



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

February 26, 2023
1st Sunday in Lent

Pastor Randy Ott

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

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 3

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

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

Islands in the Son! A Battle Scarred Island Full of Beauty

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:

Last year about this time I actually got to go to an island and get away from all this evil snow that surrounds us. We got to go to the U.S. Virgin Islands and visit my son and his wife. It was pretty interesting. It was wonderful. It was a great vacation, like the Sundays in Lent are a great vacation for Christians to reflect on God's love and mercy. One of the things that struck me as we drove around is there are a lot of buildings that still had the effects of hurricanes that were many, many years ago. They were still beaten, just lying open, weeds growing throughout or trees sticking out the tops of homes or businesses. It was interesting to see all that destruction that was still evident. Actually one of the things it made me think about was how I wish I would have talked to my dad more about some stuff.

My dad served in WWII in the Pacific Theater. He got to see a lot of islands; islands that weren't always pretty, islands that had a lot of battle scars on them. He talked about it a little bit, but I never pressed him farther on it because he would always clam up a little bit. I do remember the one time he told me after an air raid, his job was to clean up body parts out of trees. I can't imagine that. I can't imagine the horrors that you must see in war. In the middle of a beautiful, tropical island, just grotesque pictures and images that I have to believe haunted him for the rest of his life.

As we start this journey on the Sundays in Lent of looking at **Islands in the Son** (the Son being Jesus), we are reminded from our reading today that this is a battle scarred island that is full of grotesque images. We see the effects of what we read about in the First

Lesson, the fall into sin. We see it every day in our lives. It surrounds us and the battle rages on. Even though, as we see in our reading today, we know the outcome of the war, the battle still rages around us. Today we see what brought about the battle, the effects of the battle, and we focus our eyes on the One who won the battle for us.

Paul's letter to the Romans is a fascinating letter to read because when you read the first eight chapters or so, it's like you are sitting in a synagogue in 1st Century A.D. listening to Paul teach Saturday after Saturday. He had never been to Rome and he writes to the Romans to prepare a way for a visit and what he does is covers Law and Gospel and sin and grace and the effects and the struggle and the battle that goes on around us. He writes about how Jew and Gentile alike are condemned by God's Law. It's not the Law that saves us but it's only faith that saves us.

Paul pointed to Abraham shortly before our reading about how Abraham wasn't saved by the Law but he was saved by faith, and his faith took hold of God's promises. He continues on to make that point in what he talks about here because he says even before there was a law, you can see the results of the fall into sin. Through Adam's disobedience, sin came to everyone even before the Law was given. The Law was given to Moses in 1,500 B.C., so there were a lot of people that had lived without breaking any given command of God, like the Law that some of the Jews always pointed to as their hope and their answer. He says to take a look around you. When Satan led Adam and Eve into sin, God promised a Savior, and we hang onto that promise of the One who would crush the serpent's head but He would have His heel struck. Yet there are incredible effects. If you keep reading in [Genesis 3](#), you'll see those effects—pain, suffering, hardship, heartache. Those are the scars that are on this island ever since that battle was enjoined. We live in it every day.

But the greatest effect is that we are separated from God. We deserve to go to hell. We have nothing to offer to God to make Him take away the guilt of our sin. We are all sinners. We are born sinners. And sin condemns us to hell; no ifs, ands or buts. I don't care how many times we try to take away the effects of sin by saying that's not fair that Adam's sin was credited to us, it doesn't matter.

It's fascinating in the book we are reading on Sunday nights, Prepared to Answer (we'll start another Bible study on this book next week), one of the questions we are looking at this week is "It's not fair if someone has a deathbed confession and they get to go to heaven just like I do even though I served God my whole life." Doesn't that question just completely miss the point? I don't care if you serve the Lord your whole life, you didn't take away one of your sins! You lived in response to the One who took away your sins. You haven't earned heaven any more than the thief on the cross to whom Jesus said, "Today you will be with me in paradise." ([Luke 23:43](#)) Even though we give lip service to "Yes, we are sinners and sin condemns us to hell," we seem to want to put a comma

at the end of that statement instead of a period. "...but, God must love me more because I do this, this or that." No. God loves us because God is love.

The battle was enjoined and Satan led the world into sin and the effect of that sin is that we are all lost in sin and the effects of that sin are that we struggle daily against sin. We live in the effects of sin and there are continually scars in us, around us, and unfortunately given to others through us. There's just no denying it. There is no excusing it. This is what we are.

The only answer to this battle is not trying harder, not doing better. The only answer to this battle is what Paul pointed the Romans and us to. ***For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous.*** All were condemned by the fall into sin and ALL have been declared "not guilty" through the life of Christ. His perfection is credited to all people is what Paul is telling us. When God looks at us, He no longer sees our sin. He sees the beauty of the perfection of Christ.

So for you and me, one of the things we have to be able to do is when we look in the mirror and see the guilt of our own sins, we need to hear Christ say "You are forgiven. You are righteous because I have declared you righteous." Then we have to live in that, believe it, not be troubled by our guilt but rejoice in our forgiveness so that now we can begin to live in a way that honors and serves God; so that we live in a way that in a real sense, we start going on the offensive and take the battle to Satan. We do that with the sword of the Spirit. We do that by being in the Mighty Fortress that is our God. We use the weapon of the Word to assure ourselves that we are God's forgiven children, to assure one another that we are God's forgiven children, and to take that truth to those who are still living under the weight of the battle scarred sin that Satan has brought into their life.

Yes, we all mess up. We all sin terribly. But God doesn't see that when we are in Christ. So we, who are in Christ, want to live in the newness of that life and live to serve our God. That means we go on the offensive and we share Christ, and we share Christ, and we share Christ. Amen.

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