



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

July 30, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

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

First Lesson/Sermon Text: [Joel 3:12-16](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 18 CW

Second Lesson: [1 Peter 4:1-8](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43](#)

### **The Christian Lives as Wheat among the Weeds The Christian Lives in View of the Coming Harvest**

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 our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus: Amen.

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

Did you ever notice in Scripture how often God uses pictures for things? Do you ever wonder why He just doesn't say something straight out, like Jesus with the Parable of the Wheat and the Weeds we hear today, or like this one that talks about swinging a sickle and about a wine press? Why not just say "Hey, Judgment Day is coming. You're either going to heaven or hell"? Why not say it more directly? Why all these pictures? Even sometimes with very, very direct statements, you and I don't pay attention. At least I don't.

This morning I was talking with Mrs. Kuchenbecker before the service. Two or three times she said to me "Now remember, after the first, hymn give me time to get to the piano before we start the liturgy." So what do I do? I barrel right out here and have everyone stand up and then we have to wait for Brenda to get across the balcony, and you're all wondering if I had stage fright and didn't want to sing, right? She was pretty direct and it just went in one ear and out the other and it puddled right at my feet evidently.

I think maybe God uses these pictures at times because He is using pictures of things that we see regularly in our life. You and I, we don't see the sickle as often anymore I suppose, unless it's a decoration, but the idea of harvest, in certain areas of our country the idea of stomping on the grapes and the vats overflowing and things like that and this harvest and this production, I suppose for a very real reason God uses these pictures

so that when we see them year after year, season after season, the new self in us (the part of us that loves God) thinks "Hey, there is a Bible picture about this. What was God trying to remind me of?"

Today we see that as we consider that **the Christian lives as wheat among weeds**, we are reminded in this reading to (as a Christian) live always **in view of that harvest that is coming** at the end of the age. I know we talk about it at the end of the church year. In End Times, we look at the end of the age. We talk about it Advent for a Sunday or so, but really every day of our lives as Christians should be in some way, shape or form in view of this knowledge that this world isn't everything. There is more than this world that awaits us, for everyone. But for us as believers, He reminds us He is our stronghold, He is our refuge, and one day He'll take us to be with Him in heaven. But there is a day of judgment coming for those who don't know Jesus.

So what does that mean for us, to live in view of the Judgment? Joel is one of the Minor Prophets, called Minor because the books were shorter, not because they were less important. They were just shorter. You could fit all 12 of the Minor Prophets on one scroll, whereas the other Major Prophets were longer. I suppose if I had lived back then I would be a Minor Prophet because I'm not that wordy. But that's kind of how they divide them. And Joel, earlier in his writing, had used another picture. There were locusts that had come and devoured some of the harvest. He used that real event to remind the people that there is an enemy that is always attacking you, trying to get you to turn away from God, so live in view of the harvest and know that God one day is going to send His angels, as Jesus said, and swing the sickle. The nations will be gathered in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat literally means "the Lord Judges," so the "valley where the Lord will judge." ([Joel 1:1-3:11](#)) **"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!"** The Lord Judges; it's the same picture of that. There is going to come a day when God will judge and He is going to swing the sickle and harvest everyone.

Then it says kind of a strange phrase. **"Come, trample the grapes, for the winepress is full and the vats overflow—so great is their wickedness!"** I know a lot of you love wine and the idea that grapes are a picture of wickedness might upset you, but that's what God is saying. You might like your wine, but you don't want to be this grape, because it's saying on Judgment Day they are going to stomp the grapes because **so great is their wickedness!** It's a picture that is used regularly in Scripture. It's in Jeremiah. It's in Isaiah. It's in [Revelation 14](#). The winepress is God's wrath, and His wrath is stomping on these grapes. So He's telling us the day is coming when those who don't know the promised Savior (when Joel was writing this), those who don't believe God would send a Savior, are going to be judged. For us, we know who the Savior is. For those who aren't connected to Jesus, the day is coming when that is going to happen. He paints a bleak picture. **"The sun and the moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine."** That's a picture of what happens after this world.

Unbelievers in hell no longer have any blessing from God, including the blessing of the sun on your face. And in heaven, we won't have a sun because we're told the Lamb at the center of the throne is our Light and gives us light always. So the sun and the moon and the stars will be darkened. It won't be as we know it now. It will be completely other, completely different than I can even begin to imagine right now. This is what our God tells us. It's pretty straightforward. The day is coming when those who are wicked will be judged and those who are wicked but have had their sins forgiven through faith in Christ will find refuge in Christ and be taken to heaven.

So if you're going to live in view of that, that picture that he paints for us, what does that mean? I know how my sinful nature at times wants to view "live in view of the Judgment." My sinful nature at times wants to think "Well good, they are finally going to get theirs!" Do you ever think that? "The day is coming when the Lord is going to let them have it! I sure hope it comes soon because they need to have it!" That might be what my sinful nature thinks when someone irritates me, cuts me off, does whatever to someone who dares to have 12 items in a 10-item checkout line that I might want God's wrath poured out on them immediately sometimes, but this isn't the picture our God wants us to have! What is the picture our God would want us to have in view of the coming harvest and knowing there are those that we love, that we know, maybe those that we don't even like, but all these people are either going to be in heaven or hell? How does He want us to view the people that we know aren't going to be with us in heaven? Not "Good, they are getting theirs," but "Lord, help me to love them like you love them." Jesus came and lived and died for them just as certainly as He did for you and for me. You might say "Yeah, but He loves us more because we're here in church on a Sunday morning." God loves everyone.

What did Jesus say as He was on the way to the cross? "Jerusalem, Jerusalem how long I have longed to gather you like a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing." ([Matthew 23:37](#)) Even as He is on the way to carry your sins to the cross, He is grieving the people that weren't going to listen.

He wants us to love in that way. That in view of the coming harvest, and we know there is only a limited amount of a time that God has given us, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The day will come when He will return, or the day will come when He will call us out of this world or call someone else out of this world, and if they don't know Christ at that point in time, it's grape stomping time for them. I don't want that for them. I hope you don't want that for them. I hope you want them to be right where you are: the Lord is a stronghold for His people. He is a refuge. That sounds a little like [Psalm 46](#). The basis of a mighty fortress is our God. ***God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea...***

When we live as wheat among weeds, there are going to be challenges. There is going to be difficulty. There is going to be heartache. We'll be attacked (as Peter described) because we don't join in with others at times. Others will view us as strange and weird, but we're doing it because we live in the stronghold that is the forgiveness of Jesus Christ. We know that God is our refuge as we go through all these difficulties and all these heartaches on this side of heaven. He still is our refuge, a place where we find peace, where we find safety, where we know we are loved. We have that! Life is hard enough on this side of heaven having that, isn't it?

Think of all the people that don't have it. I hope the Lord gives me and gives you a heart that loves those people like He loves those people. And that we make it a priority to know our God better so that we can share our God with those who don't know Him. Not because we have to but because He has already opened heaven to us, forgiven us, and because we want other people to be in that refuge with 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.