



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

May 14, 2023

Pastor Randy Ott

6th Sunday of Easter

First Lesson: [Genesis 4:1-16](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 66

Second Lesson: [1 John 3:13-18](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 14:15-21](#)

The Redeemer Lives to Call Us to Live for Him

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.

This is the day the Lord has made. Let us rejoice and be glad in it. Amen.

In Christ, our risen and our ruling Redeemer, dear fellow Christians:

Today across our country, mothers are honored. Mothers are celebrated because it's Mother's Day. It's always a day when (if you go back over it every year) you see attendance goes up in church a little bit. Why do you think that is? I'm guessing it's because mom says you're coming to church today. This is the day then, because we love our mom, we're going to come and be there with our mom. What about the other 364 days of the year? Why did you obey mom then and do what mom said?

I don't know about you guys, you kids that are here now or you adults that used to be kids, but I obeyed Leona because Leona talked to Jack. It got to be Thursday or Friday and if dad got home and was tired and mom said, "Randy was a little out of control today," it didn't go well. I love my mom! Don't get me wrong! I love my mom to pieces! She was an incredible blessing! But most of the time I obeyed her because I was worried about getting punished either from her or more often from dad. Mom was much more patient than dad was, although mom did have to go buy a new yardstick once. I'm not going to tell you why, but that did happen.

Think about it. How often do we obey other people, whether it's our mother, our boss, or whatever it might be, because of fear of consequences? We're afraid that we're going to be disciplined by mom so we do what she says. When mom told me to go up and clean my room, I never as a kid ran up the steps and said "Yes, mom, I love you so much that I can't wait to clean it." That never happened once. I probably trudged up the steps, muttering under my breath saying "Why doesn't Michelle have to clean her room?" But I think this is how a lot of us act and behave. Is that a fair statement?

Did you notice today in what I read to you from Jesus in the Upper Room how He turns our world upside down? He really tells us to look at it differently. Not only does Jesus turn our world upside down by saying "It's not about you. It's all about me. It's all about my life. It's all about my death. It's not anything you do. It's by grace you have been saved, and this is not from yourselves, not by works, so that no one can boast." ([Ephesians 2:8-9](#)) He's really clear on that.

But why we do what we do? Look at how He turns it around. In the Upper Room, as He is talking to those disciples, this is shortly after what we read last week in the Gospel. Their heads are spinning. He had talked about betrayal. "The one who dips his bread in here with me is the one who is going to betray me." ([Matthew 26:23](#)) "I'm going to be arrested. I'm going to be put to death. I'm going to die soon." Their heads are spinning. And look at one of the things He says to them. This is one of the things that evidently He thought was pretty doggone important so He had to make sure these guys were clear on this. "***If you love me***, you will obey what I command." It's not "*If you're afraid of hell, you'll obey what I command.*" It's "If you love me, you will obey what I command." Doesn't that turn the world on edge?

Everything that you and I and the disciples are supposed to be doing is supposed to be this response of love to God and love to others, as we heard John (who was there in the Upper Room) say in our Second Lesson today. Love acts; love does. The word he uses for "love" there is that beautiful Greek word, "agape," which talks about a love that puts someone else's interest ahead of your own. It's an unconditional, unearned love. You love not because they are worthy of your love. You love because this is what you are. This is what God is. This is what He does to us. And when God gives us the gift of faith, it changes us to look at things differently. "If you love me, you will obey what I command." It changes our whole outlook on everything. It's not "*This person is nice to me so I'll be nice to them.*" It's "*My Savior lived and died for me. I'm going to love that person because this is what God has called me to do and this is how I show my love for Him.*"

It sounds so simple but it is incredibly hard! My sinful nature, and I'm going to guess your sinful nature, does not want to love jerks. People that are annoying, irritating, are tough to be around. Why are you all looking at me? They are hard to love. But this is what we are called to do. This is what our God calls us to do because this is what He did for us. He died for us, not because He knew we would believe in Him or He knew that we would be good or that we would do this or that we would do that. He did it because that's what He is—love. He put our interest ahead of His own because He is love.

So He calls us to this, but then, not only does He call us to this, He knows how hard it is going to be, so He says to them that day, "I'm going to send you an advocate, someone that is going to help you with all of this. I'm going to leave you for a little while. The

world will not see me but you will see me. For a little while I am going to be dead, but I'm going to rise again. You will see me again and on that day, you will know that everything will be changed for you. The resurrection will change everything. On that day, you will know that all of my promises are 'yes.' They will happen. So that includes this promise that I'm going to send the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, to you. You know Him. The world doesn't know Him because the world doesn't know me. You know me and He lives in you and He will continue to live in you. He will help you to do these things that I'm calling you to do. When I call you to do this, you are going to know that He is going to be there, that I am in the Father, the Father is in me, and the Spirit, as a trinity, we are working together for your eternal good and helping you to carry out this task we have given you of loving people."

I suppose it's also this reminder that if He and the Father and the Spirit are one and the Spirit is in us, He is going to keep reminding us that even when we fail to love as He has loved us, even when we fail to follow His commands and carry out His will in our lives, and we will, that He remains faithful and loves us.

The privilege we have as Christians to be the visible sight of God's love is amazing. When everyone around us can be divided and bitter and complaining and moping and groping about everything, we can see everything as an opportunity to show love as God loved us. Yes, we are going to fail at times, but as His forgiven children, when we look to Him and see this love that He continues to pour out on us by forgiving us, there is a part of us, that part of us that loves Him, that doesn't say *"Oh, I HAVE to obey His commands."* It's *"I want to obey His commands. He has forgiven me again! I screwed up again and He still loves me and He still forgives me! I WANT to get better at loving Him by loving others."*

Yesterday I was privileged to be in New Ulm for graduation and assignment day. That was really cool. It was really cool. I really enjoyed that; seeing all these young Christians, young adults (I still can't think of them except as kids. I still see them in my confirmation class), but these young adults just as excited as can be that God picked them up and said "Here is where you are going to go serve me. You're going there. You're going there. You're going there." And to see the joy on their faces; it was really, really fun!

There's a part of me that said *"I wish that joy would last a little longer for you all, but it ain't gonna because you're going to minister to sinners and you are a sinner and it's not always going to go well."* It's in those days, when the difficulty comes for those people that just got assigned or when the difficulty comes in your life for you to love someone like God loved you, that you need the Spirit. You need the Advocate to come and help you, to guide you, to direct you. He comes to you, not by you looking at a robin and thinking *that must be the Holy Spirit*; He comes to you in the Word. He comes to you in the Sacraments. He comes to you and says "This is how much we, the Triune God, love you! Look at what we did. The Son gave His life. The Father sent Him. The Father and

the Son sent me (the Spirit) into your heart. You are mine! I don't care how hard it gets. I don't care how hard it is to love others. I'm not telling you that you have to. I'm going to lead you to want to." God turns things upside down. He leads sinners like you and me to love others eagerly, joyfully and not just because Jack is going to come home someday. It's because we love Him.

So you kids here today that are honoring your parents, honor your mom the rest of the day, sure, but remember the 364 other days. Try to get a little better at loving them by obeying what God commands you to do; which is love them even when they tell you to take out the garbage. Amen.

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