



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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September 1, 2013
Pentecost 15
Sermon Text: [Proverbs 25:6-7](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Proverbs 25:6-7](#)
Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 119a](#)
Second Lesson: [James 2:1-13](#)
Gospel Lesson: [Luke 14:1, 7-14](#)

The Believer Hears Jesus' Warnings The First Will be Last—Humble Yourselves

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Did any of you watch any college football yesterday? Anybody at all? I imagine some of you watched quite a bit. I'm surprised to see some of you men here. I thought maybe you'd still be watching replays of the games that you watched the replay of last night. Your Badgers won by a lot. I'm surprised you're just not rejoicing in that.

I heard something very interesting in the discussions on college football yesterday that surprised me. If you follow college football at all, over the last year the name you've heard over and over is "Johnny Football", Johnny Manziel. He won the Heisman Trophy as a freshman. Then he had kind of a rough off season being at all different parties and different things and doing different things so that some people kind of looked disdainful at it but none of that seemed to bother people too much until all of a sudden he was signing thousands upon thousands of autographs and said he did it for free, which kind of makes you wonder. But all that aside, the thing that I found interesting was a discussion in between some games.

When I got home yesterday and turned it on, the discussion in between games, I don't remember who it was, someone on ESPN, was about rights and responsibilities. As a college student, Johnny Manziel certainly has a right to do a lot of the foolish stuff that college students do. That's what college students do. But the guy said, "When you're the Heisman Trophy winner, you also have responsibilities to carry yourself in a certain way." That's the phrase that kind of surprised me. Think about it...in our society today, which do we talk more about...rights, or responsibilities?

It's pretty obvious. We talk about "I have the right to do this. I have the right to do that." Rarely, if ever, do we talk about what my responsibility is to other people. So I thought that was interesting to hear that discussion because I don't expect to hear a rights/responsibility discussion talking about college football, but there it was.

I think it really fits in with what Jesus is warning us about today in our Gospel, and you see it carry through in the other Lessons. We live in a society that is obviously so focused on rights that we are going to always be in danger of crossing this line that Jesus is talking about today, aren't we? Don't exalt yourself in front of others. Don't always be saying "I have the right. I have the right. I have the right." Instead, humble

yourself. Set aside your own rights for the benefit of other people. Where do you hear that message except in the Gospel? You don't hear that a lot in our society today.

I think that's why Jesus has to speak it as a warning to us, because we are going to be so prone to be focused on rights. When you are focused on rights, you're focused on self. When you're focused on self, there isn't a whole lot of room left in view to be focused on God and his love for you.

That's why Solomon gave this proverb that we read. Don't exalt yourself. Don't get so full of yourself. Get over yourself. Don't exalt yourself in the place of the king and say all these things about yourself. Let someone else do that, otherwise you are going to be humiliated. Live in humility. It's the same thing Jesus said in our Gospel.

It sounds simple enough, but I think it's hard for us to do. I think it's really hard. I don't think it's just hard for people out there or that people out there are just too full of themselves. I think within the body of Christ, within the church, we have to be on guard against being too full of ourselves, because I think quite often we are.

It makes you wonder...how in the world can we get so full of ourselves within the body of Christ? Within the body of Christ, you and I should have some basic information about ourselves and about what we are by nature. What we are by nature, if it was scratch and sniff, it isn't going to smell good. You aren't going to want to sniff it. What we are by nature is sinful and wretched before our God.

We sang Psalm 119a this morning, on Page 109. Did it make you uncomfortable at all when you sang that Psalm? Did you think about what you were singing as you sang that Psalm? Just let me read the first part to you. Listen to this... "Blessed are they whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the Law of the Lord. Blessed are they who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart. You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed." Can you really sing that with a smile on your face? Blessed am I because my way is blameless? Blessed am I because I seek God with all my heart? Wow, that's worse than a fumble on the one-yard line, isn't it? I'm not that. You're not that. None of us are that.

That should really keep us humble, shouldn't it? It's kind of hard to think so much of yourself if you are fully and firmly aware of what a sinner you are before God. It's kind of hard to exalt yourself over some other person, believer or nonbeliever in Christ, if you are fully aware of what you are before God.

I think sometimes we who know who our Savior is, we who know that he has lived in our place and died in our place, we who know that he has declared us righteous and blameless through the gift of faith, we can be led by Satan to underestimate the seriousness of sin, can't we? We've never underestimated someone else's sin, hardly ever. But we're pretty good at underestimating our own sin, right? When I underestimate my own sin and I can see how clearly yours is, then I'm going to be really tempted to elevate myself in the presence of the king, the queen, the princes, the

princesses, and anyone else that I might come into contact with. If I don't have an acute awareness of what God says I should be doing and then look at my own life and see how far I've come from it, I'm going to be really tempted to elevate myself. That's why we have to be on guard against it, because it comes natural to us. It comes natural to us to say "It's all about me." It comes natural to us to say, "I like and I prefer." It comes natural to us to use that letter "I" over and over and over, and we do it within our walk with Christ as well.

It's interesting how many times it's been said to me. It doesn't make me feel good. It's not as good for everyone else. And we think as Christians we'd never say that, would we? But we do it all the time. "If the church isn't as full, it won't feel as good to me, therefore, I don't care if fewer people hear the Gospel. I want to hear the Gospel in a way that pleases me." Isn't that kind of exalting ourselves at the expense of others and saying how I feel is more important than other people learning the message of the Gospel or having the opportunity to hear the message of the Gospel? And then it's said, "Oh, they won't come anyhow! If they wanted to come, they'd come now." We're just using that to cover up that we want to say it's all about how I feel. But we don't want to say that because we don't always like to be confronted with the fact that we might be a little too self centered.

I understand what everyone says, but as a little Christ, I have to go back, we have to go back, we who are little Christs, we who are Christians have to go back to the example of Christ. How does that go? *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant... he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!"* (See [Philippians 2:5-11](#).) Do you think Jesus would have felt better if he would have stayed in heaven forever and never went through being abandoned by the Father? Do you think it would have been better for him if he never had to endure the punishment that your sins and my sins deserve? But look at the love he has... how he is willing to exalt other people and put their interests ahead of his own.

So he left heaven, he became one of us, he went through all the stuff that we go through, and then even more because Satan had many more targets on him than he has on us. And he faced it all faithfully and fully and willingly, not because heaven is going to be better because you or I are there. Heaven remains perfect if its only God who is there. But he loved us that much that he put our interests ahead of his own and endured all of that.

So now when he says to us, "Don't exalt yourself. Humble yourself." He isn't telling us to do anything that he himself hasn't done in our place perfectly because you and I can't do it perfectly, don't do it perfectly, and no matter how hard we try, we'll never do it perfectly. His perfection then becomes ours.

Because we have that perfection and because we see what sinners we are and we see just how deep his love for us is, because he loved us first, we want to love him. That's

not just a catch phrase you use as a quick answer to a question in the class. It becomes why we do what we do. It's why we don't exalt ourselves. It's why we put other's interests ahead of our own, because God did it for us and now we want to love him and have other people come to know his love. That's what it's all about. Everything else is just details until we get to heaven. Seeing to it that people know the love of God in Christ and what a difference it makes for them and for us, that's what life is all about. That's what we're here for. If it means sometimes we have to humble ourselves, even if someone takes advantage of us humbling ourselves, so be it. What matters is that Christ is all in all, not that I'm all in all, or my way is all in all, or my desires are all in all, or things that please me are all in all.

Rights and responsibilities... the only right I have to stand before my God with my chin lifted up is because he has given me that right by giving me faith in Jesus as my Savior. Other than that, you and I should be carbon spots on the ground and he should have already sent us to hell.

The responsibilities we have? They are many. They begin with putting other's interests ahead of our own and refraining from exalting ourselves. Amen.