



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

October 29, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

22nd Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Daniel 1:3-21](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 96

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Romans 13:1-7](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 22:15-21](#)

Our God... Establishes Earthly Governments Authority designed by The Authority

1. Authority _____ by God
2. Authority to _____ bad and _____ good
3. Christians _____, _____, and _____ the authority
4. God's _____ is about _____

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 we look at governing authorities of the world today, is it easy to give an opinion and maybe a grade to critique what people say and do? I know just recently the House of Representatives took three weeks to a month to find a new Speaker of the House. Everything was in chaos. They can't do anything until they have a Speaker of the House. How would you fix this problem? "If THAT side would do this, then it would be fine." Then you ask the other side. "How would you fix this?" "Well if THAT side changes and does that, then we'd be able to fix it. It's THEIR fault." Then there are wars and all sorts of different international issues. It's very easy to critique and say "What job are they doing? How are they doing on things?"

While it's easy for us to do that, how many of you have been a manager at a business and had other people underneath you that you have to tell what to do? Have you had to manage a business and say how things go? Have you ever had anyone underneath you critiquing you and your authority, how you do things, how you say things and think things should go? Do you think everyone is in agreement and saying "Yeah, you're doing a great job"?

Or think about just inside your family. As a parent, have your children ever questioned your authority? Have they ever questioned and wondered, "Why do you make us do

this?" "Why do we have to go to bed?" "Why do we have to do it this way?" "Why do I have to eat these vegetables?"

We could be very critical of the authorities above us, in government and local governments or in our work place, but when we're the authority, do you like it when people question you and wonder why you do things and how you tell them what to do?

In our Scripture today, God is telling us that He has established the authority going all the way up into the government and this really stretches down to the authorities in our family and in church, from close relationships to distant relationships. How do we deal with that and why does God have authority? How do we respond to that and how should Christians act? That's what we're going to look at today in God's Word.

As we are getting to this section in Romans, it's important to see what he talks about in the chapter before because He gets into talking about authorities and the government, but what is he talking about right before that? In [Chapter 12](#), he starts out and says this in [Verses 1-2](#): ***Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.*** He is talking about how to live. Do not conform to the ways of this world. The way we worship, yes we are here worshipping God, but when do we worship? We worship in all the ways of our life; in the ways that we are going to look at authority, in the way that we act with one another. We are to live holy and God-pleasing lives. This is what God wants for us.

A few verses later in [Chapter 12](#), starting in [Verse 17](#), he says this: ***Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.*** He talks about not taking revenge. Then he uses that quote, "You should heap burning coals on the heads of your enemies" and to not be overcome by evil but to overcome evil with good. He's telling us that how we act is important and how we deal with revenge and justice is important. That's going to be very important as we come to see the reason why God has put authority in place.

As he gets to the authority in [Chapter 13](#), he says these words: ***Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.*** There are two verses in what I just read. Did you hear a little bit of repetition? Whenever we hear something over and over again, it's usually something important, something that someone wants us to remember. Did you hear what was said three times in those

verses? It said the authorities which God has established, the authorities established by God, the authority that God has established (instituted). So what is he telling us? There is the *authority established by God*. God has put systems in place. He says: ***Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities...***

Earlier in the [Book of Romans](#) that we've been studying on Sunday mornings, he makes it clear that we're all the same. We are all equal. We've all fallen short. But what is he saying here? As it comes to authority, God puts people in places with different roles and responsibilities. That's at home, that's in the church, that's at school with teachers and students, that's in the government, that's in the rest of the world with police officers, and your bosses at work. There is this one level where we are equal. God says no one is greater, no one is better than anyone else, but there are roles and places where people have certain authority over other people. Does it make them better or closer to God or more righteous? No, but God has established and set up systems for us.

Why does He set up authorities? He explains it to us in the next section. He says: ***For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.*** Here he is telling us what authority does. What is the purpose of the government and all the other authorities in our lives? Authorities are to bring punishment *to punish the bad and reward the good*. They are to say when these things are evil, are sins, are wrong, or they are crimes, there should be punishment for them to deter others from doing those things. When things are done well, there should be reward/praise to encourage that behavior.

We see that in the world. When people commit crimes of whatever sort, there should be a punishment that fits that. When people do good, they should be commended. You can think of scholarships and all sorts of things where people are praised for doing the right thing. This is what authorities are to do—to punish the wrong and to deter others from doing evil—to keep order and to praise the good.

That's easy to say on paper. It's easy to say it should be easy for authorities to handle that. Most of the time it's pretty clear and easy to do, but we know there are a lot of problems or things of great areas where it is hard to come to easy conclusions on things. Another part is that the authorities are not perfect people. They are sinful people that are trying to do the right things.

Also think about when you are in authority. I think one of the best examples of this is as a parent. Have you ever used this in the wrong way? One of the ways we can do this is instead of punishing bad behavior and rewarding good behavior, we sometimes reward

bad behavior. How might we see that? Say you are at the store in the toy aisle and your kid starts throwing a fit. "I want this! I want this! I want this!" Or you are getting to the checkout line and they're having a fit and you don't want other parents to think "Look at that bad parent!" So what do you do? Do you give in to the tantrum? Do you give the candy bar or the toy and reward bad behavior? Does that ever happen? It works sometimes, but it's teaching the wrong thing. We see that we can do that at times. We can reward bad behavior instead of praising the good behavior.

We can also struggle when we don't use the law in the right way. I think we see that in the world and in the government/authorities now where people are afraid that maybe the jail system doesn't work the way that people think it should, so we shouldn't have the high punishment for certain crimes. What happens in certain cities when shoplifting is no longer a crime? Everyone shoplifts and stores leave because they can't make a living. The authorities aren't doing their job because they aren't punishing the wrong and praising the good, so order falls apart. God establishes the authority so that there is peace and order. He wants the authorities to bring good and to bring peace to allow things to go in a good way, for safety, but we see that doesn't always happen.

How do we respond? How do we treat authorities who are not perfect? Paul continues in Verse 5: ***Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience. This is also why you pay taxes, for the authorities are God's servants, who give their full time to governing. Give to everyone what you owe them: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor.*** What are Christians to do? God makes it pretty clear—to submit and do several different things. He says *Christians are to honor, respect, and obey the authority.* That's by submitting and doing what the government tells us to do even if we think it's not important, e.g., paying taxes (which I don't think anyone really, really enjoys paying taxes), following all the different codes and laws, and not sneak around and try to do things without paying taxes.

But then you get to some of the other ones that he ends with—honor and respect. It's very easy to look at how we can submit and follow the rules of the government and we can pay taxes, but how are we doing with honor and respect? It's very easy when the person you vote for is in authority and in power, but if you're on the blue side and red is in power, or if you are on the red side and blue is in power, what do you say about those people? Are your words filled with honor and respect? Or are you tearing them down and talking about all the stupid things they do? Do we say, "How could they do this?!" Did it say we have to AGREE with everything they do? It doesn't say you have to vote for them, but honor and respect; to speak well of them. I think the best way we can do that is to pray for them, even those people that we don't vote for, the people that we don't always support, because we are praying for THE governing authority—the person

that God has in place right now. We can pray for them, pray for our country, and pray for what is best. That happens in how I speak to others and how I feel in my heart.

As Christians, can we just pick and choose what God says is right and wrong? God has made this clear in the Ten Commandments. God has put the authorities in our place that we should honor and respect them, so we can't just throw out different commands because "I don't like that guy." How can we (as he talks about in [Chapter 12](#)) not conform to the ways of this world? We can stand out as Christians that can love and respect and show honor even when (in our hearts) we might not want to. We can do that and know that we can love and respect and honor those we might not always agree with but we can look and also understand the government is meant to bring peace and order.

In catechism class, the basic question asked to kids: "God has put your parents in authority over you. Does that mean you do everything that your parents tell you to do? For the most part, the answer is yes, when they are telling you to do something that is not against God's Law and most of the things are nothing that is completely against God's Law. So for most of the things, yes, of course you do. But if your parents are telling you to do something that is breaking God's Law, a blatant sin, can you follow them? No. So there are times when the government might say something or do something that is against God's Word. How do we handle that?"

The [Book of Daniel](#) is very good at talking about those things. We should do things in an honorable way to say what God does say is right and good. But for the most part, that's not where we live. We are living in a country that has so many blessings. When you look around the world, there are a lot of countries and governments that say you cannot do what we are doing right here. You cannot worship Jesus in public. So while we might complain and say the government is not doing what we say they should do, are they letting us preach the Gospel and are they explicitly telling us to sin? No. If we are in those situations, we pray that God gives us humility and a way to honor and respect and serve God. But for most of us, we're not in those situations.

As we find ourselves in a situation where we are serving our Godly authorities, we need to understand and remember the whole context of where this is written. We need to remember what God has told us through the first few chapters of the [Book of Romans](#). When we are in this world under a kingdom, we live in another Kingdom as well. That Kingdom gives us a hope and a peace throughout all time. When we have authorities over us and different roles, earlier in Romans God says these things: ***"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God."*** ([Romans 3:10-11](#)) ***"...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus."*** ([Romans 3:23-24](#)) In [Chapter 5](#), he says these words too: ***Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus***

Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. While we live in this earthly kingdom with authorities, we also stand in another Kingdom. We live under *God's Kingdom* which is a kingdom that *is about grace*.

Why is it important to understand that? The authorities and even as parents and at school, we deal a lot with law. But this Kingdom deals with grace. When we are talking about God's Word and the Gospel, it is so unique because we've all sinned and we don't deserve His love and forgiveness. But what do we have? We have peace. While we might want the world to function in one way, we have to understand that the kingdom of this world is different. God has given us another kingdom that we live in at the same time. So as we stand in His grace and His peace and forgiveness, we don't have to be overwhelmed by the things of this world. We can be forgiven for when we aren't respectful. We can be forgiven for struggling with how to live in a world that is not black and white but is very gray and has us make difficult decisions. We are forgiven also when we are in authority and we don't do things the right way. We stand in grace. What a blessing it is to have Jesus and His forgiveness.

The words of the Hymn of the Day, in Verse 3, say: *Many spend their lives in fretting over trifles and in getting things that have no solid ground. I shall strive to win a treasure that will bring me lasting pleasure and that now is seldom found.* Do you remember that famous poster when Obama ran for president? It was pretty iconic and it just had the word "Hope" written underneath it. We can strive to find peace and security in this world that follows this politician or that politician and find our hope that "THIS person is going to fix it" and "THIS person, once they get into power, everything is going to be fine," but where do we find our hope? Where do we find our peace? We cannot put it on something that is not solid ground, like a person and government. We find our hope and our peace in our Savior, and in the Kingdom that lasts forever, and the Kingdom that unites people from every nation because we live under grace and we live as people who are sinners, but forgiven.

So yes, we honor and respect the government and authorities but know that we have a greater Authority—The Authority that established the authorities, the Authority that loves us and forgives us and brings us into His eternal kingdom. Amen.

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