



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

May 9, 2013

Ascension

Sermon Text: [Ephesians 1:16-23](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Acts 1:1-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 47](#)

Second Lesson: [Ephesians 1:16-23](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 24:44-53](#)

### **Our Ascension Prayer**

For Wisdom

For Revelation

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

It doesn't take long when you start reading through the letters that the New Testament authors wrote to the various churches, the various individuals, the various people, to see that prayer was a very important part of their lives. They prayed continually for one another. They prayed for specifics. They were praying for one another again and again and again. That's something I think we would do well to learn from, praying for one another and praying for specifics. That's something we are trying to encourage with our shepherding ministry.

This evening you have Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, people he had spent over a year with ministering, which was a long time for the apostle Paul. He prays for them. He says he doesn't stop praying for them. But what he prays for them, these people he had ministered among for such a long time, is very specific. It's very detailed in the paragraph that's printed there for you. He doesn't pray for everything to go well for them. It's very specific.

He prays for, and he says it specifically, wisdom and revelation. "I keep asking," not a one time thing, "I keep doing it over and over, but the God of the Lord Jesus Christ"...that's an interesting phrase. How often do you hear God the Father referred to as the God of our Lord Jesus Christ? You don't come across that phrase all the time. But how the Son submitted to the Father's will is the picture he is drawing from. And now he is urging them to submit to the Father's will and do these things he's going to pray about. "That the glorious Father may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation." It's very specific. "So that you may know him better." Huh. That's kind of fascinating, isn't it?

The people he is writing to, he thanks God for them. That means he's saying they are believers who are going to be in heaven with him, right? He knew that. But notice he doesn't say, "Hey, it's just good enough that you get to heaven. That's all I really care about. I have other things to do. See you later." Specifically wisdom and revelation that will lead to knowing God better. Not just a familiar acquaintance that you might say "Hi, how's it going" to, but someone that you know intimately. The word behind the wisdom there is a thorough knowledge...knowing through and through, knowing like you

know the back of your hand. You know how we always use that phrase. I don't know what that means, but we use it all the time, right? That's the kind of knowledge that he is talking about that he wants them to have for God.

Did you notice in the Acts reading those guys that spent three years with Jesus? This is a prayer Paul would have said for them also. Jesus had opened their minds so they could understand Scripture as Luke told us in his Gospel and in his history book of the early church, the Book of Acts, he says he taught them all these things. Then they raised their hand with a question. "Teacher, teacher, I have a question. Are you at this time going to reestablish the kingdom of Israel like Solomon had?" They didn't get it yet, right? They were acquaintances of Jesus. They should have known him better than anyone else. But they still had a lot of growing to do. That's why Jesus didn't scold them or do anything except, "Okay guys. Just stay in the city until you get a little smarter, until the Spirit is poured out on you so you know me better, so you know what this is really all about, what Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms were talking about in regard to me. I'll pour the Spirit out on you. You'll get it then, okay? Don't leave the city and don't do a whole lot until then because you guys need to know me better."

They spent three years at his feet, right? You think there might be the slightest possibility that maybe you and I could benefit from knowing him better, knowing him through and through for wisdom and revelation. A very thorough knowledge is a knowledge that knows him like the back of our hand. That's the wisdom part. The revelation part is revealing to us what God is actively doing now that we can't see his presence.

Paul is really praying that the Ephesians would have both. And I think that's essentially God's prayer for us also, a prayer that we would have the eyes of our heart enlightened so that we might know what is incomparable, what you can't compare to anything. So that we might know this glorious inheritance God has given us. Think about it...we'll never know that until we get there, but he's saying to learn more and more and all you can about it until you get there. He's telling you to keep growing in your knowledge.

Why? Why does God tell you to do that? Is God just some kind of egotistical maniac that just is narcissistic and wants all this attention for himself? Is it going to make his life better if you know him better? Not really, right? He's God. He's already perfect. You and I can't do anything to make him more perfect. Do you think maybe it's because he loves us and he wants us to be blessed? The more we know him, the more intimately we know him, the more thoroughly we know him, the more we keep our eyes focused on the glorious inheritance that he has waiting for us, the more equipped, the better able, the better we will face the challenges of day-to-day life in a sinful world.

This prayer that God has for us is a prayer that just simply says, "Would you guys just slow down and let me bless you? Would you let me give you some knowledge? Would you let me increase your faith? Would you let me give you more understanding of who I am and what I've done for you? Would you just slow down and take a breath and grow?" That's the amazing love of our God.

If you're trying to help someone and you know this would help them desperately, how many times do you keep reaching out to help them? How many times do you keep putting yourself on the line? How long until you say, "Okay, go your own way. I'm tired of it. I'm not reaching out to help you anymore." You and I all might have a different number, right? We might have varying degrees of patience. But think about God's patience. Think about how patient he is with us when we get arrogant and think we know it all, that there isn't anything more we could learn, or we just get the arrogance of busy-ness. We don't have time for God.

Look at all the things we make time for in our life. It usually revolves around us or those we love, and we don't stop and make time for God as often as we could. I know I don't. I'm guessing you don't either. That's who we are. God doesn't just kick us out of his kingdom and say "I've had enough. I've lost my patience with you. You've spit on me enough." He doesn't tee us up over and over and over like the game last night and then kick us out. He stays patient and he keeps reaching out to us again and again. I can't fathom that. I can't fathom the patience of God. There's no way in the world I would be as patient with me as he has been with me. If you're honest, I believe you probably have to say the same thing, right? Yet he keeps reaching out to you because he wants you to have this wisdom. He wants you to be blessed so you can face day-to-day life. So he reveals something to you that you would do well to hang onto, that you would do well to wrap your head around, your arms around, your hands around and hold on tight like you're hanging onto a life raft bobbing in the ocean.

Here's what he reveals to us. He says, "As I reveal this, as I enlighten your eyes with your faith, I want you to focus on power, God's power. His incomparable power. I want you to have a greater revelation of that power and understand this is the power that raised Jesus from the dead, which assures you that you are forgiven, which assures you my patience with you is infinite." That's what our God's power in raising Christ has said to us, right? He says, "Now think more about that power. I'm revealing to you, I'm making known to you what you couldn't know on your own. I'm making known to you that that power seated Jesus at the right hand of God."

When you're a kid, last week we talked about childish ways and going on to maturity, this might be a little part of that. When you are a kid, you probably picture the throne of God is in the middle, Jesus' throne is on the right, and the Holy Spirit's throne must be on the left. And all three of them are just sitting there on these big golden thrones. God is spirit. The Father and the Holy Spirit are spirit. Jesus has a body, but the other two don't. They aren't sitting on thrones in heaven. It's a position of power and authority. And that's what he tells us when he says, "God placed all things under his feet."

When Scripture talks about "he's made the world his footstool," it means all things are under his power, under his authority. He's at the right hand of God. He has all authority. That's also what he said before he ascended. "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations." He has authority over everything. God's power raised Jesus, put everything under his feet, and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.

So what's the church? It's not a building. It's his body. What does that mean? It's believers. The Holy Christian Church is all believers everywhere.

God has placed everything under Jesus' feet. All things it says. All things. That means every last little detail of life, Jesus knows about it. And he is going to use it so it's for your eternal good. He's ruling over all things for the benefit of the believers. If you believe Jesus lived and died and took away your sins, you have God's promise that Jesus is ruling over all things for your eternal good, for your benefit. That has to be revealed to you. You would never come to that conclusion as you go through your daily life, would you?

As you go through your daily life, we get tripped up. We trip over things. We fall. There are the things that come about because of sin in the world, the things that God allows into our lives that are a result of sin. We get run down. We get ground on. It grinds on us, and we think at times, "Lord, how in the world are you ruling over all things?"

Maybe sometimes we are a little confused on this and think all things just mean the big things in life. But I would say to you that all things means all things. Every last little detail God is using to be a blessing to you eternal, to lead you closer to him. Nothing can frustrate that purpose except you yourself. You yourself can drift away from God. You yourself can not flee to God for help but run away from him or blame him or shake your fist at him or get mad at him. You can run the other direction. But his promise to you is that when you go to him and you look to him and say, "Lord, you're the head. I know you love me. I know you are ruling over all things for the good. I can't see how it is Lord, but I'm going to trust you." He's going to bless you in ways you'll never expect. Even in all the little things.

Think of all the little irritants of daily life. Think of all the irritants of daily life. Do you work with anyone that's never satisfied, never happy with how things go, always points out the little flaws in every last little thing? Someone who, if the sun shines, says they are going to get sunburned. If it's cloudy they say "Why don't we ever see the sun?" Do you know that kind of person? Have you spent any time with them at all? How in the world can God be ruling over that so that you have to spend time with some negative Nellie like that? Who wants to do that?

So what is God's purpose? How is he managing that? I don't know. But I have some ideas. Maybe he wants you to be the reflection of Jesus' love and patience, as Jesus has loved and been patient with you, towards that person. Maybe he wants you to keep doing it even when they take your love and patience as a sign of weakness and think now they can stomp on your neck a little bit more. That happens. It happens at times inside the church. But maybe we are here and God has put that person there in our lives so that we can show them what God's love looks like, because evidently there are things in their life that is going bad and they need to vent on someone and they are venting on you. That could be. But I have no doubts that God is still in control, because he said it. If I'm going to say I'm going to decide whether the things he said

are true or not true, I'm in trouble. He said it. That settles it. If I believe it or not, that settles it. But I'll be blessed when I believe it and live like I believe it.

That's what Ascension assures us of. Jesus is at the right hand of God and he's ruling over every last little thing in our lives to be a blessing for us for all eternity. I don't care if you wake up tomorrow and it doesn't feel that way. Forget your feelings. Your feelings aren't always right. God's Word is always right. Maybe that's why Paul prays that you get to know him better because that means you are going to be spending more time with his Word. The more time you spend with the Word probably means the less time you are going to be spending looking at your own feelings, right?

What a wonderful blessing it will be when we focus more on the promises of God and less on the problems my sinful nature causes for me. Amen.