



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

March 9, 2014

Lent 1

Sermon Text: [Romans 5:12-19](#)

Pastor Randy Ott

First Lesson: [Genesis 3:1-15](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 3](#)

Second Lesson: [Romans 5:12-19](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 4:1-11](#)

### **Islands in The Son: A Battle-scarred Island Full of Beauty**

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Islands in the Son...that's what I said we are going to talk about over the next few weeks, every Sunday in Lent. Islands in the S-o-n. I don't know if it's really fair or not with the winter we've been going through to put a picture of islands that are warm and nice in your mind after you've been struggling through the winter we've had. But then again it's something at this time of the year a lot of people end up thinking about. A lot of people even go to them. Some of the people that normally are sitting around you in the pew today. Some of them probably aren't here because they are on an island some place in the sun enjoying it and all the blessings that come with it, and you're stuck here with me.

But I've got the Son to talk to you about and it might not raise the temperature outside, it might not raise the snow, but it does keep you from a place where the temperature is a lot hotter, where you don't want to be. So it's good for us to talk about this Island in the S-o-n as we get together and see the blessings that our God has for us in the Gospel.

The first island that we visit this week focuses on the battle. Our First Lesson showed us where mankind just lost. They gave into Satan's temptation, Satan's lies, and it ruined everything for everyone. During Lent we focus on preparing for and looking at how simple we are and how Jesus had to come and battle Satan in our place, like we saw in the Gospel, and how he overcomes the devil because you and I just can't do it. But what we are going to look at is the Second Lesson. The island that we see, it's a beautiful island, there's beauty on it beyond imagining that you couldn't even begin to dream about. But in the midst of this beauty, you can look around and you can see the effects of the battle. You can see the scars that are still there, the effects of the battle are there. It's kind of like some of those battles on those islands in WWII. If you had gone to some of those islands, you would have seen the effect for quite awhile. Blood-stained sand. Crater holes. The stench of death.

In the world we live in, you and I get to see the effects of the battle that goes on between Satan and mankind, and the Lord and Satan. As you and I go about our daily lives, we probably come in here this morning, maybe happy that it's a little bit warmer outside than it has been, but we're still carrying some scars with us, aren't we? People that are sitting around you are carrying in them the effects of this battle. Because

Satan caused Adam and Eve to sin, the effects are still all around us. You see them in the physical pain that you might be enduring. You see it in the doctor's diagnosis that you're confronted with. You see it not only in those physical things but also in emotional scars, in emotional pain. Because we live in this world that is no longer perfect, there are people sitting around you that greet you with a smile, but their heart is heavy. They are dealing and struggling with things that at some times are almost too horrific to put into words. It's all around us. It's all around us because death entered the world through the one man. That's what Paul said to the Romans.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God, and the result is that everyone since then carries the effects of sin. Everyone died from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even though they didn't sin by breaking a specific command as God had given them, not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, but they still died because the world was ruined. That was the effect of the battle. Because Satan won that battle, we're paying the price yet today.

You see it in the hurts of people. You see it in people that are hurting in ways that they can't even at times put into words. So they are trying to mask that hurt or cover up that hurt at times with drugs, with alcohol, with acting out in different ways because they don't know how to deal with it. Even as Christians, you and I know that we have the answer, but sometimes we give in and the effects of that battle come to us and we deal with things in ways that are not God's ways.

Or, there are people around us that because of Adam and Eve's sin they say and do things that hurt us in ways that we can't even put into words. Here's where it gets really sad and here's where those crater holes are really deep and just ought to make us shake our heads in terror at this effect. There are people among you that are hurting so bad, and yet they are afraid to talk to you about it because they might have opened themselves up once upon a time and talked to a fellow Christian about the pain they are enduring or what they are going through and all they received in return was that it went straight to the gossip mill. It went around town. "Isn't that too bad that this person is going through that," but no help was offered. No peace of Christ was extended. No love in Christ was given to that person. Now they are saying, "I'm not ever doing that again! I'm never going to a fellow Christian again to have them help me, because that just causes more problems. I'm going to deal with it on my own and all by myself," and as you get drawn closer and closer inside of yourself, the next question that comes in your heart is the same question that the devil used to trip up Adam and Eve about God. "God doesn't have your best interest in heart. He's letting you go through this because he just doesn't love you. He's trying to keep something from you because he's not the loving God he claims to be." That was the lie that Satan used with Adam and Eve.

You and I have seen that lie. We've heard those words. Yet there are times when you and I, because of our sinful nature, are inclined to believe it, embrace it maybe on some level, not where we'd say it out loud, but in some level we think "God has abandoned me. God hates me. His people aren't there for me. What's the point?" So battle scarred world? It's not hard to imagine. Our feet are planted in it.

I told you before that there's still beauty on this island. Paul told the Romans not only about how death came into the world through the sin of the one man, but he talked about the gift, and the gift being better and brighter and more beautiful than the trespass. Did you notice that in there when we read through it before? The gift isn't like the trespass. The trespass broke one command and it brought death to all people. But the gift that God brings through the one man, Jesus Christ, followed thousands of years of disobedience and paid for all the disobedience that ever has happened and ever will happen. All those times that you've doubted God, or all those times that you didn't help your fellow believer or some other person when you had the chance, Jesus took every last one of those sins and carried them to the cross. He became your righteousness that God demands of you.

Righteousness...that's a good fun church word, right? What does that mean? The gift that is righteousness? God demands that you be absolutely perfect. You aren't perfect. I'm not perfect. But when God looks at those who believe that Jesus Christ is their Savior, he sees the righteousness that Jesus is. Jesus never sinned. We are told that when we're baptized into Christ, we are clothed with Christ, and his righteousness covers us. So what God demands of us, God gives to us.

Even though he has given that to us, we still sin against him. We rebel against him. We think we know better than him. We are so full of ourselves and so arrogant at times. Yet he still comes with his love and his mercy and his forgiveness, and in, with and under the bread and the wine, he gives us the very body and blood that was poured out to be our righteousness. He says to us, "I forgive you." Then he gives us the Word, because he desperately wants us to know at all times that yes, the world around you can be an ugly place, yes, it can be full of difficulty and trials and tribulations, but the beauty that is Jesus Christ is yours. "I want you to know just how much I love you. I lived in your place. I died in your place. I want you to have that. I gave it to you in baptism. I give it to you in the Lord's Supper. I want you to have it in the Word every day of your life." So when we are struggling, we can turn to the Word. When we are so struggling that we don't turn to the Word, God puts us among other believers so that those other believers will share the message of the Gospel with us.

When we are handling hurts that we can't lift on our own, Lord willing we'll have fellow believers that will come to us and point us to Jesus, who loves us so perfectly and who wants us to know that we are his children and we are forgiven. When we are facing the uncertainty of health or what the future might bring with our health, we have fellow believers who come and tell us God's already won. You are forgiven. Heaven is yours. This is your temporary place. Heaven is that eternal home.

God has loved us and now he wants us to be the conduits of his love. He's loved us and given us this beauty in the midst of this horrific battle-scarred world at times that we live in, but he wants us to be the ones that share that with those who don't know it and with those who do know it. God calls you to be his voice. God calls you to be his arms that lift up the broken hearted. God calls you to be his arms that hug those who are trembling and fearful. God calls you to do this, not someone else, he called you.

So during Lent, people often talk about giving up things for Lent. If you want to do it, it's fine. If it helps you in your struggle against sin and your walk with God that we talked about on Ash Wednesday, if you want to do that to say "I want to focus on how my Savior gave his life for me. I'm going to give up this"... that's fine. More power to you. But my encouragement to you today would be this Lent and every Lent that follows and every week that follows and the rest of your life that follows, how about we just give up gossip instead of talking about "isn't that too bad that this person goes through that"? We haven't shown any love if that's all we do.

Think about it this way. If God from heaven would have looked down at the sinful world and said, "Isn't that too bad they are all going to hell?" and had never done anything more, that's not love. That's not God's love. God's love led him to act. So when you know someone that is going through something, don't just shake your head and say, "That's too bad." Don't gossip about it. Be the love of Christ that goes to that person and encourages them with God's love for them, your love for them, and remind them that the God who loves them is bigger than any problem we are facing. That's the beauty that we have in this world. So live in it, but by all means, share it with one another. That beats gossip, doesn't it? Amen.