



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 24, 2013  
6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent - Palm Sunday  
Sermon Text: [Hebrews 12:1-3](#)  
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 45:22-25](#)  
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 24](#)  
Second Lesson: [Hebrews 12:1-3](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 19:28-40](#)

### **Run Faith's Race With Perseverance**

Without getting tripped up  
With eyes fixed on Jesus

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

If any of you on the outside aisles are starting to get too cold, feel free to get up and close the windows. If any of you are starting to fall asleep, feel free to get up and open them.

If we stop and we honestly think about who our God is and what he does for us, it really should never put us to sleep. When you look at what an incredible God we have who does the things he does for us in spite of who we are and how sinful we are, it's just an amazing thing to think about...the love that our God has for us and the patience he has with us. Look at that love expressed to us today in the words that I want to talk to you about. They are the appointed Second Lesson for Palm Sunday. They come from the Letter to the Hebrews in Chapter 12.

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

Dear friends in Christ, and this morning, especially you, the members of our Confirmation Class:

God paints a picture for us here, doesn't he? He paints a picture of an athletic contest, a race. He's telling us to run the race. He says to run the race with perseverance. To persevere means to hang in there, to stick to it because it's going to be difficult at times. So I don't think he's talking about the 40-yard dash. When he talks about the race of our Christian life, he's talking more marathon-type things, right? The type of things that I quit before I start because I wouldn't want to do it. That's the way it is.

What God is trying to tell you is there are going to be things in our life as Christians where we are going to want to say “I want to quit before I start” because it’s going to be hard. It’s going to be difficult. It’s going to be things I don’t want to do. I am going to have to deal with things I don’t want to deal with so I’m going to be really tempted to throw everything in and not continue on in what I’ve learned. That’s a real temptation. That’s a real difficulty.

So our God had the writer to the Hebrews point us to this great cloud of witnesses that are talked about here. It says we are going to run this race with perseverance, so focus on this great cloud of witnesses that we are surrounded by. [Hebrews 11](#) is the heroes of faith chapter he talked about. By faith, Adam did this. By faith, Noah did this. By faith, Moses did this. It goes through them all by faith, Abraham and all this, and it talks about how by faith, some of these people faced great difficulty. They even faced death because they didn’t want to lose what God had promised them in their home in heaven. It talks about how they endured difficulty in this world, yet they didn’t receive what God had promised. That only came when God called them out of this world to heaven. So between now and that time, God is telling us you have to run the race with perseverance because there are all kinds of things that are going to trip you up.

Not all of them are sins. Look at what he says. He says, “*let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles.*” Yes, sin can trip us up, but there are things that aren’t in and of themselves sin that can hinder us. One of the examples that he used in Chapter 11 would be how Moses could have lived as royalty in Egypt. He could have been the prince of Egypt. He could have lived as royalty. Is it a sin to live as royalty? Not in and of itself. But Moses chose to live as a servant so that he could be closer to his God because he was afraid that would trip him up and entangle him and then he would lose what he knew God had for him.

So think about some of the things in your race, your walk with God, that might trip you up that aren’t even sin? What are things that we get entangled in? If you are going to run a race, you aren’t going to run it wearing snow boots or hip waders, right? That will trip you up, right? Anything that is going to get between you and your God is going to trip you up. It doesn’t have to be sinful.

God wants us to work, use the gifts he has given us to make a living, but he doesn’t want us to do it at the expense of being close to him. He doesn’t want all these other things to come in front of him. Friendship...God wants us to have friends. He wants you to be the best friend you can be to other people, right? But if you have friends that are leading you away from God, that could be something that entangles you and trips you up. Peer pressure is powerful, not just at your age, it’s powerful if you’re as old as your parents are. Peer pressure is still pretty powerful. It trips everyone up. So watch yourself. Don’t let it trip you up.

The sin that so easily entangles...I think that’s a lot easier to see. I’ve told you about this. We’ve talked about it I don’t know how long, probably since you started in my class. When you get done with my class, don’t think you know everything. I don’t care

if you stick a pretty flower on you so you smell a little better today than yesterday. I don't care if you are wearing a white gown. You don't know everything yet. You just don't.

Scripture talks about "let us leave the elementary truths behind and move on towards spiritual maturity." Here is a sin that can trip you up. If you think you're already there and in arrogance think that's just for kids, that's just for other people, growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...he wants you to do that your whole life. But if you get tripped up by the sin of thinking "I know all that" or "That's just for kids. That's not for me," you are going to do a face plant on the race of walking with God. So don't give into that sin of arrogance of thinking you know it all.

Here's how I look at it, and here's how you should look at it, and here's what you should realize. You have been prepared with the elementary truths of who God is, who you are and what God has done for you so that now you can think. What's the one thing I told you to never be? Parrots. I don't want you just repeating what someone else has said to you. Last week I didn't want you to just be a tape recorder that I press play on and then you spit out an answer without knowing what it means. That's why I kept telling you to define those big fancy church words, right? You have to be able to put it into words so your friend, Peter Pagan, can know and understand because that's who you are called to share them with.

I'm confident that you are at a point where you can think and apply the truths God has given you to various situations in your life. You're not just mindlessly repeating. You should be able to think right now. That's what we've stressed over and over until you were sick of hearing it, right?

Now, that was my job, to get you to that point. Now it becomes a "who" problem? It becomes a "you" problem. God has given you that knowledge and that grace. He's put that Holy Spirit in you, and from now, on it's up to you to keep growing so that you can apply this to every situation of life. You can say, "What are the principles that apply? How do they affect me? How do I apply them to this? How do I do it so I can run that race with perseverance?" That takes continual growth.

In a few short months, I won't be seeing you every week like I do now. So you have to do that growth on your own. You have to find a way that you keep growing and don't stop growing in your grace and knowledge because if you stop, you are going to face plant. That's how the race works. There are plenty of people who have worn white gowns and stood right here and said, "I'd rather die than fall away from Jesus Christ," and they have fallen away from Jesus Christ. Not everyone runs the race with perseverance.

You've been prepared. You've been equipped. The one thing you've been told over and over is, in this race, you need to keep your eyes fixed on Jesus Christ. Look at the cloud of witnesses, but what you see in that cloud of witnesses is not the cloud of

witnesses that strengthens you. It's how God has helped other believers through difficulty. And you put your trust in Jesus, that he will help you through whatever you face. This is God's promise to us.

This week we get to see just how deep his love is for us. We are filthy rotten sinners that have nothing to offer to him. Yet he still came and let people stretch his arms out on a cross. That's how deeply he loves you. If you keep your eyes focused on that love, then you get in the middle of life's difficulties, and you think "I want to quit. I don't want to keep doing this. God, why are you letting this happen? Where are you? What are you doing, God?" Put your eyes back on that cross and you see just how much he loves you. Then you see the depth of that love, the extent of that love and that is the only thing that kept him on that cross. That's what helps you to run your race with perseverance.

In reality, even today, it's not all about you. Some of you boys, this is probably the first time you've combed your hair in weeks, right? But it's still not all about you. It's about fixing your eyes on Jesus. It's about knowing him better next year than you know him this year. It's about knowing him better the year after that than you know him next year. It's about always getting closer to him, walking hand in hand with him and running with perseverance that race that comes up. When you fall, and at times you will fall because you are sinners, just remember spiritual breathing. Remember to put your sins on him and then rejoice that he takes them away. That's the truth you've learned. Now is the time to live in that truth on your own. By God's grace, hopefully you can remind all of us to do that. Amen.