



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

January 26, 2014

Epiphany 3

Sermon Text: [Isaiah 8:19-9:2](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Isaiah 8:19-9:2](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 27](#)

Second Lesson: [1 John 2:3-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 4:12-23](#)

### **Paranormal Activity: Jesus Appears as Light in Darkness**

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Twenty-one to six...it's not my prediction for the Super Bowl, because I could care less who scores what. But 21 to 6 is the score. The score I found on Thursday afternoon. I know we have six WELS churches in Green Bay, so I thought it would be kind of interesting to see how many mediums we have in Green Bay. Twenty-one. If you want to talk to the dead, there are 21 people in Green Bay willing to take your money and tell you what they are saying. You might scoff and laugh at that, but I think it really illustrates this truth that what God says to us today through the prophet Isaiah certainly still applies to us. When he says to them, "*When someone tells you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living?*" It probably tells us those are words for us to take to heart yet today, unless you think it's just people out there somewhere that consult the dead on behalf of the living.

A couple times of the year as I go and visit people in our congregation, I will see books by some of the national mediums on the shelves in our houses. These are our members. I don't think they are buying them because the color of the dust jacket matches the color on the wall really well and that's why they have it on their shelf. I think, at times, just like the people of Isaiah's day, we want some knowledge that we can't have on our own, some knowledge that science couldn't give us. We want paranormal knowledge. That's what the word paranormal means that we've been looking at for these last three weeks. It can't be proven by science. We want something like that. Like the dead to tell us what is going to go on or what is happening with them. That's why there are at least 21 people, according to the search engine I used Thursday, that are making their living by offering paranormal contact.

God's answer for us today would be the same as the answer he gave to the children of Israel at the time of Isaiah, wouldn't it be? "*Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning. If anyone does not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.*" Then he describes the problems they are going to end up having eventually. But when he says "*Consult God's instruction and the testimony of warning,*" if you want knowledge and you want understanding, if you want light to guide your steps, what in the world is he talking about? What is the "*instruction and the testimony*"?

Your Lord is telling you that if you want paranormal activity, if you want to be guided by knowledge that science can't give you, get yourself into God's Word. That's the book of instruction. That is the testimony that God's Spirit has given through people that tells you what God has said. Why would you consult the dead on behalf of the living? Why not consult the One who has created the world and who has given life and who has taken away life because our times are in his hands? Why not talk to him, or listen to him more importantly? We spend a lot of time wanting to talk to God in prayer life telling God what he should be doing. But quite often the answers are already right there in God's Word.

It was there for the Israelites at this time. What God had been talking about in the verses leading up to Chapter 8 was that he was not real happy with king Ahaz. King Ahaz was threatened by an enemy that was coming, an enemy that was real, an enemy that was vicious. He went and consulted mediums and spiritists instead of going to the Lord's high priest and using the Urim and the Thummim. If you don't know what that means, then look to the instruction and the testimony to find out. He didn't go to God. He didn't go to God's Word. He didn't go to the avenues God had given him. He went to these other places. He made alliances with other kings so that he would put his trust in princes instead of the Lord. Those alliances he made just came back and bit him in a place where you don't want to be bit. That's what happened to him because he didn't go to the testimony and to the book of instruction. He didn't go to God. He went to this paranormal activity of mediums and spiritists.

It's sad. It was sad when he did it. It's sad when you and I do it. It's sad when you and I look for answers and we don't look for answers in the right places. It's sad! I think it's painful to our God, who has time and time again reached out and said, "I want you to know these things" and we've said, "Yeah, that's nice. But that's just for kids God. That's for other people. That's not for me to spend time in the Word. God, you just don't understand how busy I am. You don't understand how much stuff I have going on. You expect me to find time for you God? I have too much going on." This is the arrogance that we have in our hearts at times.

I saw this in a movie last week. I clicked by and I saw *Get Smart* was on. Have you ever seen that movie...*Get Smart*? It's a remake of a TV show, from way back when, starring Steve Carell. He's Maxwell Smart, this bumbling, stumbling super agent. They were fighting the Great Khali on the roof and the building starts blowing up. So the Great Khali rips off a power line and swings to safety through a window in the building across the road. Then Maxwell Smart (and Agent 99, who hops on his back) grabs a power line and he swings over to brake through a window on the building across the road. You know what's going to happen, right? He's going to miss it by this much. That's what he did. Then the line starts going down and they are falling and falling and all of a sudden it stops. He's saying to 99, "Don't worry! I can swing us over to this ledge and we'll be safe. Don't worry! We'll make it! Don't look down! We'll make it! I'll swing us to this ledge." Then he's working his little heart out trying to get them over to the ledge. Meanwhile, 99 hops off because they are 3" above the ground.

It's humorous in a movie. It's sad when you and I do it in our lives, isn't it? It's sad when we have so much stuff that is stressing us out and troubling us and we're worried and we want some kind of knowledge on what we should do and what is going on and we are asking someone from the dead to tell us what to do. We are so focused on that trouble and we are trying so hard to swing to that ledge, we don't notice that God has an answer for us in his Word. It's right there. If it had teeth, it would bite us, but we aren't paying attention to it because we think we're just that much smarter than God. "Oh the Bible, anyone can make the Bible say whatever they want." Quit making excuses and get into it and let God's Spirit speak to your heart. We can make excuses from here to eternity on how the Bible can be twisted into this and that and all this stuff. Yes, people screw it up. People are sinners. But when God's people look into it and they say, "Lord, open my eyes that I might see great things in your Word," God keeps his promises and helps us to see great things in his Word.

So we can either try to find paranormal activity in other places and continue to sin against our God, because that's what we do...we sin against our God by turning our backs on him and his Word and his promises. We end up causing ourselves all kinds of problems. Or we can look at the light that shines. The light that came to Zebulun in Naphtali. That light is Jesus.

Zebulun and Naphtali were called the way of the Gentiles because when those armies would come from the north to fight Egypt in the south, they would come through and occupy that land of the north first, and they would cause all kinds of problems. It was a dark place to live in the sense that you always seemed to be suffering from one generation to the next. But in the midst of that darkness, in the midst of God rebuking his people for turning to mediums and spiritists, he points us to a light that would come. That light is Jesus Christ who, as we heard in our Gospel, came as the fulfillment of this prophecy and carried out his ministry in Galilee and preached that the kingdom of God is near. He preached repentance, turning away from sin. He healed the sick. He did all these paranormal things. He taught with authority. All these things that science could never have explained. He is the light that takes away your sin of despising God's Word. He is the light that was perfect in your place.

Think about it...he was the One who gave the Word. The Spirit inspired the people to write these things. Yet while he was on earth, we are told that he was always there in the synagogue and he was asking questions and he was growing and understanding according to his human nature, and he made faithful use of the Word and never despised it. He used it faithfully in your place because you do not. Then he carried to the cross all your sins against God's Word, all the times you've looked to yourself or to something or someone else besides God as a source of strength. He carried everyone of those sins that should send you to hell. He carried them to the cross and paid for them. Now he has shown the light of his Gospel into your heart so that you believe that your sins are forgiven and heaven is open to you. That's our God! That's what he does. Why would we want to go somewhere else?

This is the thing that is mind boggling about God and his love for us. I have to believe you have people in your life that you love. But if they do things that irritate you and hurt you day after day after day, you will eventually start loving them less, won't you? God's love is not like that. He loves you perfectly day after day after day even though you do things that hurt him by your sins. He still loves you perfectly and he longs to tell you that you are forgiven. He longs for you to flee to his Word and find his promises of comfort and peace and confidence to face the things that stress you out day after day. The promises of his abiding presence... "I am with you always to the very end of the age. Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. My strength is made perfect in your weakness." He promises to be with us and help us through the difficulties of life. He never promises to take them away. You can't call on him to keep a promise he hasn't made. But wouldn't it be better to know all the promises he has made and live in the confidence of them than trying to swing your power line to that ledge all on your own? That's what your God is pleading with you to do.

So ditch mediums and spiritists. Ditch any confidence in yourself. Repent and just trust in God's love. But then immerse yourself in that love by getting to the Law and the testimony, the prophets, the instruction, the Word of God. It's not just for kids. It's for God's kids. That's what you are by faith. Amen.