



## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

August 13, 2023 (Typed from Thursday, August 10, 2023)

Pastor Randy Ott

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

First Lesson: [Genesis 41:41-49](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 42-43

Second Lesson: [1 Timothy 4:4-5](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 14:13-21](#)

Sermon Text: [1 Corinthians 2:1-5](#)

### The Christian Trusts God to Provide I Ain't So Eloquent!

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, through our Lord and Savior Jesus: Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow redeemed:

Twenty-one years and fifteen weeks ago this coming Sunday (Aug. 13), I read those same passages to you all. That was the first sermon I preached when I came to Morrison. It was based on that text as an introductory sermon. Last Sunday (as we were cleaning up from the funeral), I said to someone "I'm going to preach on the same thing I preached 21 years ago. I'm sure you remember." They said "Oh, yeah, I remember." I said "You don't remember what I said this morning! What are you talking about?" They said "I remember! You talked about Randy putting money in the offering plate." I said "Great, you got the first two minutes of the sermon. Wonderful." I don't remember what I said 21 years and 15 weeks ago, but I do remember that this is what I wanted to talk about and thought *"As long as the Lord puts me here at Morrison, this is what I want to focus on. It's not about me. It's not about you. It's not about how smart I am, you are, or anywhere in between. It's about knowing Jesus."*

That's what Paul stressed with the Corinthians when he was under attack. He said "I didn't come to you with wise and powerful words or powerful speech." Power of speech is when he says *"persuasive words"* and what he was talking about when he came to those Greek people. He didn't come with and rely on the oratory skill which he did possess. He was eloquent. What he stressing is "I didn't come relying on that, even though I could have done that" because they were under attack now by some people

who were false teachers who were very persuasive and trained in oratory skill. He says "That's not what it's all about. It's all about Jesus."

It's no different for us here today. It's no different for us at Morrison. It's up for (I suppose) debate on how well I've done in 21+ years of making sure it's all about Jesus. As a sinful human being, I'm sure I screwed it up more than once. But I think that's what I've always told all of you, haven't I? We're all sinners. We're all broken. We all screw up. We ain't none of us perfect. That's why we don't rely on our abilities, our eloquence. We rely on Jesus Christ. So **I ain't so eloquent**. Ain't nobody surprised to hear that though, are you?

Paula (wife) is here tonight. How long did it take you, about a year, to give up on trying to correct my grammar for my sermons? She'd come home and say "You said that wrong." I don't know—that's how I talk. She gave up. I'm not so eloquent. It's not like I know English that well. I talk the way I talk. But that's okay, isn't it? Because it's not how well I talk. It's the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Gospel.

When you share your faith with someone else, it's not about "Well, I didn't go to the seminary for four years. I can't do this." No, it's about the power of the Holy Spirit working through fools like us that ain't so eloquent. That's what God does. A challenge for us is to remember it's not about us. It's about Jesus. So how are we going to do that? I'll share with you one of the ways I've tried to remind myself the last number of years about it's not about me, it's all about Jesus.

I think twice in this calendar year someone has come to me and said "Pastor" (evidently they don't like singing hymns), "Pastor, during the hymn right before the sermon you always go and stand back there (behind the altar) and look up at the wall. Then you turn around and look at the back of the thing (the altar) and you kind of smile. You got a joke written there or something?" This is what someone asked me. No. What I am looking at is these two things. And what I am remembering is the one I couldn't get hung up during the hymn, the "Dust to Dust." We have it sitting down here on Ash Wednesday. We come up and put ashes on our thumb and put it one there. Dust we are and to dust we will return.

On Ash Wednesday, it's this reminder we are sinners. This isn't our eternal home. And we have no claim before God on our own. We are dust. We will return to dust one day, unless Jesus comes back first. There ain't none of us that can rise to the level God wants us to. I've always thought of that hanging up there all through Lent with all those crosses on it, all those ashes, and then hanging it up there after the Sundays of Easter. I go picture that every Sunday and remind myself, "Randy, you're dust. You're just as much a sinner as everyone you're preaching to, so don't get on any high horse and act

like 'why aren't you people more like me.'" Ain't none of you need to be more like me. You just need to be more like Jesus. That's what Paul said and I hope that's what I've tried to teach you.

So then I look at these two things (sword of the Spirit and a fortress). We hang them up at Reformation time. Amazing how I can handle these stone medallions so easily during the hymn. Weren't you just impressed? It's pink insulation. Just carved and then painted. It looks awesome, doesn't it? But during Reformation it's hung up. Why? A mighty fortress is our God; a trusty shield and weapon. You know, from the hymn. The one I look at first is this one (Dust to Dust) and I remind myself we're all dust. So another thing you've got that works with the dust that you are and the dust of the people you are speaking to is the sword of the Spirit. That's the message God has given us to go on the offensive against Satan. I tend to view every sermon, every class in a sense as a battle of Satan.

When I was playing football way back in high school, I used to pace a lot but during the introduction of other teams. I tried to go out halfway onto the field to try to scare and intimidate the guy I was going to block. I just loved that kind of stuff. I'd pace so much that Coach came up to me once and said "Randy, you look like a caged animal before kickoff." That's kind of how I felt. The only time in life I've come close to that feeling since is when I'm standing in there (Pastor's room) putting a gown on because I'm going to go out and I'm going to tell people about Jesus. And I'm going to remind them they don't deserve His love, but His love is theirs and His love has been entrusted to them to share with others. Ain't none of us good enough to stand before our God except that our God made us good enough.

That's why Paul didn't come with wise and persuasive words. That's why he only wanted to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified. That's the strength. Our standing before God is all the strength of Jesus. Our living for God in sharing Jesus with others, swinging the sword of the Spirit is all about the power of Jesus. It's not about how smart we are, how much we know and this and that. Whatever we know, what you know to be true, that's what God has called you to share with others about Jesus.

So when you do it or when I do it here, we are really engaged in a battle. We've got the shield of God's love and forgiveness in Christ protecting us, but we've got the sword of the Spirit to swing with all our might. It's not how wise we are when we speak. It's not how good we talk. It's about telling other people God loved them so much, He sent His own Son into the world to live and die for them.

Then I look at that one (a fortress). I remind myself the only thing you've got to give people inside that fortress or behind this shield is that sword of the Spirit, so don't get in

its way. Try and say it clearly. Try to say it concisely. Try to say it in a way that it will maybe stick in people's minds for a time but in ways that will relate to them in their daily life.

I was talking with someone this week about how nervous I still get. It says in there, it talked about, what did Paul say? "I come to you with fear and trembling." Paul, Paul was the apostle Paul! Why would he have fear and trembling? I think about when I still have fear and trembling. I had it last Sunday. I have fear and trembling before every, every, every funeral service because I always think at the funeral services there are going to be people there that don't know the Gospel very well, who have drifted away from it, or who might have this wrong notion about how you get inside the fortress, that you've got to do good and be good. Doing good and being good isn't going to get us God's love. We do good and we want to be good because God loved us first. It's our response to Him, not the cause of Him loving us. Our living for God is the result of Him loving us. But a lot of people got it backwards. A lot of people think God won't love you unless you are doing and being good and all this karma and all this other stuff that we tend to think. The last thing I want when I die and face Jesus is for Him to say "Yay! You know what? It was all about karma." I don't want to get what I deserve. What I deserve is hell! I want to get what He won for me—that's heaven! So we point people to that. And at a funeral I get so nervous because I don't want to get in the way of the Gospel.

You and I, we can't improve on the Gospel. Our eloquence will never improve on the Gospel. That's what Paul is saying here. But you and I can get in its way. You and I can say it in a way that's maybe cloudy or fuzzy. And I don't know how many times I've stood here or there and preached a sermon that I thought barked like a dog! I mean, I thought it was terrible! I expected you all to hand me dog biscuits as I walked out because that sermon just barked! And someone will say "Oh, that was great, Pastor! That's exactly what I needed to hear!" Part of me wants to say "Were you sleeping? That was awful!" But then part of me remembers it's not about how good you think it is. It's about how the Spirit works through the message of the Gospel.

And even at times when you and I don't speak it the way we wish we would have, the Spirit still works through the simple message that we are forgiven in Christ because of Christ, through the power of the Spirit working in Word and Sacrament. We don't deserve it. We can't earn it. But God has poured it out on us so freely and so lovingly. And even though at times we might, we might mess it up, and the devil will tell us "Don't ever try that again! You messed that up!" Well, God still works. God works through people who ain't so eloquent. He's done it for thousands of years. And you and I can trust God to provide and keep doing it for thousands of years more or until whenever Christ comes back, whichever comes first.

I don't know what it's going to be, but I know you don't need me. You don't need Pastor Enderle. You need Jesus. That's what you need. And you can trust God to provide you to always have someone. To get to hell ain't going to overcome God's church. That's what Jesus told us and I'll trust Him. God will provide. He'll provide someone to share the message of Christ when you need to hear it. And sometimes He'll provide you when someone else needs to hear it. So don't tell me you ain't so eloquent. I've proved to you, you ain't got to be eloquent. The greatest compliment I think I've ever gotten as a pastor wasn't about how I came trembling, you know, because of belly fat. It was about how I'm down to earth. And I better be because that's where we live and that's where we share Christ, and that's where you can share Christ. Amen.

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