



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

February 17, 2013

1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Lent

Sermon Text: [Hebrews 4:14-16](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Joshua 7:16-26](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 3](#)

Second Lesson: [Hebrews 4:14-16](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 4:1-13](#)

### **We Have A Unique High Priest**

He knows our weaknesses

He supplies our greatest need

Grace, mercy and peace are yours from God our Father. Amen.

In Christ, our suffering and victorious servant, dear Christian friends:

Over the course of my life, I've collected a lot of sports cards. If Paula were here this morning, you could ask her. She'd tell you I collected way too many sports cards. They are in boxes. They are in containers. They are on shelves. They are all over the place. It's just a mess. If I drop dead tomorrow and you see a great big bonfire, you'll know I'm dead when you see the flames in the sky as my wife burns all that stuff.

Over the course that I collected sports cards, there was a trend in it for awhile, I think there probably still is today, I don't know, where they started putting foil on the back of cards and numbering them, like 1 of 10,000 or something like that to make it more rare and more desirable. Some cards have even come out that are labeled 1 of 1. That meant it's the only card that had that foil on it. It was unique in that sense then. So if you were a collector that wanted all the cards of that certain person, you had to pay an awful lot because that was the only one in the world that existed. If someone else also wanted it, you'd be in a bidding war. Something that was unique in sports cards like that would become very, very valuable to certain collectors.

You and I have something unique, but it doesn't have foil on it. As we read these words from the letter to the Hebrews, we see that we have a unique High Priest. That makes all the difference in the world to us. His uniqueness is in that he is the only one that could accomplish what he had to do as High Priest, which an earthly high priest could never ever do.

But another thing that gives us great comfort as we consider his uniqueness is that although he is true God, he is also true man. So we have this High Priest who can understand our weaknesses. He can sympathize with our weaknesses. I think you and I forget that from time to time.

Then also, because he is this unique High Priest, we see that he supplies our greatest need, not the needs that we might at times want, but he gives us the greatest need that we could ever have.

You and I don't stand all that far away from the Achan we read about in our First Lesson this morning, do we? God has told us at times, "This is what I want you to do." Like he told them to destroy everything in Jericho. Achan took some of it because he saw something and his heart wanted it. He thought life would be better if he didn't do what God said and did what he thought was best. So he went on his own path. That path led to when they battled against the City of Ai after the defeat in Jericho. A lot of Israelites died. They died because Achan didn't listen to God.

You saw the result of how God views sin in that First Lesson. That's what makes our High Priest so precious to us, because later when God had them in the temple, they had the high priest that would go into the Holy Place every year. At this time, they had the Tabernacle and they had the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. They had their Day of Atonement when once a year the high priest would go into the Holy of Holies, the place where the Ark of the Covenant was, the throne of God so to speak, the mercy seat of God. He would take the blood of an animal and sprinkle it on the mercy seat. He would have the blood cover himself. In the letter to the Hebrews we are told the earthly high priest went into a copy of heaven, which is what he was describing the Holy of Holies as, to take away the sins of the people, the sins that were just like Achan's where they didn't do what God said. On that Day of Atonement, everyone would see that God takes away sin through the shedding of blood.

We have a great High Priest who entered not a copy of heaven. He went through everything and offered up himself and then went back to heaven itself and pleads our case for us. As he pleads our case for us, we know this about our God, about Jesus...when he pleads our case, he pleads it from the point of view of knowing our weaknesses, of knowing the struggles we have as we are tempted. We are told that he was made just like us, in every way that we are, yet he was without sin. We are also told he was tempted in every way that we are, yet he was without sin. He doesn't sympathize with our sin. He sympathizes with our weakness, with the struggle that we have against sin. He faced the temptation of the devil the whole time he walked the face of this earth. Not just three times in the wilderness, but day after day after day. The devil was attacking him because if Jesus failed, if he sinned, we are all going to hell. So he knows the weight that comes with all these temptations from Satan. He knows how frail our human nature is. He knows from seeing us, how prone we are to fall, and he knows just how much we need to be lifted up by the love and the mercy of God, because on our own we can't do it.

Think about the difference that makes for you. As you face your daily life, there isn't a single thing that you face that in some way, shape or form Christ wasn't tempted with. There isn't anything that you bear, that you endure because of living in a sinful world that Christ didn't carry for you already. We talked about it last Wednesday. It says in Isaiah that he carried our sorrows and our infirmities. He had on him all the results of our sins, not just the guilt of our sin. He knows the results of our sins, the weaknesses that we have, because they were all placed on him.

When we deal with emotional loss, he knows that. He experienced it. When we deal with all these things we are worried about...did you ever notice how often you spend time, before something happens, going through every possible permutation of what might happen, and then worrying about each and every single one of them before it even happens. Do you ever do that? We are kind of prone to that, aren't we? He knows that's one of our weaknesses. He knows how we don't always live just by saying, "Lord, I trust you. Whatever happens after this event, you'll help me through it." We worry about every eventuality and then we think about everything that could go wrong in each one of those eventualities until finally we can't sleep. We can't hardly do anything. We are twisted in knots. Jesus understands that. He knows it's a weakness we have, and he loves us anyhow.

He loves us so much that he went through the agony of the cross. He went through paying for all of our sins. He provided exactly what was necessary. He lived perfectly, trusting God where you and I fail to trust God. He lived without sinful worry, where you and I seem to bathe daily in sinful worry. He lived with this implicit trust that his Father's will would be done and that our salvation would be completed no matter what the devil or the world around him or the world's sinful flesh threw at him. He trusted God implicitly and carried out his Father's will. Just because he was perfect doesn't mean he can't sympathize with the imperfect. He knows our weaknesses and he loves us in spite of how weak and frail we are.

It's that love that led him to give us exactly what we need. It says that we can approach the throne of grace with confidence so that we can receive mercy and find grace to help in our time of need. He gives us what we don't deserve. He gives us confidence to approach God. He gives us that confidence to approach God because of his mercy and grace, his compassion for us, his undeserved love for us. He doesn't love us because we buck up and suck it up and get through stuff. He loves us because he is love. That love helps us to get through the difficulties of life. He doesn't take away our sins because we promise next time we are going to do better. He takes away our sins because he is love. He is grace. And he is mercy. He meets our greatest needs...help in time of trouble. The greatest trouble you and I have is our sins. And he's taken them away.

That leads us to move to want to live for him, to want to put our trust in him. I want to at this time next year be better at trusting God than I am today. That's something that we live with as our goal as Christians. Lord knows there is always room for improvement.

As you and I spent time with our Savior God, as we focus on his love and his mercy and we see what he went through this Lenten season to take away our sin, and we rejoice in it, God will empower us to trust more. We'll have that help in time of need of a greater trust in God. It's not going to come because we decided to do it. It's going to come because he strengthened us through Word and Sacrament. Time and time again we've seen our sin and we've seen how he has taken it away. Then it finally sinks in, not just into our heads but into our hearts, that our God loves us because of who he is, not because of who we are.

Our God loves us and that will never change. Our God gives us heaven as a free gift. That's what drives out so many of our fears. It doesn't mean they are all going to go away. We are still sinners. Our sin will still lead us to doubt and worry at times. The more that we grow in that trust in God, he will help us. Our time of need will still be difficult, but it won't be lonely because we'll have our God at our side. The One who is pleading our case before God's throne in heaven is the One who decides our fate. That's amazing comfort. And that's amazing grace.