



# MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

October 1, 2023  
18<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost

Pastor James Enderle

First Lesson: [Jonah 4:5-11](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 27 CW

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Romans 9:6b-16](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 20:1-16](#)

## Our God... Examples of Mercy

1. We \_\_\_\_\_ we want \_\_\_\_\_.
2. I \_\_\_\_\_ it all about \_\_\_\_\_.
3. What if \_\_\_\_\_ was \_\_\_\_\_?
4. \_\_\_\_\_ isn't \_\_\_\_\_, He is \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Through \_\_\_\_\_, He has \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_.

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:

You can hear it yelled pretty often on a Sunday afternoon or evening, Saturdays, probably Fridays too (during a football game), the words "That's not fair!" as a referee misses a call. Usually it's a holding or a penalty down the field. The wide receiver is getting tackled before the ball gets there and it seems like the refs kind of ignore it. "It's not fair!!" But then what happens? It gets reversed and your team benefits from the non-call. How do you feel about that? Are you saying "It's not fair! You should call that!?" Not really, right?

We often like to think about things being fair, but as we look at what God tells us today, we are going to see that we know that the world isn't fair. And even though we tend to think we want it to be fair, we know it's going to be a good thing that God isn't fair, that He is more than fair, that He is merciful.

As Paul writes to the Romans, he is going to give us some **examples of mercy** to show us how we are saved and how we are loved by God. He is going to use a pretty difficult section of Scripture. When Paul writes to the Romans, he is writing to a church that he has never been to before. It's a unique letter because most of the other churches he had been to. He usually started the churches, so they knew so much of the Gospel. But

here he lays out the whole Gospel of who we are and how we fall short and how God saves us and how His Word works.

On Sunday morning, starting today, we are actually starting our Bible study on the Book of Romans. I encourage you to join. But as he goes through this section, he is just finishing up saying how nothing can separate us from God's love. You've seen in the end of [Romans 8](#): neither height, nor depth, nor angels, nor demon, nothing can separate us from God's love. We are more than conquerors. God's Word works and He saves us and it's by His work.

But then at the start of [Chapter 9](#), the question is what about Israel? At this time already, not many people in the Israelites were in the Israelite culture when the Jewish people were believers, but he talked about all the advantages that the Jews had. But yet, many of them don't believe. So the question that is posed is, has God's Word failed? Paul is going to say "Not at all." So what has happened?

Paul continues then by talking about some of the people of Israel and who Israel really is. It says in Verse 6, ***For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel.*** Makes a lot of sense, right? Not all of Israel is Israel—what he is starting to talk about is how Paul uses the word "Israel" to describe many different things. There are the people who are descendants of Abraham and actual blood Israelites. But then he goes on to say, ***Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham's children. On the contrary, "It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."*** In other words, it's not the children by physical descent who are God's children but ***the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham's offspring.*** So what he is saying is Israel, the promised Israel that we now talk about, is not just the blood Israelites, the blood of the Jewish people, but the children of the promise, the people who believe in the Messiah and the Savior, Jesus. It goes way back to the song you probably sang as a child. "Father Abraham has many sons..." We talk about how Abraham has many children and we are one of them. How? Not because we have that blood but because we believe, we are children of the promise.

He goes on then and explains how this is. He tells how it is that God has chosen these people instead of *these* people, or how it is that God shows His mercy, and why these people don't believe. He goes on and says, ***Not only that, but Rebekah's children were conceived at the same time by our father Isaac. Yet, before the twins were born or had done anything good or bad—in order that God's purpose in election might stand: not by works but by him who calls—she was told, "The older will serve the younger." Just as it is written: "Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*** What he is starting to tell us here is that God works in a different way. *We think we want things to be fair.* We cry out in the world when we see that things aren't equal, that we don't get what we deserve or what we think we deserve and others maybe are treated better than us. In the parable, ***"...and you have made them equal to us..."*** Why he is

talking about this is because the normal way of doing things is to give the offspring who is the oldest the birthright, the inheritance. That's the fair and right thing to do. What happens? Before they were born, God said "I'm going to give it to Jacob, not Esau."

So then what happens is when things don't go that way, the way that we normally think, what do we start to do? We start to make things about ourselves. *I make it all about myself.* That's what I do all the time. When it comes to salvation, we start to think it has to do with us. But he tells us at the end, in Verse 16, ***It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.*** We so often want it to be about us. So when God says (in the parable again) that he is going to give the same thing to the people who worked a little bit and worked a lot, the people who worked a long time said "That's not fair! I worked more! I deserve more!" We do the same thing over and over again as we look at the world and look at others and say "They don't deserve that! They don't deserve God's love. Look what they've done. Look at the life that they've led. I deserve more. I deserve God's love. I'm here on Sunday. I'm in my Bible and I try hard to follow God. So there must be something in me that really makes God love me." We do this in spiritual things. We do this all the time in the world, too, don't we? When there are things going on where someone else is upset and they are just having a bad day, we tend to think *they must be upset at me.* Or when someone is talking about something, I insert myself and I start telling my story. We make things all about ourselves, in daily life and in spiritual things.

But the question is, *what if God was fair?* When we think about our lives and say we want to make it all about us, what if we got what we deserved? Paul writes, ***Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*** He is merciful and He is just. But what if God was really fair, not just merciful? What do we deserve? Because of our pride, the pride we struggle with all the time? The sins that we commit day in and day out—what do we deserve? I tend to think of when we commit sins, what if God would cause that punishment or the results of those sins to happen all the time. When you commit a sin, do you always get the consequences of that sin? Not often, right? Maybe you feel guilty, but often people don't find out what you did and you tend to keep on doing it. But imagine EVERY SIN that you did, right away you got that punishment or the consequences for that sin. Man!! Life would be hard! Life would be horrible! It would be like hell. That's what we really deserve, isn't it?

We really deserve hell and NOTHING from God because we can do NOTHING to earn God's love. So what is the answer? Paul tells this story, this kind of difficult story about Jacob and Esau. He says that God chose Jacob, or ***"Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated."*** Many people will take this section to say that this talks about double-predestination because it says before they were born God chose one and not the other. But I think a better answer is that this is not talking about just them specifically but talking about a plan of salvation; that sometimes God favors some and lowers others in order to carry

out His plans. Why do we know that when it says He hated Esau that maybe this doesn't mean exactly what it is saying, what we think it is saying? In the New Testament, what does God tell us about our brothers and sisters, our mom and dad? It says if you do not hate your mother and father, your brother and sister, you have nothing with God. [\(Luke 14:26\)](#) We have to love God above others. It's not saying we need to literally hate our brother and sister but we need to place God above even those closest to us. So it's a lowering of those who are so dear and special and a blessing from God and an elevating of God in priority.

So we see how this maybe plays out because we have to look again at who Jacob and Esau were. We see that Jacob, in his life, even though he was promised to get the inheritance, do you know what he did? He and his mother inserted themselves into the plan. They made it all about themselves. God said the younger will serve the older, but Jacob and Rebekah said, "You know what? We should do this on our own." Jacob put on the sheep's clothing and made a stew and tricked their father, Isaac, into thinking he was Esau so that he would receive the blessing. Jacob was not a good guy. And after he did this, after he stole the birthright, he runs away. As he is away, he marries one woman. You may say Laban deceived him, but do you think he knew the difference between one woman and the other? Do you think he wanted to have both lives and was okay with that? He was not always the nicest person. He wasn't the righteous one.

Jacob then gathers this huge family and returns home. He is going to come back to Esau. He splits his family into groups and he sends gifts ahead and he is hoping that Esau doesn't kill him. Esau has all these different people and these gifts come to him, and he says "What does this mean? What are you doing? I have enough. I don't need your gifts." He welcomes Jacob home. Esau is the righteous one in this story and Jacob is not. Jacob is like that prodigal son who goes away and lives sinfully and comes back and Esau is like the father that welcomes him back and shows love and forgiveness. But who did God choose? Did God choose the righteous one to be in the line of the Savior? No, he chose the rebellious one, the one who was the trickster, the one who did not show that he was righteous all the time.

What does this tell us? *God isn't fair, He is merciful.* He chooses and works in the ways that we do not expect so that we know that we have His mercy, as well as others who (in our eyes) would say "They don't deserve that," just like Abraham and his wife. They were old and they put themselves in the story. God said, "I will give you a son." Abraham and Sarah said "We have our own way." Even though at times Abraham showed faith, many, many times he fell short. We are just like Jacob. We fall short so many times, but God says "I love you." God is not fair, but He is a loving God. Nowhere does it say that Esau then is damned or sent to hell, but just that he is lowered. Jacob is exalted and shown love and mercy.

Why is this important? It says ***What then shall we say? Is God unjust? Not at all! For he says to Moses, "I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion."*** We have to ask then, who does God have mercy on? We said Esau is not damned. Jacob, the one who didn't deserve it isn't damned. We know that *through Christ, God has mercy on us all*. Many take these verses to say that "I have mercy on whom I have mercy" means "I don't have mercy on these." No, through Christ, God has really had mercy on us all, the whole world.

How do we know that? Do you know someone else that was hated? Jesus on the cross shouts ***"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"*** [\(3 passages\)](#) What is this? That is being hated by God, being despised and forsaken, stricken, smitten, and afflicted for us so that our sins, our iniquities could be put on Him. God hated Jesus in our place so that we are not hated, so that we receive His love and mercy. How amazing it is that one who does not deserve God's hatred, one who was righteous all the time, and perfect, He was the one who was hated so that we, who are not righteous, who fall short all the time, can be shown mercy and love and compassion. How thankful we are that God is NOT fair. He is merciful to each and every one of us.

What do we get to do with that love and mercy? We get to share that with so many others, to try to remove ourselves from the situation and to know that I'm not saved by my works, I'm not saved by how good I am but out of thanks, I can serve and love Him. As I serve and love Him, others can get to know Him and His love as well. They can see His mercy and His forgiveness and no matter what they've done, like those workers in the vineyard, if they've been out of the workplace for the whole time and have one hour, if someone has not known Christ their whole life and on their deathbed they find Jesus and they find His mercy and forgiveness, we as Christians rejoice and we don't get jealous and say "You have made them equal to us." Our joy is to go out and bring more into the harvest to help them to know that God truly is merciful.

We will struggle that the world is not fair. It's true. You'll hear it from your kids. You'll hear it from growing up as teenagers. You'll probably say it yourself often. The world isn't fair. But we don't have to worry about how this world works and that there will always be sin in this world because we have a loving and merciful God who is going to give us a heaven and earth that will be filled with His love and mercy. We will not have to worry about fairness. Most of all, we can be thankful that God is not fair with us and He has shown us His love and mercy through Christ Jesus. Amen.

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