



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

June 25, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

4th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Numbers 27:15-23](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 100 CW

Second Lesson: [2 Thessalonians 2:16-3:5](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 9:35-10:8](#)

The Holy Ministry is Given Out of Compassion

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: Amen.

In Christ, dear fellow redeemed:

If you go back in the church year a little bit, a few seasons ago we had an Easter celebration, and right before Easter, do you remember what season was right before Easter?—Lent. During Lent we have special services on Wednesdays and at those special services, we read from one of the Gospels of the history of Christ's Passion. Does that sound familiar?—Christ's Passion History. "Passion" there is a word that means the history of Christ's suffering, or history of Christ's suffering and death. What does that have to do with today, besides Christ dying to take away our sins? We are talking about how God gave the ministry out of compassion. "Passion" is the same root there—suffering is there—so you have to figure out what does the "com" at the beginning of it mean?

He gives the Holy Ministry for suffering, to cause suffering, is that what some of you think? He puts us pastors up here just to cause you some suffering? You 7th-8th graders, you usually think that stuff, don't you? You aren't even listening anymore, are you?

The "com" means "with," to suffer with. God suffers with us. His suffering with us, His compassion is much more than just empathy, much more than He just feels bad that we go through stuff. Compassion is suffering with someone as they are going through something and then you are moved to do something about it. We see that in our God. He gave us a perfect world. He gave us holiness, and mankind threw it away. He had compassion because they were like sheep without a shepherd, so He sent His one and only Son into the world to live and die for us. He declared us holy, even though we're

not. He gave us everything He demands of us in His compassion, but He knows we're still on this side of heaven so in compassion, Jesus looked at the people as He wandered around the towns and He saw them like sheep without a shepherd. That's the same thing Moses said in what I read to you in Numbers. Out of His compassion Jesus said, "Pray for more workers in the harvest field." Then He told the apostles, "You're the answer to those prayers." Just like some of you sitting here today, if you are praying for more workers, called full-time Gospel Ministers, you might be the answer to those prayers. He gives that out of compassion because He suffers along with us and He doesn't want us to have that suffering. He wants us to come to faith, to be built up in the faith, to grow in the faith, and then also to live our faith. This is the compassion that caused our God to give the Holy Ministry as a gift to His people.

It's the same kind of compassion that Moses had (in what I read to you from Numbers) on the children of Israel. I find that a little bit fascinating because if you read in Numbers what happened right before what I read to you, God said to Moses, "Hey, come on up this mountain. Take a look over there. That's the holy land. I want you to see it because you aren't going in it." He had led the people 40 years in the wilderness after they had come out of Egypt. All the people, the generations had died in the wilderness, except for the two faithful spies and Moses, at this point in time, and God said to Moses, "You can't go in because you and Aaron sinned against me at the waters of Meribah Kadesh." ([Numbers 27:12-14](#))

If I'm Moses, if Moses was a good American, he would have blamed the Israelites. He would have blamed them for what they did and that it wasn't his fault. They rebelled so he had to let them have it and in his anger, "Yeah, I didn't obey you God, but it's their fault, not my fault." But notice what Moses says. At least what's not recorded for us is any whining, any finger pointing, or any blaming. Instead he says, "Lord, if you aren't going to let me go in with these people, give them a leader because they are like sheep without a shepherd. They are going to wander far away from you if they don't have someone that is pointing them back to God." Can you imagine that kind of love that Moses had for the Israelites? He sees this need and he's not worried about what he is missing. He is worried about the people he had led. That's impressive, isn't it?

God says, "That's a great idea, Moses. Take Joshua, in whom is the spirit of leadership." But also, the Spirit of God had been poured out on him along with 70 elders at one point in time, so they prophesied like Moses did. Joshua was one of the two faithful spies that 40 years earlier had gone into the land. He was the appointed representative of the Tribe of Ephraim because they sent a spy in from each tribe. He had gone in and he and Caleb came back and said, "With the Lord, we can conquer these giants even though we are like grasshoppers." The other guys said, "No, we can't do it." So they had to wander for those 40 years in the wilderness. But Joshua and Caleb, they got to go in. ([Numbers 13](#))

Joshua then was appointed to be leader. And Joshua wasn't just a leader in battles and a leader in war. He had a different relationship with God than Moses did, because Moses spoke to God face to face, as we read in Exodus and so forth. Moses spoke to Him face to face, but notice God says to Moses that he will consult the priest, who will consult the Urim, to let him know when to go out to battle as they conquer the Promised Land and when to come back in. God would guide him. God would direct him. But He wouldn't have the same relationship with him that He had with Moses. He would still be a leader and he was still a spiritual leader for the children of Israel.

When you get to the end of the Book of Numbers and the end of Deuteronomy and eventually to the end of Joshua, after they have conquered the Promised Land, they have the covenant renewal at Shechem. Joshua stands in front of the people and says "Who are you going to serve? Are you going to serve the Lord, who has given you this land flowing with milk and honey, or are you going to serve the gods you brought with you from Egypt? Who are you going to serve?" They said, "We'll serve the Lord." Joshua says, "You can't do it. You aren't faithful. You won't be able to do it. As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." The people said, "We are going to do the same." And they renewed the covenant. He said, "You are witnesses now. You have made this vow before God. You have called on God to witness the truth and punish the lie." ([Joshua 24](#))

Joshua was a spiritual leader, make no mistake about it. He had a concern that obviously he learned from being Moses' right-hand man to be concerned about what happens to other people in their relationship with God. He had compassion. He didn't just say "Oh, that's too bad. They're all going to hell. What's for lunch?" He had compassion. He called on the people very directly, very boldly, and said "You all better stick to God or else you aren't going to be with me in heaven" is the essence of what he was saying.

It's amazing the compassion of Moses to a people that caused him a great deal of problems. The compassion of Joshua, who led God's people faithfully and then it all fell apart during the time of the Judges, after Joshua was gone. But he led God's people faithfully and had compassion on them. It's fascinating.

Okay, pastor, that's great. What does that have to do with me next Tuesday? I don't lead any nation. What does this have to do with anything I'm going to do this next week? Well, the Lord has compassion on you. He gives you those who serve you to build you up in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, who point you to more Jesus, more people, more often, in more places, and who are desperate to have you in heaven with them. God wants you to have that same compassion.

One of the roles of the public ministry is not to be a hired Bible slinger, like a Clint Eastwood spaghetti western (and I know that reference goes over all you young kids but

go back and watch them, they're great). I'm not here to be the Bible slinger who slings passages at Satan in your place. I'm here to prepare you for works of service. Isn't that what [Ephesians 4](#) says? *It was He who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service so that the whole body of Christ is built up as each supporting ligament does its part.* I don't know if you are ACL, MCL, or PCL in God's need, but you are one of His ligaments and He has called you to serve Him faithfully so that the whole body of Christ functions the way He intends. So sometime, I am absolutely certain, God is going to put in front of you the opportunity to have compassion on someone else. Suffer with them because they don't know Christ. Suffer with them because they are going through hardships and heartaches and they aren't focused on Christ. Suffer with them and point them to Jesus as the answer, not to take away all of our difficulty on this side of heaven. That's not what Christianity is about. It's that our God will be there as a source of strength and comfort and purpose and peace as we go through all the garbage that we go through on this side of heaven.

This is why God puts us here. This is why He gives the Holy Ministry, to prepare you for your personal ministry as you go out and interact with people every day, because they are going to listen to you much more than they are going to listen to me. They know you. I'm the hired professional. I'm the Clint Eastwood gun slinger. You are their loving friend, co-worker, or neighbor. Share Jesus with them. This is what God has called us to do.

Are we going to fail? Are we going to miss opportunities? Are we going to say "That's too bad" and then not be moved to any action about it at times? Yes. We're sinners. We sin. That's when we go back to who our God is. Our God is the one who clothed us with the righteousness of Christ at our baptism. Our God is the one who gave us His body and blood on the cross to pay for our sins and gives it to us this day in the Sacrament to say "I love you no matter what." That kind of compassion and mercy on us is what moves us to have compassion on others and then to live for the one who gave His life for us. Amen.

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