



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 25, 2023

Pastor James Enderle
Principal/Teacher Rick Muchka

Worship and Graduation Service

Lesson: [Ephesians 6:10-18](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 115

Sermon Text: [Joshua 1:7-9](#)

Be Strong and Courageous

Because...

1. You will _____
2. You won't be _____ to do _____.
3. Your God _____ you and _____.
4. Your _____ hasn't _____.

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 and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

It's great to be gathered here today with all the 8th graders. We thank all the family members and friends that are here today to celebrate this graduation.

While it's a graduation and we're going to hear some stories about all your favorite memories and all the things from Morrison, I think what is a little bit interesting is the text that we have for today. While it's talking about a transition, what it is really talking about it not just the past. It is really focusing on what is ahead—the future. At graduation that's a lot of what it is. There are memories of what has happened and all that you've learned and all that you've gone through and your friendships, but you are also looking forward to what is next.

You guys picked a text which talks about being strong and courageous. That's what we are going to focus on, that you need to **be strong and courageous**. But why do you need to do that? Why do you need an encouragement to be strong and courageous?

I think the first part is when we look at what God is telling Joshua, He knew what was ahead for them. This was kind of a transition period. Moses had led the people for a long time and it had been hard for a long time as well. They had gone through the desert. They had been delivered from Egypt, but was it going to get any easier? Here

they are on the edge and getting ready to go into the Promised Land. But it's not going to get any easier. He knew what was ahead for them. God knew that they were going to still have troubles. They were going to have conflict and there was going to be hardship for them ahead. He knew that they were going to have struggles. So as they faced all of these struggles, they needed to be reminded and they needed to know what was ahead. They needed to know that they could trust in God because they knew that it wasn't going to be easy. They knew that there were going to be hardships. *You will face challenges.*

That's no different for you as you graduate. If you ask any of your family members out there if life gets easier after grade school, most of you would probably jump back to grade school. High school is fun, but you have all that drama, you start dating, there are breakups. I see some good faces over there. Real excited for that, right? Surprised you can sit next to the boys and girls that still have cooties, right? But it doesn't get easier. God knows that, so He still wants you to be courageous because it is going to be hard. You know what you've gone through and you know life isn't easy now, but you know it's not going to get any easier. The truth is that we tend to think that we learned a lot. What does that mean? You can do it on your own. The truth is that you can't.

Imagine if Joshua and the Israelites thought that they could do it on their own. They were so afraid of entering the Promised Land. They were outnumbered. The forces were greater and probably one of the most important or the most famous stories is the Battle of Jericho. What was God teaching them there? There is no way that you can do this on your own, and that He was going to deliver them. This is something that you can learn now. You can't do it on your own nor can we, at any age. *You won't be able to do it on your own.*

What is a little bit interesting is a lot of the things that we're hearing in today's sermon are similar things that we have been talking about in our parenting emails. We have to learn our inability that we can't do these things and we have to rely on God. As you go out you have to see that you have to rely on God and the other people that God has put out there for you. But often we think we can, so we lean on our own strength, our own understanding, and we don't get very far.

But we know that God doesn't leave us alone. What does God tell the Israelites to do? What is reminding Joshua? In this section, we heard Him say, ***"Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go."*** Before that, why can they be strong and courageous? What does He say? ***"Have I not commanded you?"*** What is He telling them to do? He says, ***"Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful."*** He's telling you, "You have what you need and I'm going to be with you." You can be strong and courageous because *your God goes with you*

and equips you. Notice what that is saying... while you've gotten a great education here and a great Christian education here, it doesn't say God HAS equipped you but God WILL CONTINUE to equip you.

God has equipped you in the ways that you have that armor. You have that faith. You have the breastplate. You have that belt. You have all of those things that faith and His Word give to you. But if you don't continue to be equipped by staying in that Word, what happens? You won't find that success that God is talking about. He's not talking about earthly success. He's talking about that spiritual success of being at peace and being forgiven because the Lord loves you and is with you and has forgiven you.

When I got this text that this is what you wanted to be your Class Verse, I asked some questions that I sent out to you and had some of you give some answers back to me. I asked some questions, like what makes you afraid? Or what makes you feel that you need to be courageous? If you think about it, if I ask you today in the back, some of you who are older and have gone through more life, what are you afraid of? What do you feel you need to be courageous of? Your answers probably aren't much different.

One of the answers that someone said was being afraid of failure; being afraid of failing and letting themselves down or letting family down. That's something that we all fear. Also, fear of making the wrong choices, even something simple as choosing the wrong classes. There is stress. *What if I don't choose the right classes? What if I don't get into the right college? What if I get into college and I choose the wrong career and then I get out and I don't know what I'm going to do?* There is a lot of fear. As you get into high school, there are going to be so many different things to be fearful of honestly. *What if I don't make the team? What if I get cut from this sport or this music class? What if I don't find the friends that I want to find?* It's hard. But where we know our fear can be silenced is that God goes with us and that He has equipped us to handle all of these things. The biggest way we can do that is by understanding that *your identity hasn't changed.*

For the Israelites, they were the chosen people. God had chosen them and He had given them His Word and they were going to carry that Gospel and that promise of the Savior. They were His people.

You are God's chosen children. From the beginning of class, that was one of the things we talked about—your identity. Hopefully you remember that one. We talked about where you find your identity. What is interesting again is the last email we sent out for parenting. It was talking about your identity. It doesn't change at your age, as you get older, that people struggle where they find their identity. If you are finding your identity in your grades or your friends or all these sorts of different things, as adults you can find your identity in your kids or grandkids or your work, but if you are finding your identity

in anything other than God, if you are seeking your identity from created things, they cannot give you what God can. So yes, parts of your identity have changed.

There were pictures up before, the ones that had pictures of now and a few of you when you were a little bit younger (some of you were like "Oh, not that picture"), but there was also something else. It had your name and your pictures and then it had what school you are going to next. You are no longer going to be a Morrison Zion Lutheran Knight. You are not going to enter these doors day in and day out. Yes, your identity changes because you are all going to be at some different schools, but you are still God's child. Jesus suffered and died for you and has forgiven you. That doesn't change and that will not change. Failure or what people say or a wrong choice, that won't change that identity. You are loved and forgiven.

So when you are worried, when you are wondering *what has happened, who am I, could God forgive me, what have I done*, remember and be in God's Word just, as it says. Keep the Book of the Law always on your lips. Keep God's Word on your lips. Meditate on it day and night. Know and keep that Law and Gospel in your minds and hearts. Study it with each other. As you go out, one of the best times is Youth Group, when you can all come back together. Also Sunday worship. At home with your family, be in God's Word and talk about where maybe you are struggling to find your identity and wondering who you are. As you are in His Word, you are brought back to the truth that you are forgiven. You are loved. And you can go back to knowing that you have that armor of God, that forgiveness and peace and hope that no one can take.

God tells us to be strong and courageous, but it's not about YOUR strength. It's about GOD'S strength. It's about Jesus and what He has done for you. To be honest, today what is the strong and courageous thing to do? To have faith, to practice your faith, to stand for Christianity, to be strong and courageous and stand in that peace and forgiveness and do not be swayed. But you're not doing it on your own and it's not based on your strength. It's based on who God is and what He has done for you. When you are in that Word, you don't have to worry about how strong you are, because you know that God will be with you, to love and protect you and to keep you strong, always, so that you can be strong and courageous. Amen.

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