



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
www.mzluth.org

March 26, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

5th Sunday in Lent

First Lesson: [2 Kings 4:18-37](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 116

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Romans 8:11-19](#)

Gospel Lesson: [John 11:17-27, 38-45](#)

Islands in The Son
An Island Paradise that Does Not End after Two Weeks

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, our risen and ruling Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

As we've been talking about **Islands in The Son** during the Sundays in Lent this year, I've told you before in a sermon how last year somewhere around this time we went to the U.S. Virgin Islands to see my son, Tim, who was there brewing for Leatherback Brewery. It was a great vacation. Even though they got more rain during that time that we were there than they normally get in a couple of months, it was still a great vacation. I thought it was wonderful.

I've never understood some people on vacations. Instead of enjoying where they are and what is around them, I've seen guys that get real worried about what the weather is like where they left. Did you ever notice that?

Way back when I went golfing in Laughlin with my brother and a bunch of people from Michigan, it happened a couple different times. The one time when we were down there, usually it's really cold back in Michigan but at that time it was in the 40s and 50s, one guy was just moping around the whole time. I asked him what was wrong and he said "It's so warm back there." "What do you care? You're golfing in 80-degree weather and the sun is shining the whole day. What do you care if it is 40 degrees back there? Is that making your vacation worse?" Some people seem to think so.

You know what the worst thing about the vacation last year in the Virgin Islands was? It came to an end! I had to come back here and live here where we have things like yesterday where they dumped that white stuff all over us! I'd much rather still be at the

island, to tell you the truth—weather-wise. But that’s the thing about vacations in warm, wonderful climates. They come to an end.

You go back to maybe the reality of bad weather or maybe the reality of the grind of work, the grind of life, and I might be risking becoming Captain Obvious here but life is hard. There are so many challenges. There are so many frustrations. It is at times a grind for us.

Today our God comes to us and reminds us to lift our eyes higher than the daily grind. He reminds us who we are. We are His children because the Spirit of God lives in us. He reminds us who He is. He is the One who has power over death. And He reminds us of His grace because He gives us not just physical life but eternal life. That’s what we see today as we look at these words from Paul. They are amazing. They are wonderful. And they are full of comfort and purpose for us as Christians when we focus on them and let the Spirit seep into our being and change our attitude.

Look at what he starts out with there. He starts out with a sentence in Verse 11. It’s the end of the paragraph that we looked at last week. He says ***...if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you...*** He is basically saying you believe Jesus is your Lord and Savior. But notice the Spirit living in you, the Holy Spirit. Him who raised Jesus from the dead, we talk about it being the Father who raised Jesus. And Jesus, the Son of God. Even though the word “trinity” is never in the Bible, in that sentence we just had the Trinity described for us. And what did they do? Jesus lived and died in our place. The Father had planned all of this. The Father made and preserves us and has this plan laid out for us so that we can spend eternity with Him in heaven because the Spirit lives in our heart, the Spirit whom the Father and the Son has sent. ***...if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.*** The point is it doesn’t matter what the daily grind is, we have something better waiting for us. The Spirit will give life to our mortal bodies. He will raise us from the dead. Death isn’t the end. It looks like the end to us and if you paid attention to the Gospel, it can even smell like the end to us. Isn’t that what we heard about Lazarus when they wanted to take away the stone? But it’s not the end.

In the First Lesson and in the Gospel, God shows us He has the power over physical death, but that’s not the important part for you and me right now. The important part is that He has the power over Spiritual death. We who are born separated from God, destined to spend eternity in hell because our paycheck (the wages of sin) is death. That’s what we’ve earned. That’s what we deserve. God has taken it away. On the cross Jesus said he paid it in full, ***“It is finished.”*** [\(John 19:30\)](#) He lived and died perfectly in our place and now He sends the Spirit into our hearts so that what He did for the world becomes ours.

Now we are God's children and if we are God's children (which he says in the last paragraph there that I just read to you earlier), that means the Father is our Father, and that means Jesus is our Brother. Our Brother loved us so much that He left heaven, lived perfectly in our place and died in place. Our Father and our Brother loved us so much they sent the Spirit into our hearts to lead us to believe this even though we, by our own nature, want to rebel at it. We want to blame God for the daily grind. We want to say it's His fault. We don't see that sin is what causes all these problems that we have to endure, including the snow of yesterday. It's all a result of sin. Yet God is greater than our sin!

He lived in our place. He died in our place. He gave us the Spirit. He calls us His children. He calls us His brother. And He calls us His temple because the Spirit of God lives in us.

Look at how he applies all of this. He says ***...if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.*** He made us heirs. We have the inheritance already. Our sins are forgiven. But we don't have it fully yet. We still live in a sinful world. We still have suffering. He goes on in the verses after this talking about how our sufferings are not worth comparing to the glory that waits to be revealed in us. It's a beautiful section of Romans. I'd encourage you to read all of [Romans 8](#) regularly.

Think of the sufferings that we face. We face a lot of them. At times we are so focused on them that we forget that we're children and we have a big Brother and a Father who takes care of us and looks over us. He is there through it all. He knows every last thing we're going through. He knows all the sufferings we are going through. In fact, there isn't any suffering that we go through that Jesus Himself didn't face as the devil threw all the temptations at Him. He knows us through and through because He became one of us. He endured all those things so that we are forgiven and have heaven. Now He tells us, as you are going through them, don't just set your eyes on them. Set your heart on things above, where Christ is seated at the side and the heavenly throne. Remember that now we are aliens and strangers but that is our home. That is where we are going to be.

When we leave this world, it gets better. There is no more suffering. There are no more tears. There is no more sorrow. There is no more trouble. There is only the perfection of heaven. It's not just for a time. It's for an eternity. If God loved us enough to open eternity (which I can't wrap my head around how long eternity is), if He loved us that much, do you really think He is going to abandon you as you go through the grind, whatever it might be for you, today, tomorrow or however long it exists? No, He won't.

And because He is that Father and that Brother, He says we have an obligation. Not to live according to the sinful nature but to live by the Spirit. What does that mean? It

doesn't mean what we do gets us into heaven because Paul just said in the chapter before this, ***"For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing." "What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!"*** [\(Romans 7:19, 24-25\)](#) But to live by the Spirit means the Spirit has His way with us so we are seeking to live FOR Him.

Yes, we are going to fail on this side of heaven because we are still sinners. But to live by the sinful nature means we don't care anymore at all what the Spirit wants or who God is or what He has done for us. We've given ourselves over to our sinful nature. Don't live that way because that's death! We have an obligation to live in a way that thanks our Father and our Brother and the Spirit for the work that they have done for us. To live in a way that honors and glorifies Him. Not just to sit back and say, "Meh, it doesn't save me. I don't need to do it." We have an obligation to do it because God saved us, fully and free, of His own mercy and love. We have an obligation to do it because there is a part of us (if the Spirit lives in us) that loves God and needs to say "Thank you" to God, who has done this much for us. It's not a "have to," it's "I want to." And it pains me greatly when I see how often I fail my God.

Then I see my Brother, my Father and the One who lives in me (the Spirit) who says "You are forgiven." I don't understand it. I don't deserve it. I don't deserve heaven. You don't deserve heaven. You don't deserve forgiveness. You don't deserve God's presence and promise and comfort and peace. Yet He pours it out on us every day; every time we pick up the Word, every time we receive the Sacrament and He says "This is that very body and blood that took away your sins." Our God is desperate to have you live by the Spirit. Why would we want to live any other way? We have forgiveness and heaven. Why would I throw that away for anything on this earth? Amen.

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