, release for those held in bondage and all that. All these prophecies that they all understood were about the coming Messiah. He rolls the scroll back up, hands it to them, and says "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing." If it was charades, he would have touched his nose and said, "That's me.

You got it. This is it. I'm the Messiah." There's no ambiguity as the people hear this. There's nothing to leave them any doubt about what he was saying. He is saying, "I am the One that God has promised from the beginning. The One who is going to crush the serpent's head... that's me. The One who is going to do all those things Isaiah wrote about... that's me. You're seeing the fulfillment of what the Old Testament pointed to."

He must have kept talking because it says the people were all amazed at his gracious words. You and I, as Christians, when we hear the word "grace," we usually think of undeserved love. We think about believing who God is and what he has done for us. I don't think that's what it means here. It probably means that he speaks really well. Maybe he talked really well, his words were really good and really powerful and so forth, but I don't think it involved saving faith because saving faith doesn't usually lead you to want to throw Jesus off the edge of a cliff, which is what they wanted to do a little bit later.

There was a stumbling block even at these powerful words. They didn't have the ears of faith to hear these words because they kept tripping over the fact that this was Joseph's son. This was the carpenter. They grew up with him. They knew him. If I was going to serve in the church where I grew up as a kid, that probably wouldn't go over really well. The people would know me and know what I did. I did at least one, maybe two things wrong when I was growing up, and they'd know that. It would cause a problem.

Now in the case of Jesus, he didn't do one or two things wrong. But they knew him as the guy that helped his father in the workshop. They knew him as the guy that was there doing all this. They might have known he wasn't like all the other kids, but to say that he was the promised Messiah? Familiarity breeds contempt, right? Jesus says "No prophet is honored in his hometown."

To show that it's no different than what had been going on, he says, "No doubt you are going to say to me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Do here in your hometown what we have heard that you did in other places, like Capernaum.' Prove to us that you are the Messiah. Do some miracle. Do something. I want you to do this, this and this, and then maybe I'll believe in you." To make demands of God instead of simply to believe in God is always a dangerous thing for the faith of a person.

Jesus says to them, "That's not how it works." God works through the Word. He works through Sacraments. He gives us the gift of faith. It isn't a decision we make. It isn't something we come up with or that we are convinced of by proof. It's a gift of God. If they are going to be so focused on "Physician, heal yourself. We've heard you've done it. Prove it to us. Show us that we should believe you, that you're not just some quack," he says, "No. I'm not doing that. The reason is because no one is accepted in their hometown." He gives evidence of that by pointing them back to how they are so proud of their birthright as children of Israel, that they have this special relationship with God and everyone else are just the nations, the Goyim, the good for nothing basically, and he says that's wrong. The prophets came to God's people again and again and

again, and they rejected him. So what did God do? He sent them off to what we read in our First Lesson. During the time of the famine in Israel, 3½ years without rain, a severe famine because wicked King Ahab and wicked Queen Jezebel had led the people away to worship Baal. They had deserted the prophets of the Lord. They killed a lot of them. He sent them not to the widow in Israel but to Sidon, a heathen nation. That was an affront to “We are God’s chosen people.”

It’s the same thing where there was a lot of people who had leprosy during the time of Elisha a little bit later. The one that God healed was Naaman, who was the general of Syria who had come and raided God’s people and took them away captives to serve as servants. Jesus is trying to lead them to see “don’t depend on yourself and your birthright. You need to depend on the Messiah.” He’s really calling them to put their trust in him and not in themselves, not who they were, and not what they had always known, but believe what God had promised and that he was the fulfillment of it. He reveals himself quite clearly and literally almost begs them to not do what their forefathers had done.

They did what their forefathers had done. To take Jesus by force? Can you imagine that? In the middle of a synagogue worship service, they got so furious? Can you see people rushing to the front here trying to take me out and throw me off a hill someplace? This is where they were at, right? Just think of how furious they must have been.

The natural reaction to God and his message to us is “I don’t need you God. I can do it on my own.” That’s where we are wrong. We can’t do it on our own. We’re by nature so sinful that we are condemned no matter what. We can think we are good and all that, but we aren’t. Things like this happening, what we are reading about here in Nazareth, is evidence of it. Left on our own, think of what we’d all be like.

We talked about it this morning at Bible class. What would life be like if there was no government, if there was no police force? We say people are basically good. Do you think all those good people would not steal, murder and so forth? Without the government to maintain control, we’d have all kinds of problems, wouldn’t we? That’s what we are like.

As they rejected Jesus, we shake our head at it, but the reality is that you and I aren’t that different. You and I can get caught up in what we are used to and the assumptions we have. Their assumption was that they were the children of Israel, they had a special relationship with God, and nothing could change that. They were wrong. Jesus showed them they were wrong, and they didn’t like it. What Jesus said was absolutely true. It was just unpopular and not willing to be embraced by the people.

Think of how that happens for you and me as individuals. God says things to us that are absolutely true about how we are sinners and “don’t do this, because that separates you from me. That leads you away from me,” and we take what God says and throw it off the edge of a cliff and go our own way. God says it’s so important for you to be

connected to him through his Word, and we, through the course of time, have developed this tradition, not given by God in Scripture, that we've reenforced a message among ourselves that God's Word is just for up until the time we get confirmed. We've kind of developed that mentality. God has called us to live lifelong grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, and we say growing in the Word is for someone else. It's for the kids. It's not for us. We don't always embrace it and hang onto it. We get caught up in the way we've always done things.

I really enjoy teaching Confirmation Class. I really enjoy the 10% of the time the kids listen. That's really great. But God has not given to me that command to teach your children. Did you hear it in the Psalm we sang today? Psalm 78? "We'll tell our children, the next generation, the praiseworthy deeds of our God. Parents, bring up your children in the training and instruction of the Lord." He's given parents that command. Is there a danger for you and I as parents to think we've done our job if we ship them off to someone else and say "You teach them about God. That's your job. That's not my job. Now I've gotten them through the Christian day school, or I've gotten them through Confirmation instruction, I've done my part. I've given them to you." We are throwing God over the cliff because that's not what he said to do. He said we are to train them and that we are to keep growing for our whole life, and not just think that because we had a cute little corsage on a white gown that now we're done with that stuff. Yet, we often do that. That's the impression we give. We've thrown Christ over the cliff so to speak.

We do it in our own life with whatever sin we are caught up in. We all get caught up in our own sin, and we know it's wrong. If you did it, I could say quite clearly that's against God's will, but when I do it, you have to understand there is this reason why. We convince ourselves that our sins aren't that bad. "Yeah, I can have another drink. What's the big deal? I'll let someone else drive. There God, you should be happy with me. I have a designated driver because I'm loaded and I can't walk straight." No, God says that's sin. We've kicked him off the cliff again, right?

Go through all the Commandments and think about all the sins we commit. They are basically us saying, "God, I know better. I'm throwing you over the cliff because I want to cling to what I want to cling to. It's about me and my desires and not about you God." God gives us those commands because he wants to bless us. He wants to make our life better. As we are closer to him and live for him, he will bless us. He tells us that. Unfortunately we want to throw him off the cliff at times. We are all that way. It doesn't make it right. It's just a reality.

This is the part of our God that surprises me. If I am Jesus and they get me out to that edge of the cliff, and I'm going to perform a miracle so that they don't throw me over the cliff because my time hasn't come yet, which is what he did when he walked through them, I'd probably draw a little blood. I'd probably be so irritated with these people I grew up with that they didn't get it, they didn't understand, that I'd make a carbon spot on the ground out of one or two of them just to let those people know that what they are

doing is wrong. If it was me, I might say “You know what? To hell with all of you! I’m going back to heaven. I’ve had enough! I’ve been rejected time and time and time again. I don’t want to put up with it anymore!” Have you ever been there?

I hear this fairly often. “Pastor, I invited someone to learn more about Jesus. They didn’t come, so I can’t do that. I’m not going to do that anymore.” Think of how quick we are to throw our hands up and say “Enough!” Think if Jesus would have done that.

This is what is amazing. God loves us because of who he is, not because of who we are. We get that messed up at times. We think God loves us because I do this for him, or I do that for him, or because I’m here in church this morning giving him some time, now he owes me something. God doesn’t owe us anything, but he loves us because he is love. He walked through those people because of his love. He had to be resilient. He had to continue on the path that led to Calvary. He walked through them and didn’t strike them down like my sinful nature would want to, because he is love.

So all the times that you and I have messed up, all the times we have sinned and not done what God wants us to do, or the times we have embraced something that God said not to do, he still loves us. This is the amazing thing because it’s only the resilience of his love that saves you and saves me and saves the world. His love forgives our sins. Where you and I threw God over the cliff, Jesus embraced his Father’s will perfectly and loved perfectly and kept all the Commandments for us. Where you and I could never endure the punishment for sin because that would be hell itself, Jesus endured it for us. It’s not about what we do for him. It’s about what he has done for us. The more we understand that and keep that as the central focus of our spiritual life, the more we are going to want to do what he wants us to do, not have to, not because someone is kicking me in the hind end and making me do it, it’s because I want to know my Savior more. I want to live for him more faithfully. I want to be close to him because he has revealed himself to me. Even though at times I’ve rejected him and went my own way, his resilient love has reached out and found me and drawn me close to him. That’s the coolest thing in the world!

Live in that utter awe of the resilient love of our God.