



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

September 17, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

Festival of Friendship

First Lesson: [Proverbs 17](#) (*selected verses*)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 133-134 CW

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Philippians 4:4-9](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 9:35-38](#)

Jesus is Your Perfect Friend

1. He is _____ with you. (_____)
2. You can _____ with Him.
3. He gives _____ and _____.

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:

When you think about the good friends you have in life, what is it that separates them from the people who are not your friends? What is special about those close friends that it makes you want to go camping with them, to go travel with them, to go have dinner with them, to go to sporting events with them? There is something different. You could have all these people you choose to hang out with, but those close friends, those good friends, those are the ones you are willing to go away from your technology and all the special things and maybe go to where you are going to get rained in and kind of have a miserable time but you're still going to have fun with those people. There is certainly a difference in our life with those close friends, those good friends that we have, and maybe those people that aren't our closest friends. We see that God has given us good friends. What they can bring to us is such a blessing of joy, laughter, companionship. There are so many things that good friends bring to us.

As we look at what Paul writes to us today, we are going to see that God gives us a perfect friend. While we have many good friends in this life, we know that just like us, they can fall short. We are imperfect. We are sinful. We are not always perfect friends and they are not perfect friends. But God has given us a Perfect Friend, in Jesus. We will see what makes Him unique and special and what that means for us in our life today.

As Paul is writing the Book of Philippians, it's such a unique and special book because Paul writes this book and if you remember where he is, he is in prison. But the theme of

the book is really about joy and rejoicing. That tells you something right away. You can be in this situation, this difficult situation, but he is saying your circumstances don't have to tell everything about how you feel and how you view everything. You can still have joy in difficulty. Why?

He starts out and says this in the first few verses: ***Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*** He tells us to rejoice, not just once. He said, ***I will say it again: Rejoice!*** Rejoice always. And he says ***Do not be anxious about anything.*** Does that seem very realistic? Rejoice always. Don't be anxious about anything. He is telling us we can do this because the Lord is near. God is with you.

Why does he have to remind us to rejoice and rejoice again and to not be anxious? Because we are anxious and because we have such a hard time rejoicing. It's so easy for us to pick at this and that and that. It seems like as soon as we're happy with one thing, the joy of that new thing or that happy situation fades with the news of something new or just time. We struggle so much to rejoice. It's important that we see who Jesus is and why He is a good friend, so he tells us these things to rejoice always and to not be anxious because we know that we are going to have those times.

Jesus is real with you. Isn't that the type of friend you want? A friend who is real with you? When you have a spot on your shirt at work, do you want that friend that doesn't say anything? Or your hair is all messed up and you get home and, "Why didn't anyone say anything?" Even though it's hard and a little embarrassing, you want that friend who is actually going to point out what is wrong. Jesus does this. He points out and says we need to confess. We are sinners. All have fallen short. It's the truth.

We are sinful, but then He also says that we live in this sinful world. He comes and says "I forgive you and I love you." But does that mean that a life as a Christian, knowing Jesus and being forgiven, that as soon as I believe, "Life is easy"? No. Jesus also gives us proper expectations as He is real with us. He says "When you believe in me you have to deny yourself and take up your cross." Our sinful nature wants to put ourselves first and be selfish. Think about when you first become a Christian, you are not so concerned about what God thinks and you're not too concerned about those Ten Commandments. Then after you are a Christian, life gets harder because you have these things of how to please God and how to love others. So we have to put that sinful nature and hear God's Word and let the Holy Spirit work in us so that we can glorify God. That's hard! We have to deny ourselves.

But then He also says this about the world. What did the people of the world say and do to Jesus? They hated Him. They put Him on the cross. They crucified Him. He says "If the world hates me, what do you think they'll do to you? They'll hate you." So life as

a Christian is not an easy one. We have difficulties. We have troubles. We have to deal with our own sinful nature and the sin of the world. But notice that we are not supposed to be afraid or fearful or hopeless and filled with anxiety. In fact, he says to rejoice always! Let your gentleness be clear.

When it comes to this and expectations, I heard another pastor (a pastor that went to heaven recently, Timothy Keller) talking about these verses and his church is in New York. He said when you get in a cab in New York and another cab hits you from behind (two cabs get in an accident), what happens? The first one drives off. The second one drives off. No one gets out. They keep on going. Why? In New York City, accidents like that happen all the time. If you are in Green Bay or De Pere or Manitowoc and someone hits you, would your gentleness be shown? Not at all, right? We'd be furious! Our expectations are "those things don't happen." But in our life as a Christian in this world, our expectation should be "sin happens." I commit it and other people are going to sin against me. It doesn't excuse it. It doesn't say it's okay. But should we be surprised at sin? Not at all.

So how can we rejoice and be gentle? He says this about when things are difficult. In Verse 6: ***Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*** You might think about some of the friends that you have and you could probably call them at any time of the day or any time at night. You maybe even have some family members that you consider some of your best friends. You know that they will listen at any time. But you still know that there are times when you are at work and they are at work, or in the middle of the night, it may be something that they don't have control over and it's hard. You don't know who to talk to. The truth is Jesus is our Perfect Friend because *you can always talk with Him*. Whatever is on your heart, whatever is going on in your life, you can go to Him and share. If you read the Psalms, it's not just saying you can only share the good things. The Psalms are people pouring out their hearts and crying out "God, why?! This world is unjust!" We can cry out and say "Why are these things happening?"

But notice what it also says about how we present those prayers and requests. It says ***with thanksgiving***. If we do a survey and ask how you feel your prayer life is, I guess most of us would probably raise our hand and say "I could probably improve my prayer life." Most of the time, what our prayer life involves are those requests. "God, can you give me this? Can you help me with this thing?" What we are often lacking is that thanksgiving, that adoration—praising God for who He is and what He has done.

Again, if you want to turn to the Psalms and turn to a Psalm like [Psalm 103](#), you can live in the things that God has done for you. We can be thankful even for difficulties. That's unique. As Christians, we can look at our life and see that He brings (sometimes allows) challenges and difficulties into our life, but what do we know? God has loved us and forgives us and has heaven in store for us. So these things are not without purpose or

planning. God loves you. So when things are hard, we can even thank Him. We can say “God, I know you have a purpose. Help me through these things. Help me see your purpose. Help me be gentle in this situation. Help me show you in these situations.” We can do all this through prayer, but as we talk to Him, it’s an important thing to remember that He can talk to us at any time, too.

When you are anxious, when you are fearful, what can you do? Turn to His Word. Turn to where Jesus speaks to you and He gives you that peace. Sometimes our prayers are empty. Sometimes our life is filled with anxiety because we are not letting Jesus speak to us. Yes, we can talk to Him, but sometimes, let Him talk to you. Be filled up in that Gospel. Be filled up in His love for you. I think we will be more thankful. We will be able to understand what He has given us as well.

What He promises us is not just a temporary thing. After talking about the prayers and petitions, it says: ***And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*** He’s already said to rejoice, but now he says this peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts. It will help you understand. Understand what? That *He gives eternal peace and joy.*

When you are with your friends, you go camping, you go on a trip, and sometimes it feels like you don’t want that time to end. It’s filled with joy, filled with laughter, and you choose to go with those people instead of sometimes when you HAVE to go with family and sometimes families are a little more difficult. But even with friends, what sometimes happens? Sometimes there are quarrels, disagreements, and sometimes you even need a break from your friends. Again, they aren’t perfect. Even though God gives us a taste of that joy with friends, it’s nothing compared to that peace and joy that God gives us.

He tells us: ***Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. And the God of peace will be with you.*** Noble, right, lovely, admirable, praiseworthy, what are those things? We can see that peace and joy that God gives us and those things cannot be taken away.

If you want to break down a little bit what peace and joy are—joy is the opposite of hopelessness. I can be sad. I can be in a difficult time. I can have a loved one die, but I’m not hopeless because I know God is helping in those situations. Even when a loved one dies, I know that Jesus is with them and if they are a believer, they are in heaven and they are in a better place—with their Savior. We are not without hope. No matter what you face in this life, you are not without hope when you have Jesus.

What is peace? It is the absence of anxiety. Not saying that in this life you will not be anxious because, truthfully, we all are anxious at times. It happens. It's this natural feeling. But over and over again, God is telling us "You do not need to be anxious. I have this"—that peace of God which transcends all understanding. God so loved the world, that He gave His one and only Son. He loves you so much to give you eternal life? What can He not take care of? This is a friend who will not leave, a friend who has done everything for you.

He came to live among us. He knows what it is like to be one of us. He knows what it is to be betrayed, for everyone to turn their backs on Him. He even knows what it is like for God to turn His back on Him. That's what happened on the cross as God put all the sins of the world on Him so that He could suffer hell for you. Then He died, defeated death and rose again to remind you that even the thing that every person is going to have happen someday—death—we do not have to fear. We can have the assurance that we have life eternal, an eternal peace and joy.

Even in this life we can have peace and joy with Christ. He forgives our sins. He helps us get through difficult times. He helps us in our friendships. But more than anything, He gives us eternal peace and joy where, in heaven, we will have no more sin, no more sorrow. So we cling onto that forgiveness now and the peace and joy we have now. But we look forward to the eternal peace and joy we will have, knowing that Jesus truly is our Friend. A friend who gives us all that we need and has done everything 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.