



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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November 10, 2013

End Time 2 - The Last Judgment

Sermon Text: [2 Thessalonians 1:5-10](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Ezekiel 9:1-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 90](#)

Second Lesson: [2 Thessalonians 1:5-10](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 19:11-27](#)

The Promises of End Times "To Everyone Who Has, More Will Be Given"

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

I don't know if you read the little italics, the introduction to the readings today. I don't write those. I get those from some place else. But I really like the one for the Second Lesson. It's talking about the Last Judgment and how so many people think they are going to do the same thing that people do in society today. There are a lot of lawsuits that are brought in our country today, but a lot of them never make it to court because settlements take place outside of court. It's settled. There is a compromise reached. And they're done.

The introduction to the lesson kind of points out that many people who don't know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior kind of have that approach that when the Last Day comes they'll be able to make some kind of compromise with God. They'll be able to say, "I did better than so and so." Or, "I've tried my best, so certainly you'll have to let me into heaven God." If they still believe there is a heaven. As we've seen in our readings this morning, that's not going to be the case. If you don't have faith that Jesus Christ lived and died in your place, you're going to be destroyed eternally in hell. God makes that abundantly clear in his Word. That kind of bargaining doesn't work.

But our Second Lesson is really addressed not to those who don't believe who are going to try to make this kind of bargain, but to Christians who I think at times are inclined to another kind of bargaining with God, not about the Last Judgment. If you are a Christian, by nature you know Last Judgment is a good day. We will be with the Lord forever. God will take us to be with him in heaven forever because Jesus lived perfectly in our place and gave us that holiness that God demanded of us. And he died as the punishment that our sins deserve. We believe that. That's why we are Christian. That's the nature of the word.

I think our bargains that we want to make with God, our settlement outside of his courtroom so to speak, have to do with what we live with. What I mean is this...we face difficulties. We face hardships. We face challenges in life. We want to say to God, "God, get rid of this and I'll do x, y or z for you. God, I've done x, y or z for you. Why are you letting this into my life? You should take it away from me." Ever have that kind of thought cross your mind? I think if we've gone through hard times, we've had that cross our minds because even though we believe Jesus is our Savior, we are still

sinner. We still at times doubt God's rule of our lives. We doubt God's purposes in our lives. And because we are sinners, at times we think we know how to be God better than God knows how to be God. So we want to make those kind of bargains with him.

Paul wrote these words to the Thessalonians because I think he was concerned they might be trying to make that kind of bargain with God. They were going through difficult times. If you remember Paul's second missionary journey, he had that vision and he went into Europe. One of the first cities he came to was Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a port city. It also was on the Ignatian way, an important trade route where some people say that at the time of Paul's visit, it was a city of about 200,000. Just a little bit bigger than Morrison. But it was an important city. It no doubt had a large Jewish population because it was that large.

We are told that when Paul came there for three Sabbaths in a row, he went to the synagogue and he showed from Old Testament Scripture the promises of the Messiah. Then he showed them Jesus Christ and how Jesus was the fulfillment of these promises, and how he had lived and died and taken away the sins of the world and did everything God had said the Messiah would do. We are told that the Holy Spirit blessed this work and many people came to faith in Thessalonica. But some didn't.

Those that didn't made the life of those that did kind of miserable. The leaders of the synagogue that didn't convert to Christianity got a bunch of people together and started a riot in the city and demanded that Paul and Silas and the other traveling missionaries be brought out to them. They were nowhere to be found. So they brought out Jason, a convert to Christianity. If I remember correctly, that's where Paul was staying. They brought him out. This riot takes out over the city. I think they threw him in prison. So that night, the Christians urged Paul and Silas to leave and ushered them out of the city. They went down to Berea. It says the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians. They searched the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true from Scripture, and God was blessing his work there. But then those people in Thessalonica heard about it and sent a delegation down to Berea to make Paul's life miserable there and chased him out of the that town also.

What that tells you is that these guys were pretty adamant about not liking Christianity. It's not like hopping in the car or catching a bus or taking the Amtrak to go to Berea. These guys had to make a journey that wasn't normal I would suppose you'd say. They did it simply because they couldn't stand the message Paul was proclaiming.

So Paul continued on his missionary journeys. He ended up in Corinth. He wrote his first letter back to the Thessalonians because he was really concerned about them. He saw the venom for the Gospel that these people had and he knew that these guys were feeling the sting of those bites and that venom. So he was very concerned. He got a report back from Timothy that they were standing firm in the faith, even in the face of this persecution.

So he writes his second letter. He had just said, "I've been telling everyone how wonderful it is that you stand firm in the faith even though you are being persecuted." Then he says, "This is that evidence. This is clear evidence of God's righteous judgment that you will be counted worthy of God's kingdom, for which you are also suffering." He writes to them again because he knows they're suffering, he knows the persecution is tough, and he knows there is going to be that temptation that you and I also face at times of saying, "God, why are you letting this stuff into my life? I finally found the Messiah and I worship him and I love him and I want him to be a big part of my life, but all it's doing is making my life miserable." Can you see the devil's temptation to those people to go back to the comfortable, the familiar, the old ways, and leave behind this Christianity that was only causing them problems?

So that they wouldn't give in to this and wouldn't try to make a compromise, so that they wouldn't try to make a bargain with God, or with the devil I suppose, he writes to them again. This time as he writes to them, and notice what he points them to. He tells them, "These people that are afflicting you, there will come a day when God will afflict them. These people that are causing you not to have any rest, there will come a day when you will receive rest from the Lord and all this will be gone." But notice what he tells them. He tells them that this won't happen right away. "This will take place at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with His powerful angels, taking vengeance with flaming fire on those who don't know God and on those who don't obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus." He doesn't say God is going to make everything fine. He doesn't say God has promised to make everything fine in your life on earth. Instead he tells them to focus on why Jesus lived and died in your place so that you have heaven. On that day when he comes again to judge the living and the dead, then you will receive your rest.

In their culture maybe they were a little bit better at waiting than we are. Have you ever noticed how impatient we are? If I get to an hour and fifteen minutes today, some of you are going to be really impatient, aren't you? These pads are cushioned. It's not like a bleacher. A bleacher you could sit on forever. But church, an hour and fifteen is enough and then we have to be out of here, right? We're very impatient.

So when God comes to an impatient people like us and says, "I know at times you suffer because you're doing what is right before me." Maybe it's a coworker who wants you to do something that is against what God has said. They want you to lie. They want you to cheat. They want you to take advantage of someone in the work place, a customer or something. And you say, "We shouldn't do that." And it make your life miserable now because you're not a team player. When you lay your head on the pillow at night you say to yourself, "Yeah, but one day I'll go to heaven." That doesn't work so well for us today, does it? We are so impatient.

The problem isn't with our God. The problem is with us and our impatience. The problem is with how often we put our focus on what troubles us and not on the God who has made promises to us that will tell us "Yes, you are going to have trouble here and now. I've never promised to take it away from you because I want you to know for a

certainty that this world is not your eternal home. I want you to live as an alien and a stranger here.” We have a short attention span. Think about it...If everything always goes only well in our life, our short attention span won't see that these are blessings from God's hand. At times we'll think they're blessings from our hands and then our focus goes off of God entirely and onto ourselves. When our focus is on ourselves and not on our God and his love for us and his forgiveness in Christ and his promises, then we become low hanging fruit for Satan, don't we? Isn't that the problem?

Sometimes we have to learn to grow and do what Paul said in here. Didn't he say count it as blessing that you have been counted worthy of suffering for the sake of the Gospel? This shows that your faith is not misplaced. This shows that your trust in Jesus has worried Satan so much that he is attacking and he wants to make your life miserable.

I don't know about you, but this is at a point where I have to be very careful. Are you like this? When you hear God say, “Those that have afflicted you, the day is coming when I'm going to afflict them,” does the sinful nature in you kind of go, “Lord, give it to them and give it to them hard and give it to them now”? Does your sinful nature kind of enjoy this idea of them suffering a little too much? We have to be careful as Christians.

We've been called to love like God loved us, right? “As I have loved you, so you must love the world. By this all people will know that you are my disciples if you love one another and love the world.” ([John 13:34-35](#).) That's what Jesus said the night he was betrayed. God loved us when we were unlovable. God also wants us to love others even when they are unlovable. He doesn't want us to delight in the fact that those who trouble us one day, because they don't have faith in Christ, will be in hell. That's not what he is telling us. He wants us to focus on the second part of the equation...that he will give us rest.

I think this kind of fits together with that parable of the minas that we heard. They thought the kingdom was going to come right away, so Jesus told them this parable. Part of it is to teach them that it is not going to come right away. That was the whole part of the parable where the guy is going to go off and be made king and then he is going to come back. The people didn't want him to be king. Jesus came to earth to win the victory over sin, death and the devil for us. They didn't want to hear it. They didn't want him to rule over them. And then when he comes back, he is going to judge those who have rejected him.

But in the meantime, those people that are his he has entrusted, in the parable it's minas, money, but in reality what he has entrusted to us, who believe, is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That's the Gospel he wants us to put to work. He wants us to use that Gospel even to reach out to those who afflict us and make our life miserable. He wants us to reach out to all people with the Gospel. This parable tells us that he looks for an accounting on how faithful we are with how we have used the Gospel he has entrusted to us. We are to use it for ourselves to build ourselves up so that we can face the challenges and the difficulties of living in a sinful world, so that we can even bear up

under persecution. But more than that, it's not just a defensive weapon. The sword of the Spirit is an offensive weapon that we are to use to reach out to those who don't believe. He has called us, each of us personally, to that task, not just to go support someone else who does it but to do it ourselves.

The idea he is going to call us to account for how well we use the Gospel, is that kind of scary? I don't know about you, but I haven't used it as well as I should. I haven't always devoted myself to the Word. I haven't always spoken up when I had the opportunities to, how about you? Have you been bored by the Gospel? "Same old same old pastor, tell us something different. We know Jesus died for us."

We don't use the Word faithfully. This also is sin against our God. Again, it's what makes God so incredibly amazing. He is a God who is just and punishes sin. You can read our first lesson and see that God is going to punish sin. It's frightening. He will punish sin. Yet at the same time, he is a God who is so incredibly patient and willing to forgive. But you and I, all the times that we have failed to use his Word, he forgives us. We are covered in the blood of Christ at our Baptism. We receive that body and blood for the forgiveness of our sins at the Lord's Supper. He tells us, "I forgive you once again for all the times you have failed me." It's an amazing truth! If that bores you, God have mercy on your soul, because I sure wouldn't.

It's the most amazing truth about our God. He is consistently patient in wanting us to return to him and to be close to him. When we realize that and we take our eyes off ourselves for a little while and put them on God and we see how incredibly loving he is and how he gives us what we need to get through the difficulty and we realize we can't call on him to honor a promise he has never made; we can't call on him to say, "Lord, take away all my troubles" because he has never made that promise. But he has promised heaven is ours through faith in Jesus Christ.

When the end of the world comes and God's messengers, the angels, go out to the four corners of the earth and bring people back, we don't have to worry that we are going to be on the side that goes to hell because we know heaven is ours. So until that day, our task is to make sure as many people as possible know that message. If they reject this, that's a them problem.

As for us? Our task is to serve the Lord and share his Gospel message whenever and wherever we can. Amen.