



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

March 5, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Lent

First Lesson: [Genesis 12:1-8](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 121

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Romans 4:1-5, 13-17](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 4:5-26](#)

### **Islands in The Son: An Island for All**

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, and our Lord and Savior Jesus: Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

Last week when we started this series about Islands in The Son, I told you about how last year we went to the Virgin Islands to visit my son, Tim. Last year he was brewing beer for Leatherback Brewery in the U.S. Virgin Islands. This year he is back there again and I really wish I was there today. I love you all, but I'd rather be looking at the ocean than looking at all of you and looking outside at snow across the road as I'm talking because, as you know, I hate snow. But that island getaway last year was great and it opened my eyes to a lot of different things like I talked about last week, and a lot of things that fit in with this series really well.

As we drove around the island when Tim was showing us around, I remember one place that looked just gorgeous. I thought, "I bet they have a really nice restaurant. Let's go there, Tim." "It's a resort, dad. You can't go in there." You can't go in there. You're excluded. That's kind of how life is at times. We can't go everywhere we want. We aren't able to be involved in everything we want. There are some places we are excluded from. I can no longer walk into Sam's Club. I don't have my cool picture on our card anymore. I can't go in there and buy stuff. In fact, I am excluded for many things that maybe you aren't. There are ladders and stepstools at home that I cannot go on because I'm not below 250 pounds. That's just the way it works.

Excluding people from things is something we can become good at, too, even if it's for your own good. We can exclude people from our circles. We can exclude people from our get-togethers. We can exclude people as though they don't belong with us and that is a centuries-old thing. What we heard in the Gospel was trying to explain how

Jews really wanted to exclude Samaritans from everything. So Jesus being there and talking to that Samaritan woman would have been shocking because Jews looked down at Samaritans. They weren't good enough. They didn't worship the Lord the right way, as God had told them to. So instead of loving them and trying to bring them closer to God, they flat out said "We're better than you are. You're out."

When Paul wrote to the Romans in what I read to you last week and this week, one of the things he was in the middle of (in this first section of Romans when showing the way of salvation) was showing that the way of salvation is through God's love, not through the Law. The Law was given to show the need for the Savior from sin that would come. The Savior would come as a descendant from the Jews. Jesus said salvation is from the Jews, but just because God had chosen the Israelites out of all the nations on earth to be the one the Messiah would come from did not mean they were better than everyone else and they should look down on everyone else. In fact, the Law was there to show them how desperately they needed the Savior just like everyone else did. Yet the Jews tripped over the Law in the sense that some of them thought they would get to heaven by the Law, and they looked down on the people that didn't keep the Law as well as they did. They were pretty good at making up rules and saying "If I keep the rules, I'm better than you are."

Paul writes to tell them "You've got it all wrong. Abraham wasn't saved by the Law because the Law came long after Abraham was there, 500 years later. Abraham was saved by faith." Faith predates the Law. Faith has always been God's plan of salvation. The One who would crush the serpent's head would come and He would destroy the devil's work. Our keeping the Law doesn't destroy the devil's work. We're born in sin and we get pretty good at it. We are sinners who can sin naturally and expertly. This is us. So to put your hope in the Law is a fool's hope. Paul points out that it's the faith of Abraham that saved him and that this faith is the same faith that saves all people; He would be a blessing for all nations, not just for the Jews. God is one who greatly desires to have all people be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

***As it is written: "I have made you a father of many nations." He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed—the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that were not.*** Faith saves. Faith is the gift that God gives and He can give it to all people. This is what we're reminded today. This island that we live in, in the grace of our Lord Jesus, is not an exclusive island. It is for everyone. It is for anyone here today that thinks they've done so many bad things in their life that God could never forgive them. God tells you Jesus was perfect in your place. God tells you Jesus died in your place. God tells you through faith in Jesus that He did that, "You are forgiven. I don't care what you've done." It's for all people.

But how often are you and I like the Jews? We look at other people and say "No, it's really not for you. It's for people like me, who do what I do. I'm in church so God must love me more than He loves you."

I'm still amazed at how often God's people talk as though THAT person couldn't be saved. "They are Arab." "They are Hindu." "They couldn't possibly be Christian." "I'm not going to associate with THOSE people who have done THAT. That is terrible!" If that's your attitude, start coming to Wednesday services as we talk about "acceptable" sins. We see sins that you and I are comfortable with damn us just as much to hell as if we were serial killers. But this idea that we look down our nose at other people and say the Gospel isn't for them, we have to get over that because that's not Christ-like love, and you and I have been called to love like Christ loved. That means we talk to people that maybe we don't even like because we want to build bridges so we can share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the only thing that saves. Christ died for the times you and I get our nose up in the air and don't want to talk about Jesus. Christ died for the times you and I think "I don't need to be in worship because it doesn't save me, so why should I come?" Christ died for all those sins.

Now, when we understand who we are and what we are, living in response to that love means we WANT to do what He has called us to do. We want to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus. We want to share Jesus with others and not be condescending and arrogant as to think God could only love us. For Pete's sake, get over ourselves.

Loving like Christ loves means we talk to people that might cause other people to raise their eyebrows because we're talking to them. Isn't that what we heard Jesus do in the Gospel? That means sometimes we go to where people are hurting and we talk to them. We try to share the love of Christ with them. That's what we're called to do. At times you and I, we all stink at it.

But God loves and forgives us anyway because it's not our works, it is Christ's love. The more you and I grow to understand that and not just give it lip service but take it to heart that God should not love me, He should not love you, but He does, then we'll want to share that love with others that we might at times, in our sinful nature, think are not worthy of His love. In a sense, we're right. None of us are worthy of His love, but He has told us His love is for ALL people. So our job is to share that love, because this is God's plan.

You and I, we are the ones that are to reflect the Son-light. We are called to reflect Jesus in our conversations with each other and with those who don't know Him. This is what God has called us to do. It's for all and His only plan is to bring all in is through His people. So don't act as though it's exclusive. Share Jesus. Amen.

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