



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

April 13, 2014

Pastor Randy Ott

Palm Sunday

First Lesson: [Zechariah 9:9-10](#)

Psalm of the Day: [Psalm 24](#)

Second Lesson: [Philippians 2:5-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 21:1-11](#)

Sermon Text: [Philippians 2:5-11](#)

Islands of Refreshment: Our Island King Rules in Humility

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Throughout the season, the Sundays in Lent that aren't a part of the season of Lent, the 40 days proper, we've been focusing on Islands in the Son to remind ourselves of the great refreshment that our God has for us in the message that Christ wins. During the season of Lent, we focus on repentance and what our sins did, how our sins caused Jesus to go through all of the suffering and all the things he went through, and the agony of being separated from God himself on the cross. It's our sins that brought that about. We focus on that on Wednesdays during the season of Lent, but on the Sundays in Lent, we look at these Islands in the Son. So I've used the picture of a tropical island to kind of guide some of our thoughts over these past number of Sundays.

Today we look at our island King and we see that, just like a lot of other things that we found on this island, it's different than what we would expect. Our island King does not rule with an iron fist. He doesn't rule seeking his own glory. He doesn't just wait for people to wait on him hand and foot. He doesn't want palm branches that are being waved to keep him cool as he sits in the island heat. Our island King rules in humility by putting our interests ahead of his own. That's what we see today as we see him entering Jerusalem to suffer and die. That's what we see as we look at these words from Paul's letter to the Philippians. He talks about attitude. The command that is given to us there is to have the attitude of Christ. Then he tells us what our island King's attitude was all about.

It says that he was in very nature God. Literally he had the form of God. He is true God from all eternity. He was there in the beginning and he said "Let there be light," and there was light. He said, "Let there be islands," and there were islands. He has that kind of divine power from all eternity and yet he did not consider having the form of God something to be grasped or hung onto. Think about what that means.

He didn't consider having the full glory of God from all eternity something to be kept, but he said it aside to take on human form to become one of us, to do nothing else except to come to this world and live like we do, endure everything we endure and then some

(because the devil was always attacking him), and to do it simply to take away our sins. This love that our God has for us is incredible! It's beyond our understanding. I rejoice in it and I hope you rejoice in it, but understand it? I can't. How hard was it for some of you to just get in the car and drive here to be here this morning? You've got someone getting confirmed, so you have to come. You don't want to be here. You'd rather be someplace else, right? I have to believe there are more than one or two people like that here today. But for their sake, you do it. You come. And when we do something for someone else's sake, we spend so much time patting ourselves on the back that we often hurt our arms, don't we? That's kind of how we are.

We don't always like putting someone else's interest ahead of our own. You can see it even when it comes to God, even when it comes to Jesus. We love him, I hope, as Christians. We love what he has done for us. But we don't want to get out of our comfort zone when it comes to worshiping him. Did you ever notice that?

We started with a Palm Processional today. A lot of people don't want to do it because that means they have to walk up in the front of church, right? "I have to go up some steps and back down some steps and someone might see me? Maybe I'll trip and fall and then I'll look ridiculous." I'm wearing a white gown. I look ridiculous all the time. I wasn't built for white, right? But this is what it is... it's not about focusing on us, it's about focusing on our God. When we can focus on who he is and what he has done for us, then we can set aside some of our own concerns. That's hard for us as Christians to do at times. We sing a song and we don't really like the melody. We think, why did we have to sing that one? Our eyes are often focused on ourselves and what we like as opposed to our God and what he has done for us.

That's why God had to say through Paul to the Christians in Philippi, have the attitude of Jesus. He set aside his divinity and he became true man with all that meant. He was true God from all eternity and now he has to worry about getting hungry. He was true God from all eternity and now he has to worry about all the stuff he had to worry about while he walked the face of the earth. He did it because he loves you. And when you stop and think about that, it's absolutely incredible because I'm amazed that he loves us. Absolutely amazed that he loves us.

It says Jesus humbled himself, because he suffered and died and took away our sins. He rose again to assure us our sins have been paid for and heaven is open to us through faith in Jesus. It says that God exalted him to the highest place. He gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. If you look at that part of what I read to you from Philippians, it tells you the name of Jesus is pretty important, right? It's a name unlike any other name. It's the greatest name we could know because of what he has done for us. Yet think of how often you and I abuse that name.

I talked about it with these guys this last week. It was just this last week, wasn't it? Are you still listening? Okay. I talked about how we misuse God's name. We looked at the

Second Commandment. Here is the name that was given that saves us. But how do we often use it? I hit my thumb with a hammer and I say "Jesus Christ!" Is that why he gave me that name, to express my frustration, to express how I'm upset? Is that what he gave me the name for? Can you imagine what it would be like if next week on just one day at your work place every time a coworker has something go wrong they mutter your name under their breath? How would you feel by the end of the day? If these guys, when I give them their quizzes back and they look at their quizzes and some of them start muttering, which they probably should, and they decide that one day every time they mutter they are going to use my name... they look at the quiz, "Randy Ott! I blew it again." You might smile the first time, but do you think you'd be really irritated by the end of the day? Think of how we do that with a name that is above every name. I think if they did that to me, by the end of the day if I was with them the whole day and they were doing that, I'd probably be ready to throw hymnals or catechisms at them. I'd be upset.

Think now for a moment how God hears it from every one of us in our words or in our thoughts and he still loves and forgives us. Think about how Jesus, as he is listening to people as he enters into Jerusalem going, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" and they're shouting and they're rejoicing and all these things and he knows, as true God he knows that some of those same people are going to be (later in the week) saying, "Crucify him! Kill him!" And he still goes in and he still does it. He still goes to the cross for you and for me and for everyone else that misuses his name or sins against him. He loves us that perfectly.

That's what God is asking us to do when he says to have the same attitude as Christ Jesus. He's asking us to love perfectly, to love in humility. Don't think of ourselves more than we ought to, like we are inclined to do.

For you guys today, think of what that means. We've talked about this before. When you get to the point you're at right now, remember that one passage we looked at? Let us leave behind the spiritual milk and move onto the solid food. That's the teachings of growing in faith. Right now, I'm sorry, you're still on spiritual milk. You've learned the basics. Any of you 10 here just having milk all day every day? Or do you eat any solid food in your physical life? Any of you? Have you moved on to steak, burgers, that kind of stuff? Okay. God's telling you, don't be so arrogant that you think you know it all now. Humble yourselves and say "I need to get to know God better." We've talked about this a lot. Hopefully one of the times you heard it and it sunk into your hearts. You know the basics, but you need to know God better and better and better, to keep growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. If this is the peak of your knowledge of God, my heart goes out to you because Satan is going to be attacking you and you're going to be lion chow for that roaring lion looking for someone to devour. If this is the peak of your knowledge of God, you might as well get a bag that says "Lion Chow" and wear that today at your parties, because that's what you'll be.

Keep growing. Keep knowing more and more. There's always more to know. What's amazing is it is so great to get to know our God better and to see just how much he

loves us. The more you see just how much he loves us, the more we are able to be humbled like him because it changes us. It transforms us. We find out life isn't all about us.

You're wearing pretty gowns. You have flowers. You have all that stuff today. I'm happy for you. I'm happy that I had the chance to teach you. But I'll tell you again, get over yourself. You don't know everything. You need to keep growing. Okay? If you do that, you'll be blessed. If you don't, I won't see you in heaven with me, and that will make me sad. But then I'll go to heaven where it's joy, and then I'll forget. So don't make me forget you, okay? Does that make sense?

This is the privilege God has given everyone of us, to know him better, to set aside ourselves, to not think so much of ourselves but think more about God. When we put our eyes on Jesus and who he is and what he has done and what he was willing to enter into Jerusalem to do for us, it absolutely should thrill us to the tip of our toes that God loves us that much. Then to humble myself and set aside my wants, my needs and say "Lord, it's all in your hands and I trust you," it becomes easier. That's what we are called to do. Through the food of Word and Sacrament, God will strengthen you and me and all the rest of us so that's what we can do. Amen.