



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

February 13, 2013

Ash Wednesday

Sermon Text: [Luke 22:39-46](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [2 Samuel 24:10-25](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 51a](#)

Second Lesson: [2 Corinthians 3:14-22](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 18:9-14](#)

Names of Wondrous Love - Jesus

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

What is the first name for God that you ever learned? Probably the one that you will remember if you think back, I'm guessing, is Jesus. Did you learn when you were little, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so," or "I am Jesus' little lamb"? Those are the songs we teach to real young children. That name Jesus stays dear to us even as we grow older. Yesterday we closed a Bible Class by singing "What a friend we have in Jesus." It's a song we love to sing. Or the hymn, "Jesus lead us on until our rest is won." The name Jesus is precious to us, and I think it's kind of obvious why. It's a name that came down from heaven and was given by earthly parents. Earthly parents were directed by a messenger from God. "This boy that you're going to have, you are going to give him the name Jesus." You and I know why. We know what it means. I would think everyone here knows that the name Jesus means Savior. They gave him the name Jesus because he would save his people from their sins.

So Jesus is the name that we probably associate most with the wonderful love of God. We know it's love that moved God to send his Son. It's love that kept the Son doing the Father's will. It's love that led God to save us and to take away our sins.

This year during Lent we are going to look at names of Wondrous Love, names that communicate the love of God that caused him to save us. The one we are going to look at today is Jesus. As we look at it, the first thing we are going to see as we consider this name of Wondrous Love, Jesus, is Jesus' love for a fallen world. After we stand in amazement and look at that for awhile, we are going to see Jesus' love for his Father's will. In seeing that, hopefully we are empowered to submit to the Father's will in our lives.

Jesus, that's the name that was used by Luke in this account of Jesus praying in the garden. Jesus went out as usual to the Mount of Olives. The disciples followed him. Why did they go out there? What was he going to do there?

If you showed up an hour after they got there, what would you see? As you get up close to the gate, you might see a group of guys slumped over stuff, spread out on the ground, asleep. We are told that they were exhausted from sorrow. They had just heard that Jesus was going to be betrayed by one of their own. He had just told them all these things that were going to happen. Their heads were spinning. They couldn't

understand. They were worn out. Emotionally drained. They were so exhausted, they fell asleep. So as you take a step around those guys, maybe they are outside the gate, you get into the gate and go a little farther and then all of a sudden you come upon three guys laying there, Peter, James and John. The other Gospels tell us they went off a little farther with Jesus. Then about a stone's throw away in the distance you hear some murmuring. You hear something, so you follow the noise. As you get closer to the noise, you can make out a figure. That figure isn't exactly how we always picture it, not even how we picture it on the front window above our altar at church. We always picture Jesus at the garden praying over a nice big rock that he is reclining on or leaning over. It said here that he knelt to the ground. The other Gospels tell us that his face was in the dirt.

He was on his knees and he was bent over, face down in the dirt, and as you get closer, you see that and wonder what is going on? Then you can hear in his language. He's pleading. He's begging. It's not what you would expect from Jesus, is it? This is the guy that we just heard two weeks ago how when they were going to throw him over a cliff, he went right through the middle of them, right? This is the guy that could walk on water. This is the guy that could say, "Lazarus, come out," and he came out. Now he is face down in the dirt, on his knees, and he is pleading with his heavenly Father. "Father, take this cup away from me!" Then he says it again. He says it again. The Gospels tell us that three times he prayed this to his Father.

What is this cup? What is this cup that brings the One who walks on water to be face down in the dirt? It's the cup of God's wrath that is poured out against sin. It's what God thinks of sin and what sin deserves.

I don't know how often we think about this, but we looked at this in Bible Study yesterday. It says in Isaiah that Jesus carried our infirmities and our sorrows. That's not just our sin, right? That's the effects that our sin has on us. The effects of living in a sinful world. Do you know what I mean? Have you ever stood beside the casket of a loved one as it's lowered into the ground? That's one of our sorrows, right? Have you struggled with ongoing physical problems or watched a loved one do the same? That's our infirmities. That's a result of sin. Think of all the emotional pain that every person in the world has ever felt. Think of every problem that comes from sin that every person has ever experienced. It was all on Jesus' shoulders. Can you even begin to imagine that? We can't hardly stand up under the weight of our own problems without our knees buckling and he has every one of all time. He carried our infirmities and our sorrows.

But the cup wasn't just that. The cup you and I know is what God feels about sin. You and I might shrug off sin from time to time and think it's no big deal, but can you hear that First Lesson we heard today and come up with that same answer? Can you stand there in the garden and see Jesus on his knees and the One who created the dirt pressing his forehead into the dirt, only lifting it up enough so that you can see sweat like blood falling into the dirt? That's what our sins are. When you see what he went through, can you ever really again stand before God and offer up to God a pathetic

“Everybody is doing it. What’s the big deal? It’s the 21st Century. Get over it. Don’t tell me that it’s wrong.” Can you really stand before God and even begin to mouth those words anymore when you see what Jesus went through because of your sins and my sins, Adam and Eve’s sins, Cain and Abel’s sins, David and Absalom’s sins, every sin that has ever been committed? This is what it did to Jesus. You can’t just put sin lightly. That’s why Ash Wednesday may not be one of people’s favorites when it comes to minor festivals of the church year because we are confronted with an ugly mirror. It’s the mirror of the Law. We see our sins. And then we are confronted with an even uglier picture of what it did to our Savior. That hurts.

So why is he there? Why does he stay there? When a parent gets up in the middle of the night to take care of a crying baby, why do they do it? Why does a spouse sit by a hospital bed of their spouse as they are suffering? It’s an easy answer, right? It’s love. When you see the love that God has, that Jesus has for you and for me and for every other sinner that has ever walked the face of this earth, it’s a love that we really can’t comprehend. We can say it’s amazing. We can say it’s wondrous. We can stick all kinds of adjectives on the front of it, but I don’t care if you live to be 100 and contemplate his love every day of your life, you won’t even scratch the surface of the depth of his love that led him to stay in that garden and say, “Not my will but your will be done Father.” It was love that led him through it. That’s why this name fits. Jesus loves the fallen world with an incredible, indescribable, unexplainable love. That means that’s how he loves you.

As you stand there in the garden and consider this love that led Jesus to go through with this and you see his willingness to drink a cup that is the distillation of all of God’s wrath against sin, you can only come to the conclusion that he does it because he loves you. That cup is not distilled sour mash. That cup is the distilled anger of God, the distilled wrath of God that he says, “Not my will but your will be done.” As you consider the truth of that phrase, “Not my will but your will be done,” stand there a moment and marvel at the love that Jesus has for his Father’s will.

If your earthly parents told you to do something you didn’t want to or you didn’t think you should or you didn’t think whatever, did you ever mumble and grumble under your breath? Did you ever go to your room and throw a fit and scream and holler in your mind at your parents and how terrible they were and they just don’t understand and they are just unfair and they are just not loving and all this kind of stuff that they would expect you to do that? Look at Jesus. He doesn’t do that.

He gets up from the ground, talks to his disciples and says, “Let us go. My betrayer is coming.” He walks resolutely on the path that is going to lead to the cross of Calvary, that’s going to lead to blood from his back, blood from many other places in his body, not just his forehead, but he walks resolutely, resiliently. He submits to his Father’s will just like that. That’s amazing. That’s incredible. Jesus’ love for his Father knew only to surrender to the Father’s will and do what the Father had sent him there to do. That’s something we could learn. That’s something we can be empowered to imitate.

Think about it... when do we want to say “Not my will but your will be done”? It’s when things are going well, right? When things are sunshine and roses, peaches and cream, it’s not hard to say, “Lord, your will be done,” because his will is obviously just what we want. But we want it all the time. It’s like the kid that ended this prayer, “Lord, could you just please put the vitamins in the cake and the pie and not just in peas and carrots.” We want him to bless us in the way we want and everything being good all the time. But God’s will isn’t always that way. God understands that he is preparing us not just for time and not just redeeming us for time but for eternity.

So when those troubles come, it becomes a lot harder to say, “Not my will but your will be done” to the Father, doesn’t it? When we plead and plead and plead that some difficulty in our life be removed, that “Lord, please put some kind of balance in the checkbook,” “Lord, please take away this pain and this darkness that never seems to go away,” “Lord, please heal my loved one,” and when God doesn’t, do we get up off our knees and say, “Okay, not my will but your will be done”? Or do those prayers turn into cries of demands to our God? Accusations to our God like “God, you don’t love me or else you would be doing these things”? At some time or another I have to believe that every one of us sitting here has sinned against our God in this way. We haven’t submitted to his will and we wanted to tell God, just like Job, how things should be done.

A cabinet maker, Jesus’ wood... wood comes with imperfections. If you want to make a cabinet, you have to get rid of those imperfections. That makes sense. How do you get rid of that? Quite often it is with a power sander, right? You can power sand those imperfections away and get it ready so that it will look nice and the beauty of the wood will come out even better. Just for a moment, just imagine wood could talk. Do you think it’s going to say “Ouch” or “Thank you” as it’s being sanded?

Sometimes the Lord has to sand us for our faith and bring out the beauty of our faith with some difficulties that we face in life. We as Christians want to always go back to the truth that the Lord who loved us enough to stretch out his arms and die on a cross is going to be the Lord who will take care of us. He won’t abandon us. Even when we want to scream “ouch,” we can trust that he still loves us and he will work all things for our good. As we struggle with this, this is when we want to turn back and look again at Jesus over our shoulder in the garden and see how he willingly submitted to the Father’s will in our place, because we don’t always do it, and how he went to the cross and how he endured the punishment that we deserve. When we see his perfect submission to the Father’s will, we see not only our forgiveness, but we are moved by that love to submit to the Father’s will and just trust that our Lord will take care of us. Then we can pray just like Jesus. “Father, if you are willing, take this cup away from me.” But then, empowered by his love for us, we’ll always be willing and ready and eager to add, “But Lord, not my will but your will be done because you know better than me.” That’s why we call him Jesus... because he saved us from sins like these and he loved us with such an incredibly perfect love. He gives us that love today in his body and blood so that even though we, who are troubled by our sins, might know for certain that they have been taken away forever. Amen.