



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

February 22, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

Ash Wednesday

First Lesson: [Numbers 21:4-9](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 51a

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [2 Corinthians 7:8-13a](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Luke 18:9-14](#)

### Grow in Godly Sorrow

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.

Now is the time of God's favor. Now is the day of salvation. Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

When I was the age of you school kids here and I got into trouble at home, my dad would often discipline me. Sometimes he would use a belt. He said something to me every single time before he did that and not once did I ever believe him. He would always say "This is going to hurt me more than it's going to hurt you." I was perfectly willing to change places with him, but that never happened. My dad knew that what was about to happen was going to cause me some pain and some discomfort, but he was doing it to teach me a lesson so that I would learn to be a better son, a better child, a better brother, a better neighbor, whatever I had screwed up at, as a way to serve and honor the God who loved me and forgave me of all those sins that I was being disciplined for.

I never really understood what dad meant until I became a parent and I would have to discipline my children. If it meant taking away something that I knew they really wanted to go to, it still hurt me. And of course when you're a kid, you think your parent really loves taking something away from you. You think "Oh, you think this is fun to take this away from me," but when you get to be a parent and you understand, no, it's not fun! No parent wants to cause their child any kind of discomfort or grief or pain like that, and I think that's one of the reasons why so many parents today don't do it. It's just easier to let the kids do what they want than it is to discipline them and cause them some discomfort and some tears, sadness, grief, pain, whatever it might be.

That's what God has called parents to do and as we grow as Christian parents, that's what we want to get better at doing—being able to say “no,” being able to discipline so that we teach those God has entrusted to us to be better Christians.

As we look at these words from [2 Corinthians](#) today, I think Paul was going through the same emotions that a parent would. He had to discipline the Christians in Corinth by writing them a letter that really let them have it. He didn't sugarcoat anything. He just gave them the straight cough medicine that tasted terrible. He didn't put anything in it to make it taste better. He confronted them with their sin.

There is some debate among theologians about exactly what sin it might be, but some point back to his first letter in [1 Corinthians 5](#) where he had to admonish the Corinthians because they were allowing in their midst sins that even the unbelieving world around them knew was wrong. Yet they said, “Look at how loving, how tolerant, how willing we are to accept people no matter what they do,” and they even encouraged them to keep doing it. Paul had to write and tell them, “What you're encouraging them to do is wrong before God. God calls it sin. You are encouraging someone to sin. You need to expel the immoral brother and hand him over to Satan.” That's what it talks about in [1 Corinthians 5](#).

Then some feel it appears that what Paul is writing about here ([2 Corinthians 7](#)) is that they had done what Paul told them to do and the person who had sinned repented, but the people had gotten such a tongue lashing from Paul that they weren't willing to assure him that he was forgiven and welcomed back with the loving, open arms of Christ. So Paul has to write to tell them to receive him back and to do all these things.

Now Paul is talking about it again later in his letter and he says, “I regret that I had to cause you some pain, but I don't regret it.” It sounds like he is contradicting himself. What he is saying is, “I regret that I had to cause you this kind of sorrow, but I had to do it.” You notice later he says it's not because of the person who had sinned or the person they had sinned against. “It was because of you. I needed you all to see that what you were doing was wrong so that your sorrow that came” from this sharp letter that he wrote to them, these sharp words, these words of discipline, would lead them to Godly sorrow that leads to repentance and looking back to Christ as the only answer to that sin, and the answer of Christ's life and death.

Now he heard from Titus that is what had happened among the Corinthians and he was happy and he rejoiced and he said, “Receive this person back with open arms. Assure them of forgiveness. I'm so encouraged that you have done this. I'm so happy that you were willing to do the hard thing and put the person out, but now, receive them back.”

I can read these words of Paul and I can think of different times I've disciplined my kids and it wasn't fun. But I thought about it recently. This weekend, three of the five kids

were together. I sat there and looked at my kids and I had to say to Paula, "You did really well raising them. They are pretty good kids." Even though some of the things we had to do weren't fun and it hurt them for a time, it served for their good, earthly and eternal lives. That's what Paul is talking about to the Corinthians, and that's what God reminds us today.

When I was a kid and dad was about to discipline me, was I sorry? You bet I was sorry because I knew what was coming next. But what was I really sorry about at times? I was sorry I got caught. I was sorry about the pain it was about to inflict on me. I was sorry about the punishment and the discipline I was going to have to endure. It took constant instruction from my dad to get me to the point of sorrow that what I had done hurt my God.

I think that's one of the differences between worldly sorrow and Godly sorrow. We can be sorry that we've done this or that and now it has caused problems in family life, in work life, in relationships and all these other things. We can be sorry for what it has brought about, but that's still not the same as understanding I should go to hell. This damns me to hell! There are no ifs, ands or buts. I need to have the Law spoken to me as though there is no Gospel so that it crushes me, because then I see I can't do anything and I can see how serious it is. It is way worse than a snake bite. It's hell.

Then I have to plead to God and say, like David did, "God have mercy on me, a sinner. This is what I am. I can't change it, God. Only you can wash me. Only you can blot out the iniquity. Only you can cleanse me from this thing that makes me an eyesore to you!" And in Christ, that's exactly what He does.

In the body and blood of Christ that was given and shed on that cross, we find forgiveness. It's not a bronze snake on a pole. It's God Himself taking on human flesh, on a cross, because you and I are terrible sinners. Then our God comes to us and says, "This is done for you, for the forgiveness of your sins." And then we hear the Gospel as if there is no Law. Our God says to us, "I have completely and absolutely wiped away every bit of your sin. Every little bit of guilt and punishment you deserve, it's all gone, in Christ."

That Godly sorrow leads to that repentance and that turning to Christ and despairing of self and rejoicing in this incredible love that our God has for us. That's what He calls us to this Lenten season—a time of applying the Law to ourselves as though the Gospel doesn't exist. Then a time of hearing the Gospel as though the Law doesn't exist so that we see how forgiven we are and we no longer beat ourselves up over our sins, because in Christ, they are removed. This isn't easy. It can't be half-baked.

Work this Lent at applying the Law, not to your neighbor, not to your spouse, not to your child, not to your sibling but to yourself. Then by all means, apply the Gospel to your own heart that has been crushed, and know that in Christ, you ARE His forgiven child. Amen.

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