



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 5, 2013

Easter 6

Sermon Text: [John 14:23-29](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [2 Kings 6:15-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 65](#)

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

Gospel Lesson: [John 14:23-29](#)

Love Obeys

God expects it

God empowers it

In Christ Jesus, our risen and ruling Savior, dear Christian friends:

The apostle Paul once wrote, "When I was a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child, I acted like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me." I think one of the areas where you can apply the words that Paul is saying is to why we do what we do, why we do the right thing. When you're a child, why do you do the right thing? Why do you do what your parents tell you to do? Most of the time it's so you don't get in trouble, right? You're doing it because you don't want to get punished. You don't want to get sent to your room. You don't want to be grounded. You don't want to be in trouble. Sometimes you do it and the whole time you are doing it you are grumbling, mumbling, and shuffling your feet, and then you say, "But I did it." You don't exactly do it because you love your parents and you can't wait to do something for them, right? Can you see that in your own life? Maybe a little?

Hopefully we grow out of obeying or loving in that way. If you are married and the only reason you show love to your spouse is so that you won't get in trouble with them, you have problems, right? You do things for your spouse, not just so they won't be upset with you. You do them because you love them and you want to put their interests ahead of your own. You do it because this is what love is. Love does for the other person.

That's what Jesus reminds us of in the Gospel I read to you a little bit ago. He's there on Maundy Thursday and he was talking to his disciples in that Upper Room. Last week we looked in from [John 13](#) where he had said, "Love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another. A new command I give you: love one another." He just kept saying it over and over to get it through our thick heads. As he went on a little bit later in the Upper Room, he's telling them that "Love one another means you are going to obey what I and the Father tell you to do. That's what I and the Father are going to expect of you." But in reality, you and I can't do that unless we're empowered by the Holy Spirit. So he also reminds us that he is going to give us the Spirit who will empower us to actually love for the right reasons when it comes to living for our Savior.

Look at the first two words of what I read to you from John 14 (Jesus replied). When I read them to you, did you think to yourself, “Okay, Jesus replied. Replied to whom? Replied to what?” That’s part of it...digging into what Scripture says by thinking about what it’s talking about here, right? Jesus replied...who did he reply to? He replied to Judas, not called Iscariot. Jesus had said he was the way, the truth and the life. No one can come to the Father except through him. Philip said, “Show us the Father.” Jesus said, “I and the Father are one. Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. I’m going to reveal myself to you. After a little while, the world won’t see me, but you will.” Then Judas said to him, “Why aren’t you going to show yourself to everyone? Why are you just showing yourself to us?” He was going to be gone for a little while (he was going to die) and then he was going to rise again. Why not show yourself to everyone? Why just to us?

This is Jesus’ answer. “If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching.” Do you think Judas had to kind of be going “What? How does that fit my question, Jesus?” But if you remember what we talked about last week, what Jesus had just said to them minutes earlier in the Upper Room, “A new command I give you: love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another,” then it makes sense, doesn’t it? “If you love me, you’ll obey my teaching. That’s how I’m going to make myself known to everyone. If you love me, you’ll do the things I want you to do. That love will show up in your life. People will see it. It will be different than everyone else around you. That’s how I’m going to make myself known.”

That’s Jesus’ plan. That’s what he’s telling us to do. All the things he told us to do last week, here is why he is telling us to do it. He says, “You know what? This isn’t just my idea. These are not my words alone. They belong to the Father who sent me.” This has been God’s plan from all eternity.

Another thing as I read it to you a little while ago might have struck you as odd. Maybe you thought about it and thought, “What in the world is Jesus talking about?” “You heard me say, ‘I am going away and I am coming back to you.’ If you loved me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. I have told you now before it happens, so that when it does happen you will believe.” He says these words are his and his Father’s and he says, “the Father is greater than I.” You and I might be thinking, “Wait a minute. I thought Jesus was God too?” Didn’t Jesus say, “I and the Father are one”? He had just said to Philip, “If you’ve seen me, you’ve seen the Father.” So what in the world is Jesus talking about? “The Father is greater than I.” It’s something that we talked about in Bible Study last Sunday morning, looking at Jesus’ return to judge the world, where Jesus said, “No one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.” When Jesus spoke these words, he was in his state of humiliation. He set aside the full and constant use of his divine power and glory. He got hungry. He got thirsty. He got tired. He said “The Father is greater than I” because according to his state of humiliation, he didn’t use his full divine power and glory. So at the times he wasn’t using his full divine power and glory, he didn’t know when Judgment Day would be while he was on this earth, and now he can say “The Father is greater than I”. He said, “This isn’t just my idea. It’s God’s plan from

all eternity.” It shouldn’t trouble us because now Jesus has again taken up his full divine power and glory. Now he and the Father are one and he is using his full divine power and glory, but when he spoke these words, he wasn’t using them. That’s why he speaks in that way.

The point we need to remember is that he is saying “This is my word to you. This is what I expect of you. This is what the Father expects of you.” He’s really pointing ahead to what we are going to celebrate in a few weeks, the Doctrine of the Holy Trinity.

Think about it now...if we love the way God has told us to love, that new command that said “Love as I have loved you,” put others’ interests ahead of your own, love without expectation of return, will that lead people to know the Father and lead people to know God and lead people to ask questions of us?

This morning we talked about End Times in Bible Study, and one of the things we looked at is godliness in the last days and what it says in [2 Timothy 3](#). Listen to this and tell me, if this is what God says the world is going to be like in the last days, if you and I love as Christ loved us, will it stick out like a sore thumb? In [2 Timothy 3:1-5](#) the Holy Spirit had Paul write to Timothy: *“But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God—having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people.”* As you hear that description, can you see that in the world around you? More importantly, can you see it in yourself at times?

Now think about this...if we love as Christ loved us, if we forgive those who have harmed us, won’t that stick out like a sore thumb? As we put others’ interests ahead of our own instead of loving ourselves above all else, won’t that stick out like a sore thumb? Won’t that earn us the right to have the opportunity to tell other people why we do it? It’s because of Jesus.

Now think of the opposite side. When we are doing the exact same things everyone else is, when we are unwilling to be forgiving, when all we want to do is slander other people and talk about how terrible other people are, do you think anyone wants to hear us talk about a Savior? Of course not. Think about how many times you and I have done that.

Does it really work if you live in a way that shows love for God? Will that really stick out? Or is that just God talking? If you look at the history of the early church, the early church faced persecution, faced difficulty, faced hardship. At various times when persecution would break out from the Roman emperors, people could seize Christians’ property just because they were Christians. They were accused of being cannibals and things like that because they ate the body and blood of someone. So they could seize

their property. What happened at times, when you read the accounts of the early Christian church, is that plague would break out. People would be dying left and right in the streets. People would flee the city because it was a death city. Often the only people that were left there to care for those who were dying were the Christians because most often they were very poor. They couldn't afford to get up and flee. So there are the Christians caring for the sick and dying, sometimes caring for the very people that had maybe just seized their property. Now they are loving them like Christ would love them. The church grew by leaps and bounds because people saw this love in action.

God provides us with the opportunity to tell others about who our Savior is. One of the ways he does it is as we live our faith and as we love. As we don't hold grudges. As we don't slander other people. If the only time anyone ever hears us talking about our church is when we are talking about what idiots they are, they are never going to listen to anything else we say. But when we forgive as we've been forgiven, when we love as we have been loved, it will stick out. And we do it, not because we have to, but because God first loved us. That's what our Savior tells us.

He tells us that he is going to send "the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you." When he comes, peace will be what's left with us. Jesus' peace will be given to us. Not the way the world gives peace. All the things in the world, all the possessions, all the things we could love about this world, all the successes, they can all come and go. But the peace that God gives us is eternal. I don't know if we always recognize that or always focus on that. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in what we can see, we forget about the blessings we actually have that are eternal.

Jesus says, "I am going to send the Spirit because he needs to help you and remind you of all these things so you will be empowered to do it because on your own, you won't be able to." The fact of the matter is that if you look at your life or if I look at my life, we have failed our God so often in this way. We haven't loved and obeyed. We went our own way. We've done all these kinds of things. Satan is going to come to us and say, "You can't do that. You've failed. You've screwed up so many times, you can't possibly love like that. That's someone else's job. That's not yours." That's why God says he is going to send "the Counselor". That's how they translated it here.

The word in Greek is really kind of hard to bring straight into English. In fact, some translations just take the Greek word and bring it straight into English. It's in some of our hymns and things too. Have you ever seen the word "Paraclete"? That's that Greek word brought straight into English because it's kind of hard to translate. Counselor sounds like someone at camp that chased you around when you were naughty or something. It's not the picture that really is telling you what this is doing.

The Counselor, the Comforter, the Paraclete is someone who comes to your aid, someone who speaks on your behalf, someone who takes up your defense, someone who is there to aid you and help you when you desperately need it. That picture starts

to get me a little more fired up. Think about it a minute...when Satan comes and tells you, "You can't do this stuff. You've screwed up too much. That's someone else's job. That's not yours. God won't love you. God won't let you do it. You just sit back and sit on your thumbs and don't say or do anything," the Holy Spirit comes and says, "Wait a minute. This person believes in Jesus." In fact, when the Father looks at us and says, "I told you to love this way. You haven't done it. What's wrong with you? What have you got to say for yourself?" The Paraclete speaks on our behalf. We don't have to say, "Yes, I have sinned and I can't ever go to heaven." We can say, "Father, when you look at me, you see the perfection of Jesus. You see his obedience as my obedience. You see my sins punished in him. When you look at me, Heavenly Father, you see a holy child that is yours." Because the Holy Spirit reminds us of all truth and leads us into the peace that only God can give, the peace that is eternal. This is the peace of forgiveness through the life and death of Jesus. He jumps to our defense. He brings to mind this faith that he has worked in our hearts. So when we feel we can't do things, he comes and says, "Yes you can. I've made you a child of God. You have more power behind you than you can ever imagine." That power is God.

As he helps us focus on God's love for us and as he helps us be honest with how we have failed our God and not make excuses but simply say, "Lord, for the sake of Jesus, forgive me," and we know then that we are forgiven, we begin to find joy in obeying our Lord. We begin to find joy in loving and forgiving the people that our sinful nature finds so hard to do. We find joy in it because we find joy in forgiveness and joy in our Savior. We find joy to such an extent that the next time you sing a 10-verse hymn, you'll actually enjoy it. Amen.