



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

November 5, 2023

Pastor James Enderle

1st Sunday of End Times: Reformation

First Lesson: [Daniel 6:10-12, 16-23](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 46

Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [2 Timothy 4:9-18](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Matthew 10:16-23](#)

Lord, keep us faithful to your Word! Hold to the Promises of God

1. _____ what God _____
2. You will have _____
3. Faithfully _____ Christ, but don't _____
4. The Lord will _____ with you and _____ you

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:

There was a man, let's call him "Bob," who worked faithfully at his job for 20 years. He was getting closer to retirement. He had a few more years to go before he would get that nicer benefit and pensions. He was seeing some of his co-workers retire and they were having big celebrations. They would have a little meal. There would be a nice, big plaque for all the years of service that was given. The next year, his boss (the CEO) changed over. They had a new person come into leadership. This person wasn't so friendly to Bob. He started promoting people that were younger and started having Bob not take on as much responsibility. So Bob wasn't as happy at work. He started finishing up and he would spend his final years there, but it was a challenge. When his day of retirement came, there were a few little donuts and some snacks, a little tiny cake, no plaque, just a little card with a gift card to Red Lobster. It wasn't what he expected. After many years of faithful service, it's not what he expected. He had faced more opposition and things were much harder than he imagined. He thought he deserved more. He felt after all of his years of service, there should have been more fanfare. There should have been more praise for all of his work. There was nothing. More than that, there was opposition and work was difficult. Then he was just done.

In our lives, there are a lot of things that we might expect. Maybe you've had similar situations at your work place where things don't go as expected. Different people start

to oppose you, maybe even at school, classmates, friends, and at college, maybe you have these disagreements with your close friends and there is conflict and things don't go the way you plan.

As we celebrate the Reformation today and look at what God says life is to be like and what He promises us, it's important to **hold on to God's promises**, to see what He tells us and what is true for our lives and what is true about how He is going to be with us and to understand what we should expect and know is true and what awaits us.

For Paul, he had such a blessed ministry. He had gone throughout the European continent, the southern continent, and had been able to share God's message. It wasn't easy though. In other Scriptures, he talks about how he was stoned and beaten, kicked out of cities. And here he is in [2 Timothy](#) in prison. He is writing to Timothy, who you might consider almost like his adopted son. Paul was his mentor and Timothy was this person he poured into and really built up to be one of the next pastors. He was a pastor and encouraged him in his ministry. But Timothy was a great encouragement to him as well. But as he is here in prison, we see and can learn about how we can face life and what is in store.

He talks to Timothy about what is going on in [Chapter 4](#), about all the people that have opposed him. Before this, at the beginning of [Chapter 4](#), he has some encouragement for Timothy about how he should lead his life, what he should focus on. He says these words at the beginning of [Chapter 4](#). ***In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge: Preach the word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction. For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths. But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry.*** As Paul is encouraging Timothy how to live his life, he is telling him to trust in God's promises but in order to do that, he needs to *know what God promises*. He needs to know what His truth is. He says to be prepared. Preach the Word and use His Word. Correct, rebuke and encourage. Why is that important? It's important because there are many people who will not put up with the truth. There are many people who are going to teach different things and lead people away from what God promises. So if I'm going to **hold to the promises of God** (what this Reformation Festival is really about—to hold on to the Word), I need to be IN the Word.

Recently in catechism class, we had the passage come up from Colossians where it talks about the Word dwelling in us. What does it mean for the Word to dwell in you, to live in you? The things you think and the things you say, what are they? They are God's

Word. I can't do that unless I'm IN God's Word, by being in worship, in daily devotions, and then speaking to God in prayer. But how can I know and hold to God's promises if I'm not in the Word, if I'm not letting His Word dwell in me and live in me? We have to hold on to that because there is going to be opposition.

You will have difficulties. Paul speaks about this. He said that many will gather around those who want to teach differently. Paul talks about all the difficulties that he has faced. He talks about Demas, who deserted him and loved the world. He speaks about Alexander. How would you like to be Alexander? The metal worker who did him great harm because he opposed the message. There will be so many difficulties we face in this life.

I find it interesting in all of these three texts that we talked about today that the difficulties that are talked about are because of other people. Sheep among wolves Jesus talks about in the Gospel lesson. Brother will betray brother. Think about in our lives, often the difficulties we face are in our relationships. There will be people who are not happy with what we teach and believe. Those divisions are not far away, but they are close to us. We know that not everyone is happy with God's Word and His truth. We live in this sinful world that is going to continue to oppose what we teach and preach. As we speak the truth of God, that there is only one way to be saved, people will say "How can you be so close-minded? You have to respect everyone! You have to say 'every way is okay as long as you have a strong faith.' And who are we to say that someone else is wrong?" What are we to do as we face so much opposition to God and His Word and the truth?

Paul explains what his mission was. He says: ***But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it.*** The truth is, as we face opposition, what do we continue to do? *Faithfully proclaim Christ*, to proclaim His name but in so, *to not expect rewards*. Others think "As I proclaim Christ, as I'm faithful, as I live my life in service to God, what will that mean? That means God will give me good things or that things will be easy. I won't have any difficulties." He's saying pretty much the opposite. The more faithful I am, the more I hold to the Law and live as a Christian...

I was talking to someone recently, when people before marriage don't actually live together, people are shocked. They say "Oh, no, that can't be true." But what a witness you can be to just do that, to not live together before marriage, even though people might mock you and ridicule you. Or to proclaim the truth that "Jesus loves you." That's what it's all about. It's not that we are condemning or we are saying people are horrible people if they believe something else. We are saying Jesus loves them. It's not about who I am or what I teach. We want to get them to Jesus but not expect that things are going to be easy when I do that. In fact, it's the opposite.

As we talked about Bob and his life, the truth is sometimes, as we get older, we say “God, take it easy on me. I’ve lived a long life. I’ve been faithful. I’ve raised these kids. I have grandkids and I brought them up in the faith. God, give me a little break. Make life a little bit easier.” Do you ever think that way? Does God promise it’s going to be easier the more faithful we are? No. He hasn’t promised us rewards or easy things in this life. He tells us in our faithfulness that we’ll be blessed, but I think most of all in a spiritual sense, having that peace and hope and that forgiveness. He does promise us that He is here with us though, giving us that peace and hope and more.

Paul says these words in Verse 18: ***The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever.*** As we look at what it says, that He will rescue us, it’s important to look at just a few passages before our section. Right after the section I read where he is talking to Timothy about what Timothy should do, he says this about himself: ***For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time for my departure is near. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*** Paul here says ***“The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack,”*** but just before that he was saying “I am being poured out. My departure is near. I have fought the good fight.” So which is it? Is he going to be rescued, or is his end near? The truth is that his end is near. This is his last imprisonment.

Paul had been imprisoned earlier. It was more of a cushy stay, more of a house arrest, and he could have lots of visitors. He wrote letters and it wasn’t so bad. He wasn’t facing death. But as he writes 2 Timothy, these are some of the last words that Paul wrote. He knew soon he would be killed for his faith. Yet he says here, “The Lord will rescue me.” So what do we need to know and remember? That even as we face these difficulties, *the Lord will stand with you and rescue you.* He stands with you now. He has stood with you in the past. He will stand with you in the future. And He will rescue you.

That doesn’t mean it may be a miraculous rescue, like Daniel from the Lions’ den. But maybe He has. Maybe that has happened to you in the past. But He doesn’t promise to rescue us from everything that we think we want Him to save us from in this life. What does He mean by “rescue you?” Paul is saying “He is going to rescue me from THIS life; from all the pain, all the trouble, all the difficulties; and He is going to bring me to heaven.” And while He doesn’t give us rewards in this life, what does He give us? He gives us THE reward of heaven, the crown of righteousness which Paul talks about. The truth is it’s not a reward we earn. It’s a gift that is given to us, by grace alone, by faith alone. But to know we stand in grace and stand with the Lord next to us when we confess and are faithful to Him. You are not alone.

Many of these texts spoke about people who are betrayed and facing difficulties but none of them were ever alone. As Daniel faithfully prayed to God, he knew he wouldn't be alone. And his prayer was amazing. The decree said "Don't pray to anyone but the king," and what does he do? He says a prayer, but he says a prayer of thanksgiving.

This is a great reminder for us as we stand in opposition to the world—that the Lord is with us and we can be thankful for that in all we face knowing that the Lord is with us, has been with us, and will be with us. But most of all, He will rescue you. He will rescue you and take you to be with Him in heaven.

We get to celebrate that again tomorrow as we celebrate another saint entering His kingdom and in just a few weeks, as we celebrate Saints Triumphant. We have the joy of faithfully proclaiming His name now, but why? It's so we have the hope and peace that we will be with Him and rescued forever. And we proclaim His name so that others will not fear on that day and they can enter into His glory and know that they are standing redeemed and forgiven, by what? By the blood of Christ, by Jesus, who was betrayed, who was mocked and deserted by everyone. He knows what it feels like to be us. But He went through all of that and then died on the cross and rose again so that we will be rescued to proclaim His name in the midst of persecution.

In the midst of people mocking our faith, stand firm because you are not alone. The Lord stands with you, and the Lord will rescue you from dangers now, but most of all, He will rescue you and bring you to heaven forever. Amen.

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