



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

July 14, 2013

Pentecost 8

Sermon Text: [Deuteronomy 24:17-22](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Deuteronomy 24:17-22](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 25](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 12:9-21](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 10:25-37](#)

### **The Believer Follows Christ Followers of Christ Love Their Neighbor**

They remember what they were

They remember what God is

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Have you ever walked into a room, stood in the middle of the room, looked all around and scratched your head and said, "What am I doing here? What did I come in here to look for?" Has that ever happened to you? Raise your hand if that's happened to you. I remember my dad doing it when I was a kid, and I remember laughing at him thinking, "How in the world can you walk into a room and not know what you are doing there?" I do it all the time now.

Since the fall into the sin, one of the consequences we deal with is fading memory. Our memories aren't always what they were. Our minds aren't always what they were. It's one of the results of the fall into sin. Our Lord knows that. That's why so often in Scripture he tells us to remember certain things because he knows we are prone to forget. God's people have always known that. God's people have known that they have a tendency to forget, so they do certain things to help them remember.

I don't know if you remember that when Joshua crossed the Jordan River leading the people into the Promised Land, they crossed on dry ground. God had caused the water to stop flowing just like the Red Sea thing, only it was the Jordan River. As they were going across on that dry ground, Joshua told someone from each of the 12 tribes to get 12 big rocks. He told them, "You take that rock with you and set it up in the land the Lord is going to give you to live in and when your kids see that and say, 'Dad, what's the deal with that rock,' tell them how the Lord stopped the waters and led you to come in on dry ground and how the Lord gave you the land in which you are living, so that you don't forget." So, long before 3M invented Sticky Notes, God's people were using sticky stones, so to speak, to put these notes up to remind themselves of various things.

Samuel did it too. In [1 Samuel 7](#) you can read in there about how the Lord delivered them under Samuel's leadership as a judge and how they defeated the Philistines a little bit past the town of Mizpah, and they shouldn't have been able to beat them. Samuel had to put up a stone. He even gave the stone a name...Ebenezer, the stone

of help...thus far the Lord has helped us...this is where he came and delivered us. Sticky stones for everybody. He used these stones to help them remember.

What do you do to help you remember God and who he is and what he has done? You put a cross on your wall, or is that just decoration? You have pictures of Jesus on your wall so you look and remember who he is and what he has done for you. I'm guessing you probably have something like that in your home. That's its purpose...to help you remember.

Why do we do all these things to remember? Because we forget. We can get so wrapped up in day-to-day life that we forget what an incredible God we have. In fact, that's one of the chief problems in our walk with our Savior. We forget how awesome he is because we become very distracted. Do you ever see a cat just laying there and a fly buzzes by and the cat jumps all over to see that fly and then lays back down? Until another fly buzzes by and distracts him. That's us. We are constantly being distracted by the day-to-day things we do in life. Our Lord knows that and that's why he gave to the Israelites these specific commands that we read from Deuteronomy.

We don't have any olive farmers here, do we? None of you have an olive orchard at home or a vineyard. None of these words really apply to you, right? This is what he told them to do when they settled that land so that they would remember certain things. But the principle of remember who God is and remembering who we are is what the Lord was teaching them. That's certainly something you and I need to do. We need to remember who we are and who God is.

He told them, "You Israelites are going to settle in the Promised Land. I am going to give you the Promised Land. You are going to defeat an enemy you never should have defeated, humanly speaking, and I'm going to give you cities that you didn't build. You are just going to move in and live in them. When that first happens, you'll be saying, 'God is great! God is awesome!' But after a little while, you are going to become accustomed to it and you are going to forget that God is great and God is awesome and God did this for you. You are going to start to think you're all that. So even though you were in Egypt in need and you had to rely on the kindness of other people, you are going to forget to be kind to others, so you make sure you are kind to the fatherless, to the widows, to the foreigner, because that's what you once were...the foreigner. You make sure that you don't take advantage of them in courts. You don't take their cloak as a pledge because that might be the only thing they have." That's something we really can't grasp. Anybody here only have one coat at home? We can't grasp that but that's what he is talking about. We have such a super abundance, you'd think we could remember better.

"When you harvest those olive trees or those fields or those vineyards, don't go back over it a second time. Leave that so the fatherless, the widow and the foreigner can go and take from it. The point is that I want you to do that so that you remember how you were in need and how God helped you. And because God helped you, you are to show

love in this way as you remember how God delivered you and you remember who you are.” It’s straight forward. It’s simple. “This is why I’m commanding you to do this” God tells us.

Yet you read the minor prophets and you can see they forgot it. One of the things some of the minor prophets talked about over and over is social injustice and how people were taking advantage of the needy, the poor, the fatherless, the widow, the foreigner, and how they didn’t do what God told them. The reason why they didn’t do it was because they forgot how incredible God is.

In my walk with God, when I am struggling in my walk with God, it’s because I forget how awesome God is, and it’s because I forget who I am. When things start going well, you start patting yourself on the back. You start thinking everything is good and everything is going to be good and you’re doing it. Boy, the world is lucky to have someone as smart as you are. Do you ever struggle with that?

Sometimes we forget that we are nothing more than filthy rotten sinners who deserve nothing from our God. I can’t say to God, “You owe me.” Yet he has given me an abundance. You can’t say to God, “God, you owe me forgiveness.” Yet he has given it to you fully and freely through the life and death of Jesus. His love is just beyond our imagining, yet we take it for granted.

Look at that Second Lesson from [Romans 12](#) again. Glance over that and think of how hard those words are for us to live. He told us to “Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse.” Is that natural? Not quite, right? “Honor one another above yourselves. Be devoted to one another in love.” That’s just counter-intuitive, right? Our sinful nature says, “If you love me, you should be doing this, this and this for me.” But God is saying, “As a Christian who knows God and loves God, you should be doing these things to show love for others.” When you see that and you see just how far you and I fall short of that, it’s amazing that God doesn’t just strike us dead. We’re nothing more than filthy rotten sinners.

This love that God has shown us, we take it for granted. Instead of striking us dead, he left heaven and became one of us. He became one of us! The One who created the universe had to eat. He had to sleep. He had to put up with sinful idiots surrounding him when he was holy. You and I only think we are holy surrounded by sinful idiots. He actually was. He had to put up with it. He had to do all of that.

Could you imagine if you or I would have been Jesus, if you or I were God, how many of those people would have just been carbon spots on the ground because we would have been sick of it and said, “That’s it! Zap...you’re gone.” But he didn’t do it. He loved us so much that he continued all the way to the cross. He lived perfectly in our place. He died in our place. Then he loved us so much that he said, “Here, I want you to hear this message. I want you to be baptized into that perfection that I won for the world. I want you to receive my body and blood for the forgiveness of your sins. I love you this incredibly much.” We go, “Yeah, right, but when are we going to leave?”

Think about how patient our God is that he puts up with us. You and I forget that because we don't want to dwell on our shortcomings. You and I forget how awesome God is because we forget who we are. I'm convinced of that. I'm convinced of it in myself. I'm convinced that's the plight of all of us as sinful human beings. The idea that we could ever become bored with a God who loves us that much is unfathomable. Yet you and I do.

Our God, however, never becomes bored with loving us. He never becomes indifferent toward forgiving us. He says that his love for us is unfailing again and again in the [Book of Psalms](#). Read Psalms and just skim over them and you'll see that word "unfailing" in front of "love" over and over and over. That's the glorious truth.

As Christians, we rejoice in this love, but more than that, we want to live this love. We want to love each other with this kind of love. The only way we are going to do it is when we remember how incredible our God is. That means we have to, we have to, take our eyes off ourselves and put them on our God.

Here's an example...a day when the readings are all about loving and doing all these things, I should have chosen even more hymns that we aren't familiar with. Did you notice this morning that first hymn? That first verse was a little shaky, but by the time we got done with the third verse, we were singing it pretty well. It's a cool hymn. It's a beautiful hymn. I love the hymn. But how many of you, as you sat there singing the first verse were thinking, "Why did he start us off in worship with this hymn?" How many of you were focused on "I'm uncomfortable because I don't know it and it doesn't make me feel good, because it's all about me"? This is where we sometimes have to take those eyes off ourselves and put them on our God. Then we find the strength to love each other and be more patient and be more kind with one another and not only always find the flaws and the weaknesses in one another. When we remember to find them in ourselves first, it becomes much easier to love one another, doesn't it? We see that God loved and forgave me and that means he also loved and forgave you. No matter what you are struggling with, that's what he's done.

So today we come to his altar and he gives us the body and blood and says, "Depart in peace." We are forgiven. So as we depart in peace, we can go and live and love better than we do now and get better at it day after day as we get closer and closer to our God. That isn't a "have to." That's a wonderful blessing that he gives to us. Amen.