



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

February 12, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [2 Samuel 11:1-17, 26-27](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 119a

Second Lesson: [1 Thessalonians 4:1-12](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 5:21-37](#)

### **The Savior's Sermon: Live a Holy Life! Thoughts, Words, Actions**

Welcome to worship today at Morrison Zion Lutheran Church. We exist to glorify God. We have set out to do this by gathering around the Gospel so that we may grow in the Gospel and go to others with this Gospel.

Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father, through our Lord and Savior Jesus: Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

We heard in the Gospel today Jesus talking about how thoughts condemn us to hell just as quickly as our actions do. There's a phrase we often use in our confession of sins in our orders of worship. We didn't use it today, but often we say "I have sinned against you in my thoughts, my words and my actions." I can understand why we say it because of what Jesus said today in His Sermon on the Mount. Yet I still find myself at times patting myself on the back that I didn't actually do the things or say the things I was actually thinking. Do you ever find yourself doing that?

Someone is really annoying and you just want to let them have it, but you don't. You just smile instead. You pat yourself on the back about how you didn't say every last thing you were thinking that would have put them in their place. Today we're reminded that condemns us to hell just as certainly as if I would have said it or if I would have acted on it and done other things that were bad. So I understand why God is concerned about our thoughts, our words and our actions because our thoughts of sins condemn us to hell just as certainly as our actions that are sins condemn us to hell even if we don't always think they're on the same level.

I think as we look at the account of David which I read to you today, we see that God is concerned about thoughts, words and actions also for another reason because our thoughts, when we stay focused on something—we stay focused on a grudge we have, we stay focused on something that irritates us or something that intrigues us (as in the

case of David)—it leads us to sinful words and actions that can hurt other people and lead other people into sin. Then our thoughts led us to these words and led us to these actions that caused someone else to sin also. That's another reason I think God is so concerned about thoughts, words and actions.

Look at David. He had time to think about stuff because he wasn't doing what God called him to do. ***In the spring, at the time when kings go off to war***, David was a king—David stays in Jerusalem. David had been a warrior king. He had fought a lot of battles under Saul and then as he became king, he had fought many battles. He was a warrior king, a bloody king. That's one of the reasons why God said "You're not going to build the temple for my Name. Your son Solomon will." ([1 Chronicles 28:3-6](#)) But now he had gotten to a point where he evidently said, "As the shepherd king of God's people, I'm supposed to go to war, but I don't think so." He stays home and he has time to think now and he can't sleep.

He sees Bathsheba. You know the rest of the story of how his desire for Bathsheba led him to say, "Hey, you servants, go find out who that is and then bring her to me so I can sleep with her." He involves the servants in his sin. He involves Bathsheba in his sin and they both sin against the Lord. Then she becomes pregnant. He sends for Uriah to cover up his own sin instead of admitting it. He wants Uriah to think that it's his child, so he sends for Uriah and says "Hey, why don't you go home. You've been fighting long and hard. Go home and see your wife." Uriah the Hittite, the non-Jew, says "I can't do such a thing when the Lord's army and the ark are in the field. I can't do that." So he doesn't do it.

The next night David causes Uriah to sin by getting him drunk so that he'll go home and sleep with his wife. David's thoughts have spiraled into more words and actions that are leading other people into sinning against their Lord. But even then, Uriah wouldn't do it. Finally his solution is that he writes a letter to Joab and he sends it with Uriah himself basically saying "Kill Uriah. Put him in a place where I know he is going to die." He kills him with the sword of the Ammonites.

Thoughts, words, actions led to all kinds of sins. He involved Joab in committing this sin of murder by using the sword of the Ammonites. There were all these things he was doing to cover up his sin because he didn't want to admit it. It was all because he had too much time to think.

Do you ever find that happen to yourself? When you aren't doing the things God has called you to do and maybe you have too much time to think so you end up doing things you shouldn't be doing?

Recently I was talking in some Bible class, and I'm not the world's most patient guy. I've gotten better at it in a lot of ways, but I'm still really impatient when I'm driving to South

Dakota. Some idiot cuts me off. That just drives me nuts! Then they slow down! They come flying up, go past me and make me slow down because there is a truck there. So I have to slow down. Then all I do is think "There's a truck up there. If I pass that guy, I could slow down right in front of him and make him slow down and see how much he likes it." That's stupid! Why do I become that impatient?! Maybe it's because I'm driving 8 hours and I have time to think about how irritated I am that someone is making me slow down because now it's going to take 8 hours and 10 seconds. I had that time to think and it leads me down paths I shouldn't go. Do you find the same for yourself?

When we aren't doing the things God has called us to do in our various vocations, in our work life, in our family life, our life with our friends or different things and we have that extra time, sometimes we're just like David and we get ourselves in trouble. There are a lot of things that are thoughts and they lead us into actions that can lead someone else into sin. Our thoughts condemn us just as certainly as our actions, but our actions can affect someone else.

When I think about how someone irritates me and then I speak in that anger or irritation as a pastor. If I do that as a pastor, that is going to put a roadblock between you guys and Jesus. You aren't going to want to listen to me tell you about Jesus if I give vent to my anger at times. You and I aren't perfect. Sometimes our thoughts lead us into words and actions that hurt others and lead others into sin. We can spend a lot of time, like David, trying to cover it up by saying "It's their fault because they did this first." But the reality is my God has called me to live a holy life in response to how He loved me first. Always keep that straight in your mind.

We are called to live a holy life in response to how He loved us first. I can't do anything to take away any single one of my sins, but God, knowing this, sent Jesus to live perfectly in my place and your place, the place of the whole world, to die as the punishment for all the sins of thoughts, words and actions that we commit. Now He gives us the gift of faith through the work of the Holy Spirit in Word and Sacrament. That faith makes us holy in God's eyes. No matter who we are and what we've done, God has forgiven us in Christ when He gave us that gift of faith that Jesus was perfect and that perfection is ours and Jesus was punished in our place.

In response to that, I want my thoughts, words and actions to get better. I don't want to keep committing the same sins and justify or try to cover them up. I want to do better with my thoughts, words and actions, not because it makes God love me. He has already loved me perfectly. He has loved you perfectly. He has forgiven you. It's how we thank Him for this gift of salvation.

One of the most fascinating things I think about the life of David is that David was called a man after God's own heart, by God, in the Bible. ([1 Samuel 13:14, Acts 13:22](#)) But you see him here screw up.

When I was a kid going through grade school and we had the sin of David and Bathsheba as the Bible History Lesson, for whatever reason I thought this was the only time David sinned because he was a man after God's own heart. But then when you read the rest of the Bible and the life of David, you see he messed up as much as you and I do. He was a man after God's own heart because eventually he got to the point (when Nathan confronted him) when he stopped trying to cover up his sin and he simply said "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner." Read his penitential psalms, like [Psalm 51](#), when the guilt of his own sin was uncovered for him. He heard the Law as if there were no Gospel. He said that whoever did that should die and that person was him.

But then Nathan, the prophet, proclaimed the Gospel to him as if there were no Law. "You are forgiven." Not "if you do this, this and this." "You are forgiven." He was forgiven through faith in the promise of the Savior to come. You and I are forgiven because of our faith in the Savior who has come. ([2 Samuel 12](#))

Recognize where you sin against God in your thoughts. See how that leads into your words and into your actions. See how it hurts others and leads others away. And then don't make excuses. Don't seek to cover it up. Just say "Lord, have mercy on me, a sinner," and then your brothers and sisters in Christ who are doing what God has called them to do will tell you, "Your sins are forgiven. Live in that forgiveness."

Part of that living in that forgiveness is seeking to get better in our thoughts, our words, and our actions. This is the cycle we live in as Christians. We fail our God. He forgives us. We seek to do better. Not to earn heaven but to thank Him that He has given us heaven as a gift. So live in that gift. Amen.

***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** ([Philippians 4:7](#)) Amen.