



# MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

July 23, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

8<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Isaiah 55:10-13](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 65 CW

Second Lesson: [Acts 18:1-11](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 13:1-9, 18-23](#)

## The Christian is Planted by the Word and Produces Fruit Refreshing Rain that Renews

### God's Word...

1. \_\_\_\_\_ (v.10)
2. \_\_\_\_\_ God's \_\_\_\_\_ (v.11)
3. Brings \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ (v.12)
4. \_\_\_\_\_ (v.13)

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:

I've been in the Morrison area now for a little over four years. I remember back four years (in 2019) we had a really wet year. The farmers even had a hard time getting into the fields to plant and the roads were covered with mud. Do you guys remember that, when farmers were getting in and out? But this year is a little bit different. This is probably the driest year since I've been here in Morrison. We didn't have that week or those days in spring and early summer where it just rained and rained. Everything has been planted and you can see the farmers and everyone kind of watching the weather, hoping those storms come. For some reason this year there are just little, small storms that give water here and there and there. I heard a term for the first time a few weeks ago when someone called a rain a "million dollar rain," that rain that comes at just the right time where the crops are really needing that water to make it. It seems like God is providing that this year though, too. Even though it's dry, water comes at just the right time to keep the plants growing and healthy.

We know what it is like to be in a dry place and needing that water to keep the plants growing. If you've ever been out on a hot day, you know what it is like when you are hot and humid and you need that water and how refreshing it is.

We see that in God's Creation, how water refreshes and brings life and it is so needed. In our text today, what God is telling us is that His Word is very similar. His Word is a **refreshing rain that renews**. As we look at the words of Isaiah, you can imagine and feel what it's like to be in God's Word. If you've been away from God's Word or not around it or if you weren't a Christian at some time, how refreshing God's Word is! We are going to see how Isaiah speaks to that and we are going to see four different things that God's Word does for us.

As Isaiah writes, he is a prophet whose book is pretty unique. A lot of the prophets spoke a lot of judgment and a lot of their books were Law. Isaiah has that in his book but it is so filled with Gospel. It's the truth and some beautiful pictures looking forward to Jesus/the Messiah. A few chapters just before this, in [Chapters 52 and 53](#), we see the picture of that Suffering Servant, of Jesus, who would go to the cross and He would be perfect for us and we would give Him our sins. The iniquities of all were laid on Him and He gives us His righteousness. We see that's what that message is all about that Isaiah got to share; the message that God loves us and forgives us through Jesus and what He did on the cross.

As we get into [Chapter 55](#), he explains a little bit that even though that Word is out there and the knowledge of the Messiah/Savior is there, not everyone listens to it. I'm going to read a little bit of the context, the first few verses of [Chapter 55](#) so you get the idea of where we are as Isaiah writes. It begins talking about water. He says, ***"Come, all you who are thirsty, come to the waters; and you who have no money, come, buy and eat! Come, buy wine and milk without money and without cost."*** This Gospel is free is what he is saying. ***"Why spend money on what is not bread, and your labor on what does not satisfy? Listen, listen to me, and eat what is good, and you will delight in the richest of fare. Give ear and come to me; listen, that you may live. I will make an everlasting covenant with you, my faithful love promised to David. See, I have made him a witness to the peoples, a ruler and commander of the peoples. Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendor." Seek the Lord while he may be found; call on him while he is near. Let the wicked forsake their ways and the unrighteous their thoughts. Let them turn to the Lord, and he will have mercy on them, and to our God, for he will freely pardon. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts."*** In those words, you see a little contrast of the unrighteous and the righteous and Isaiah is calling out, "Come! This is free! Just come and listen. Soak up this water," but understanding that many don't want that. There is a contrast.

So then we have to be reminded that even though we share and God's Word goes out, he says those words that "His ways are not our ways and His thoughts are not our

thoughts," things don't always go the way that we plan. We know that in life. We know that God works very differently than we do. It's the same as His Word goes out, too. His Word is going to accomplish what He wants. We're going to see how God's Word works a little different maybe than what we think or we might want all the time.

He says this in [Verse 10 of Isaiah 55](#): ***"As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth."*** Here he is drawing that picture of what His Word does as he shows the rain and snow come down and water. What does it do? Just as water and snow cause the earth to bud and flourish, His Word goes out and gives life. His Word gives us life and it gives life to this world that is in so much need of that Gospel truth. What were we, what are we without God and the Gospel? We're lost! We're condemned. We are on a path to hell! We are lost in our sin and lost in our own ways thinking, "I can do it on my own." But God and His Word comes to us and tells us no. There is a different way, different than your ways, and it comes through faith; faith in Jesus that He died for us and forgives us and that it is through grace. This grace gives us life because it tells us we did nothing to deserve our salvation. We can do nothing to earn our salvation. It's all free and a gift. What better life-giving message is there than to say you are loved and forgiven? You are loved by God, forgiven through Jesus, and that gives us life now but also life eternal. There is so much else in this world. So many other competing religions or thoughts or ideas and so much of it is empty. So much of it drags us down and makes it all about you and what you do, but *God's Word gives us life*.

As His Word goes out, what do we see? He says, ***"It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it."*** As the waters come down, the waters always water the earth. It accomplishes the purpose it goes down for. As *God's Word* goes out, it also accomplishes His purpose. It accomplishes *God's will*. That is to save us, to tell us that God loves us and is with us, and to forgive us. It gives us hope. It helps us to know who He is and to guide us day in and day out.

As that goes out though, we have to wonder sometimes, is His Word doing anything? Maybe you share the Word over and over again with a friend or a loved one and maybe you start doubting. "Is it doing anything? Does God's Word work?" Much like when we plant a seed, sometimes it takes some time for that seed to grow up. We have to water and nourish it and know that even if I don't see the process or I don't see the results right away, God is still working.

Yet while God's Word does cause things to nourish and grow, have you ever seen the powerful waters of a flood? God's Word, the water can also be somewhat devastating to those who refuse, those that we saw in Corinth who rejected Paul, or as we saw in the

Gospel lesson with the Parable of the Sower, those who are distracted or want nothing to do with it, that hard road, it bounces off. God's Word is also like a flood that brings judgment and says even though you don't want anything to do with it, there is a truth. There is heaven and hell. So this water that nourishes can also accomplish God's purpose of bringing judgment; the same judgment that tells us that we are sinners in need of a Savior, it says that those who don't want God, that don't seek Jesus, that don't want anything to do with His Gospel, they are lost.

But there is hope. Hope that we continue to share because of how important this Word is. [Verse 12](#) says: ***"You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands."*** When you see that picture, what it kind of reminds me of is the Disney movies with the princess in the forest and the birds are singing. It's like the forest is alive. That's not exactly what God is saying, but He is saying there is so much joy. There is so much peace that comes from God's Word. Without it, it's hard! You always ask "How does someone who loses a loved one, how do they handle it without God?" The things that give us peace and joy, that's what *God's Word* does. It *brings* us peace and joy and hope and forgiveness. So in the midst of everything that is going on in the world, whatever you might be facing, when you have God and His Word, you have true peace. You have true joy.

Maybe you've gone through a difficult time, maybe a loss of a loved one, a loss of a job, or many of the difficult things that are going on and you do have that joy and peace, watch how other people see that and wonder, "How can you be joyful? How can you have joy at this difficult time?" I think a thing that helps us is when we look at the waters of a flood. Water can come down and as it can come and have a devastating power, it can wash away some of the things that are most dear to people; a house, a home, all those earthly blessings that we sometimes put our hopes in or find our value in. What can happen? It could be gone in an instant. Yes, those things can bring joy and peace to people, but it's nothing like the joy and peace that can't be taken from you. The spiritual joy and peace we have of knowing Jesus and His love; to know that as I have failed over and over again, as I struggle with sin day in and day out, whatever that might be for you as you struggle, failing as a parent, yelling at your kids again, or struggling at work, struggling with that temptation that comes again and again and you say "Ugh! How can anyone love me? How can I be forgiven?" God says, "You are! You are loved and forgiven and you can have that joy and peace every day." Being in His Word reminds us of that over and over again.

If you've been out of the Word, it's like being out in that summer heat. Here a lot of people talk about humidity. I grew up in Kansas City where about this time of the year it's about 95 degrees every day and humid, so it feels like about 105 degrees outside. You get so warm, but how refreshing that drink of cold water is. That's what God's Word is for us, that refreshing water we need more and more. But if you don't go to it,

if you're not getting refreshed in that water, what happens? That dehydration, that lack of being in God's Word can drive you away and cause you to question and lose a lot of hope and peace. But being in His Word gives us that over and over and over again.

As we have that peace and joy, what will happen? It says in [Verse 13](#): ***"Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."*** This is telling us that *God's Word produces fruit*. We saw that in the Parable that as that seed is planted, it will produce a harvest.

If you look at our garden over there, you'll see I'm not exactly a green thumb. I'm kind of new to a lot of gardening and growing. The thing that is growing the best, Kurt Voster transplanted some raspberries for us that are delicious and there are tons of them. So we have raspberries going pretty well. Even though I don't know a lot about gardening and farming, I do know something. This says here, ***"Instead of the thornbush will grow the juniper, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow."*** It talks about God's Word watering and coming down, but if you water a thornbush or a brier, does that turn into a juniper or myrtle? These plants that we don't want anything to do with, these thorns, become something beautiful and youthful. That's not something I can do on my own. That's not even something I can do with my plants, but God can do this. God can do that with you and with me. Through His Word He creates that faith in us so that we thornbushes are a new creation, ones who can produce fruits, and love and serve one another.

The question might be how much fruit, or what type of fruit? It doesn't tell us or demand you must have this much fruit. The Parable says there is a harvest of 30, 60, 100. Different people will produce different fruits. But when you are in God's Word, you will produce fruit. I think some of that is that joy and peace. If I have that joy and peace of being in God's Word and knowing I am loved and forgiven, that will flow out to others. I'll treat my family, my co-workers, my friends with that same joy and peace. The hope is that I can share that joy and peace and bring others to have that same joy and peace that they are missing.

When you ask why it is important we share that fruit and want others to know of that joy and peace, think about what this says. ***"This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, that will endure forever."*** The stakes here are not small. We are talking about heaven or hell. For fruit, it comes and goes. It is seasonal. My daughter keeps asking when the apples are going to be ready. It's a short time. But the fruit that God produces, the faith that God creates in us, the results are eternal. As we share that Word, that Word that works in us and the Word that as we share it goes out and works in others, we're snatching people from the grasp of hell and bringing them to eternal life. We know that it's not our power. We just get to share the Word and God works through the Holy Spirit and works faith in them just as He did in us.

So don't give up! Maybe you have that friend who you think is not going to believe or you have shared with over and over again, but God's Word does work. Have patience and continue to nurture that faith, sharing God's Word and trusting that God can work. If God can work faith in you, that miracle, He can work faith in your loved ones and friends as well.

We know that God's Word is so refreshing. It gives us life. It gives us true hope and peace. It produces that fruit in us. But most of all, it gives us that eternal life; a hope that isn't just for a season, like fruit, but a hope that lasts forever. Amen.

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