



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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March 12, 2014
Midweek Lenten Worship
Sermon Text: [John 18:19-24](#)
Pastor Randy Ott

It's No Secret!

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Did you ever have this experience? You're frantically looking for your car keys. You go to the last coat you think you wore. You go to the last pair of pants you thought you wore. You look up on your dresser. You look all over the place and all of a sudden you notice they are right there where you started looking, on the counter, where you dropped them off when you came in from the garage. Or maybe you spent time asking your spouse, your kids, maybe even your pet if they had seen your glasses, or your sunglasses, only to discover they are sitting on top of your head. Sometimes things are hidden in plain sight, right? Sometimes we are reminded that we're not the brightest bulb on the tree, right?

I wonder if that's kind of what Jesus was saying. "It's right in plain sight. Why are you asking me what my teaching is? You guys were there. You heard it. You know what I've taught. Why this pretense, this sham of a mockery of a sham of a trial? You know what I teach. You just don't like it. You've just rejected it. And now you're just trying to find something to hang your hat on so you can kill me."

It was no secret what Jesus was teaching. It's one of the surprising words from our Savior's passion. It's no secret. Jesus wasn't heading some secret society that met in the dark corners. He met in the open in the middle of the temple and talked to people. He did that on Tuesday and Wednesday two days earlier. He had never hidden out and tried to get away from people. He had preached to thousands of people at a time. The feeding of the 4,000. The feeding of the 5,000. The Sermon on the Mount. One time he had to have Peter... "Hey, let me get in your boat and you back off shore a little ways so that my voice will carry over the waters better because there is such a crowd here that is trying to hear me and I want them to hear what I'm teaching." He hadn't hidden it. It was always out in the open. And his message, from the very beginning, had always centered in the cross.

What did John the Baptist say? "Look! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" The lamb of sacrifice was the evening sacrifice every day in the temple. The lamb of the Passover was the blood that delivered the people. It pointed to suffering and death. It pointed to blood being shed.

Early in his ministry, one of the leaders of the Jews, a member of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus... remember in John 3 he went to Jesus at night and talked to him about "How can I enter my mother's womb a second time" and all these things that he had asked? Jesus again told him quite clearly it's about the cross. He said, "Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so the Son of Man must be lifted up." Then some words that aren't that hidden yet today. He said, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him will have everlasting life." He's saying he's going to be lifted up like that bronze snake and through faith in him comes eternal life. It's not a hidden message. It was open. It was there to hear.

He had preached in Capernaum, in Galilee, in Nazareth. In his home town he went into the synagogue, unrolled the scroll and read from Isaiah. "I've come to preach good news to the poor." It's not real secretive when he rolls the scroll back up. The people were going, "Oh man, this guy teaches as one who has authority. He's pretty good." Then he says to them after reading this, "Today these scriptures are fulfilled in your hearing." That's saying "I'm the Messiah. Tag, I'm it." It wasn't a secret.

Do you remember what they did when he said that? They knew what he was saying. They wanted to stone him. They wanted to throw him off hills at times, right? They knew he was claiming to be the promised Messiah. Every time he referred to himself as the Son of Man, he is referring to himself as that guy in Daniel 7 that is standing next to the Lord, the one who is divine, and the one standing next to him is divine. They knew what he was claiming about himself. This wasn't hidden. This wasn't secret.

It's the same reason why today, when you come to worship, I'm hoping you're expecting to hear Christ crucified. If you're coming in and you're expecting to hear a different message, you're obviously not coming to hear five good ways to lose weight from me. That's not the message you're coming here to hear. You're not coming here to hear how to brew better home brew. If you want that kind of stuff, go to the Universal Unitarian Church. They'll teach you stuff like that. If you come here, I'm assuming you're coming to hear what we center upon... Christ crucified.

Look around. Do you see any crosses? Do you see any visual reminders of it so if my sermon is that bad you can still look around and see the message of the cross on our artwork? Christ crucified is what we are all about. That's what we need. There's no other message that could be anymore important for us.

We, who are so separated from God and so not in line with his will, can't be what he asked us to be. He said, "Be perfect." We can't do it. So Jesus came. He came. He lived in our place. He came. He was lifted up on that cross. He died. He rose again. He ascended. He assures us that our sins are paid for. That's the message that is still ours to proclaim boldly today, not in secret, but to let all know Jesus is the one. There is no other way to heaven. And there is nothing more important you can learn before you die than that Jesus Christ is your Savior. It's no secret. That's what we're about.

The problem wasn't that they wanted him to tell them about his teaching because they didn't know. The problem was that they knew, and they just rejected it. They had been there on the background as Jesus taught. They were there offering their critiques and their criticism when he said to the guy that came through the ceiling, "Son, your sins are forgiven." They were the first ones to start muttering to each other, "Hey, only God can do that. He's claiming to be God." They offered their critique early and often. They attacked him early and often.

God sent John and Jesus to try to call them to repentance. John preached repentance, preached with harsh words. "You brood of vipers! Produce fruit in keeping with repentance" he said. He used harsh words because he was trying to get them to see that they needed a Savior. Jesus didn't mince words with them either when they were there snipping at him. He would answer that, "What's harder? To say 'you're forgiven,' or 'get up and walk?'" He showed them that he had divine power.

They were there when he raised Lazarus from the dead. He had power over death. They saw it. Their reaction wasn't to believe it. Their reaction was to get their backs up. When Jesus said, "You teachers of the law, you honor me with your lips but your hearts are far from me. You're whitewashed tombs. You're the problem." They kind of raised their hands and said, "Hey, teacher, you're insulting us! We're the pharisees. You shouldn't be insulting us. We are the good guys! We are God's chosen." It didn't stop Jesus. He kept at them. He kept trying to get them to see their need for a deliverer from sin instead of just a deliverer from the Romans. He didn't mince words. And they hated him for it.

Sometimes the message of the Gospel is met with rejection. When Jesus answered the question with "You know what I've said," the guy slapped him across the face and said, "How dare you talk like that?!" He was just rejecting him. That's all you can say. Which probably has some meaning for you and me in our lives, doesn't it?

We preach the message we are here about... Christ crucified. He's the only answer to sin. Some people don't believe it or they reject it to say "I'm never putting myself on the line like that again. I'm not going to do it." Our Savior didn't do that, did he? As he is carrying his cross, stumbling and fumbling on the way to Calvary, as he stops at one point and sees the women crying, he says, "Don't weep for me. Weep for Jerusalem. How I've longed to gather you like hens gather her chicks, but you were not willing." His focus is still on those who are rejecting him. "Father, forgiven them. They don't know what they are doing." He continued to reach out to them time and time again. He even reached out to Judas when Judas betrayed him. He tried to lead people to repentance. But he didn't give up and say "Well, I did it once. They didn't listen. I'm done." The question you have to ask yourself is, is that what you would do?

Or do you not even bother sharing Christ just because of the possibility that you might be rejected, that someone might reject the Gospel that you speak to them and you don't want to go through that?

We reach out to those who don't know Christ. We reach out to those who know Christ and have drifted away. And we do it because we love and we want people to know their Savior. Sometimes we aren't going to be loved back for doing it. That's okay. Our focus is on our Savior and his love for us. We want to reflect that love to others.

It's just a sad reality. The Gospel is proclaimed. You believe it and you rejoice it and you think it's the greatest treasure in the world and you can't understand why someone else wouldn't think that way, but you have to understand that people today are still going to reject the Gospel. It's sad. It's sad that people who have heard the Gospel drift away from it and find things that are more important. It's sad. But it's also sad when you and I, who love the Gospel, who treasure our Savior, at times, because we are faced with challenges in our life, act as though it's all one big secret what Christ has done for us. We know it, but we forget it. It becomes a secret to us because we don't focus on it.

So we go through those challenges in life, we go through the things that make our knees weak, and we don't go through it with God at our side because we forget to look to him. All of a sudden we act as though it's a secret that he loved us so much he was going to die for us. Now we forget that and we think he's not going to love us enough to be with us in what we are going through, so we don't even turn to him. That's sad. Because for you and me it also is no secret that we know his love for us. The truth is, when we focus on it, his love sustains us. It doesn't take away the problems, but it sustains us through the problems. This is God's promise to us.

Proclaim his Word. Make sure it's not a secret. Know that people will reject it, but doggone it all, make sure you aren't the one rejecting it. Continue to focus on it. Continue to share it no matter what happens, because your Savior loved you that much that he was willing to go through a lot more than being smacked across the lips for what he said. He was willing to die for what you did. Amen.