



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 7, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

5th Sunday of Easter

First Lesson: [1 Kings 18:16-45](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 33

Second Lesson: [1 Peter 2:4-10](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 14:1-12](#)

The Redeemer Lives To Be the Only Way to Heaven

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.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

In Christ, our risen and ruling Savior, dear fellow redeemed:

I told you before in sermons how I'm not the world's most patient driver, especially when I'm driving out to South Dakota. I kind of figure everyone should realize I'm driving eight hours and they should speed up or get out of my way so I can get there faster. I'm always shocked that they don't understand that, and I get frustrated and irritated at times with some of that. But over 20 years ago I was a much more patient driver, at least in one instance.

When I served in Minnesota we were 20 miles north of Rochester, so a lot of our members (most of the time) would end up in the hospitals in Rochester, at St. Mary's and in Methodist. It's all in the Mayo Health system. Mayo Clinic was right downtown in Rochester. People come from all over the world to go to the Mayo Clinic. Rochester, in its wisdom, had all kinds of one-way streets right downtown. It would happen 2-3 times a year that I would be driving down one of those one-way streets (and yes, I was going the right way on the one-way street) that all of a sudden I would meet a car coming straight at me that wasn't going the right way on the one-way street. I never really got too upset with those people or got my undies in a bunch about that because I kind of figured to myself that those people were probably here from out of town dealing with things that were pretty heavy on their mind at that point in time. I figured they were going through some really tough stuff and they were going down the wrong way on a one-way street, so at least I could be patient with them and not make it even worse by laying on the horn and acting like a fool.

I kind of think that's what Jesus was doing in the Upper Room, being patient with people that at times were going the wrong way down a one-way street. I find it fascinating when you start reading in [John 13](#) (I think [John 13-17](#) you read about Jesus in the Upper Room) and you read all these things He said to His disciples. John introduces it all with having loved those who were His own and He now showed them the full extent of His love. I suppose this could be John leading into Jesus' suffering and death. But I think it also fits for what Jesus is doing here in the Upper Room, showing the disciples the full extent of His love as He answers their comments and their questions and their doubts and their worries and their concerns knowing full well that later that night He is going to have what looks like blood running down His forehead because He is so earnest in prayer about "Father, if it is your will, take this cup from me." ([Luke 22:42](#)) He knows everything He is about to go through and yet look at how patiently He deals with His disciples, even in what I just read to you here.

He tells them very directly, "I'm going to talk to you about your comfort. Don't let your hearts be troubled." The word He uses for "troubled" is like churning water being tossed here and there. I think you can relate to that when you don't know what to think and you're hearing all these things that Jesus is saying. Your stomach is turning and churning and there is fear and there is uncertainty and "What is going on? He's talking about being betrayed. He's talking about dying. What is He talking about?" And to meet that, He comes with comfort. "Don't let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God. Trust also in me." That's literally what He says. He uses a present imperative—"Keep trusting in God. Keep trusting in me. Don't rely on what you are going to see over the next 48 hours. Trust in what I'm telling you. Don't walk by sight. Walk by faith. Trust in the Father. Trust in me."

Then He comes with the comfort, "In my Father's house are many rooms, a permanent place of dwelling. That's why I've told you I'm going there to prepare a place for you, and if I go, I'm going to come back and I'm going to take you to be with me where I am." That's comfort for the disciples. That's comfort as they go through all these things that are going to turn their world upside down.

So what does Thomas say? "Well, we don't know where you are going, so how do we know what road you are taking?" He had been very direct. He had been telling them this many times. As they were traveling to Jerusalem, He said "Hey, I'm going to Jerusalem to suffer and die and be betrayed and then rise again. I'm doing all this to fulfill my Father's will." *Show us the road?* I don't think I would have reacted as patiently as Jesus did. I think I would have said "Hey, you got rocks for brains? Haven't you been listening?" Instead Jesus just very simply, very patiently, very lovingly says, "***I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.***"

Look at what Jesus says. To hearts that are troubled, to hearts that are churning, He says, "I AM the way." Not *I show the way*, like another Moses. "I AM the way." Not *I have the truth*, but "I AM truth." Not *I lead to eternal life*, but "I AM life." Think of the difference of what He is saying there. He isn't pointing them to themselves saying "I'll show you what to do. Now you guys go do it and then maybe God will let you into heaven with me." He says "I am the way. I am doing everything for you. If you want to get through all this, just cling to this truth. I am the truth. And I am life." What beautiful comfort Jesus speaks to them!

It seems out of place in our society today to make those bold claims that are made to comfort someone else because so often today we don't want to say there is anything that is really true, an absolute truth. Our society wants to say there are many ways to whatever being might be there, but to claim exclusivity is unloving. I don't know; I just can't see that. I don't see that in Scripture and I don't see that in life. I think back to some of the earliest things my mom said to me. They were absolute truths. "Randy, the stovetop is hot. Don't touch it." "I choose to think it is cold, mother. I'm going to put my forehead on it." There's an absolute truth. Heat burns! It's there.

There is an absolute truth you and I live with every day—we are sinners. We can't find the way on our own. We can't travel a road on our own. We don't have truth in us because we are corrupted by our sin. We need truth to come from outside of us, which is Scripture. We need someone else outside of us to be perfect, because you and I can't be perfect. We need someone else outside of us to take the punishment for our sins, and that someone is Jesus! That's why He says "***I am the way and the truth and the life.***" Can you think of anything more comforting in the world?

It's not about you. It's not about your shortcomings or leaving you falling short of what God wants of you. Jesus is the bridge that takes you to what God demands of you. He did it all. Then He sends the Spirit into our hearts (as we'll see coming up at Pentecost) to give us this gift of faith in Him so that we have a prepared heavenly home that is an absolute truth, because it's about Jesus.

So He says, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." Again we see someone react when Philip says "Well, just show us the Father and that will be enough." Again, I'm amazed at the comfort and the patience Jesus shows to Philip after a question like that. I would have said the words He said with a lot more venom. I don't think Jesus did. I think He says "You've seen me." I really think John gets this. Go home and read [John 1](#). "We have seen the glory of the Father because we've seen the glory of the one and only who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." When Jesus says that night to them "I and the Father are one. If you've seen me, you have seen the Father. Look at me and you see the Father and you know what is on the Father's heart." I think John took that to heart, but Jesus just answers patiently with Philip and He says "If you aren't going to believe just because I told you, at least believe on the basis of the things you've seen me

do which reveal the Father; the healings, the miracles, the raising from the dead, the walking on water and that stuff." Jesus did all these things to show that He came from the Father, full of grace and truth. You and I can't do those things. The closest I've come to walking on water is ice fishing, and I don't think that really counts. This is what our God has done for us. He reveals the Father and the Father's love.

Then at the end of this He says something that I find absolutely amazing because you and I go through life at times when Jesus says "I am the way. Stay on the road that is me and I'll bring you safely to your eternal home in heaven" and we can get upset with Him because sometimes this road involves difficulty and trouble and hardship just like He had to go through. We get kind of upset with God and say "God, I want you to show the way that makes life a little bit better on this side of heaven, not just in heaven." That's what you and I at times will do. We are just like Philip and Thomas and these other guys. We don't always get what He says even though He has said it to us over and over and over again. You and I will get mad at Him for not keeping a promise He never ever made to us. And yet He comes and He says to us this incredible thing. To sinners like you and me, He comes and says ***"Very truly I tell you, whoever believes in me will do the works I have been doing, and they will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father."***

We're going to do even greater things than Jesus did?! He raised the dead! How in the world? What in the world is He talking about?! Is that just the fear of what is coming up the next day that is leading Him to say crazy stuff? Or does He actually mean it; that God can do greater things than raising the dead through you?

Think about it. Look at what one of the guys in the Upper Room that heard Jesus say all this wrote in our Second Lesson today. The Holy Spirit led him to write: ***"But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."*** God has chosen this as the only way to share His salvation, to share the One who has called people from darkness to light through you. This is what He has done. He has made you His special possession. He has made you His royal priesthood. It's not someone else's job. It's not a church committee that does this sharing Jesus stuff. He looks you in the eye and says "It's you." When you share Jesus, there will be times you will be rejected just like Jesus was. But there will be times the Holy Spirit will work through your shaking words and your uncertain tone of voice and He will give the gift of faith to someone who didn't have it. For that person, I think that's a little bit better than walking out of the grave after you've been in it for four days. That's what God has called you to do.

The church isn't here to do it in your place. We are here to prepare you and equip you to do it. And we're trying pretty hard to do it. But if you want to do greater things than Jesus did (He has called you to do it), get prepared and always be ready to give an

answer for the hope that you have. ([1 Peter 3:15](#)) That's what Jesus has called you to do. He's not the only way to heaven for you alone. He is the only way to heaven for everyone. Amen.

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