



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

www.mzluth.org

December 13, 2023
Midweek Advent Week 3
Reading: [Matthew 3:1-12](#)
Devotion: [Jonah 3:6-10](#)

Pastor James Enderle

The Clothing of the King Clothed in Conviction

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 talk about clothing and things you wear, do you ever wear your emotions (as they say sometimes) on your sleeve? Do you put your emotions out there so everyone can see? Sometimes it is joy and pride when you have done something well. For kids, I know when my kids accomplish something, I see the joy that comes to their heart and they want you to watch them as they do something for the first time. That joy they have; maybe it was at the Christmas Pageant we had recently, the performances and their singing of different songs, the little ones singing All I Want for Christmas is a Hippopotamus, or the 1st-2nd grades singing all the songs about the Christmas tree. There is a lot of pride that goes into it and you can see that it their joy.

What about when you are embarrassed. When you speak some words about someone, maybe not the kindest words, and you turn your shoulder, and they are standing right there, your face turns ghostly because you're embarrassed. If you are talking about Christmas coming up soon, maybe you give a gift to a relative that ended up being a re-gifting that your mother-in-law gave you the year before. You didn't think she was going to be there, but she sees it and as you see her face as you are re-gifting a gift given to you, that embarrassment is clothed on you.

There are times when we wear our emotions. You can probably think of many other times when that happened in your life. Think about repentance—that God wants us to repent. Is that something that we should wear? When we talk about Advent and Lent, this is a time where we do talk about repentance. During Lent we focus on it over and over again, but really during Advent, that is one of the key things up here—repentance. But how often do we think about our repentance? Do we really show our repentance and our humility? Do we wear that around?

When we look to what happened as we are preparing for our Savior to come and His humility, we want to have that same humility as we prepare for His coming. We look to our lesson today, and we see Nineveh, a people and this example of repentance that you would not expect. Here Jonah, who I like to call him the “racist prophet” because he ran away from God, jumped on a boat, was hurled into the sea, swallowed by a fish, and then when he returns later (at the end of the story), he tells God why he ran away. He said “I know you are loving and compassionate. I didn’t want these Ninevites, these people that I don’t like, to have that compassion from you.”

So we have Jonah, this reluctant and racist prophet, who goes to the people and he shares a message that they should repent. The words that we have of what his message was aren’t very long. It said **“Forty more days and Nineveh will be overthrown.”** [\(Jonah 3:4\)](#) “Tell them to repent or in 40 days God will bring destruction.” Was his message more than that, possibly? But we don’t know exactly what his message was. Do you think his message was filled with a ton of Gospel? Maybe there is a little bit about God and His love, but we’re not quite sure. But this message of repentance and a call to change their ways and to believe in God finally reached the king.

Now we see what the king’s reaction is. We see what he does and what he tells the people to do. We see that he put on sackcloth and ashes and lay in the dust. He took off his royal clothes and said “We need to wear this repentance. We need to show that we are sorry for our sins.” How complete was this repentance? How much did they show that they wanted to change their ways? The king issued this decree for all the people, and who else? Even for the animals, all the livestock, and they were not to eat them.

Why do people fast? Especially in the Old Testament, why did people fast? They fasted to show that repentance and to show that there was mortality; to show a hungering and to seek God. The sackcloth was to show their humility. The king took off his royal robes and put on sackcloth and then he was covered in dust and ashes to show their shame over their sin. The Ninevites all did this. They put on that repentance. We see that they saw and understood what repentance was about because the king’s words were really important.

He tells us there are two parts of repentance. He says **“Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”** Notice the two things. The first thing is to “turn”—that’s really what “repentance” means; to turn from your ways, to turn your thinking, to change your thinking.

If you are continuing in sin and living in sin, you are saying “This isn’t a problem. This isn’t a sin.” You don’t see how serious it is. But repentance is about saying “This is

sinful. This is bad. It hurts me. It hurts God. It hurts others." You are looking at this and your actions and you are turning from it. You are saying "This is wrong and this is right." So the first part is to **turn**, to change your mind, to change your ways, to change your thinking and to say "This is wrong and sinful. This hurts God and others."

But you saw the second part, too. The second part is really important because if I turn but I don't have the second part, then what am I turning to and where does my hope come from? The second part that the king talks about is that God may have compassion and He can relent. The second part is "trusting that God can forgive" and that He is a loving God. For us, we have an even bigger picture than Nineveh had. What did they know about the God of the Israelites; maybe not a whole lot. But we know Jesus and that He was our great Prophet, Priest and King; the One who came on our behalf to sacrifice Himself. We can **trust God that those sins can be washed away**. What is repentance without trusting in Jesus to say that He can forgive me and has forgiven me and He washes over all of those sins? So we cling to that. We cling to Him and know we want to turn and wear that repentance.

In this Advent season, we want to stress that repentance and that humility. That's a lot of what repentance is about, too—admitting wrongs and trusting God. What better time to look at humility than Christmas. As we see our Savior come, He is the great King, and how does He come? He comes humbly. Not in a palace, but in a manger. Not with fanfare, but with a stable full of animals. Instead of a parade, we have a few of the lowest of society. The shepherds come.

It wasn't just His birth. It was the way He lived His life. He wasn't the famous rock star. In fact, when He got popular, He would go away and spend time in prayer. Often, as His popularity grew, He would continue to teach, and people would oppose Him and didn't like His teaching because He spoke of repentance and pointed out sin. He also pointed out that people couldn't save themselves, and that most of the time, we are being hypocrites and needed to repent.

So Jesus then showed even more humility, by going to the cross and taking the sins that we deserved upon Himself. Isaiah prophesied that no one would like how He looked as He suffered. He wasn't one with beauty but in fact, people looked on Him with disgust. That's the humility—that He came to save us. He came from heaven and the throne to a stable. He is the King who was born among cows and livestock. He didn't come just so that we felt bad. He actually joined in and He suffered for us. He shows us the extent of His love. He shows us the humility and love that God has for us.

When we see His love and His mercy and His forgiveness, then we actually see and look at those parts of repentance. Then what can we say about repentance? On Christmas, as we celebrate gifts, we can see Christian repentance as a gift—something we get to do. We get to receive God's forgiveness and we can turn from those sinful ways that

lead us away from God. We can see that the Holy Spirit works in us to make us want to live under the Spirit and to flee from sin. So often we think of repentance as this difficult, hard thing. Yes, it's not easy, but it truly is a gift for us Christians because we get to see why God's Law is good and He has all things for us, to bless us and to keep us safe.

As we turn away, He points us back to bring us to Christ. In that repentance, we have that forgiveness that says ***there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*** [\(Romans 8:1\)](#) When you are in worship, you hear that every time—that you are forgiven. At home, as you read and you study God's Word, as you say your prayers, as you repent, you stand in forgiveness. You stand knowing that your God has loved you and forgiven you. We can rejoice that we have repentance and we have His forgiveness. We can wear that repentance in humility, not proud of our sin, but thankful. Thankful that God has given us His true Word and His love and mercy.

We know that we don't repent perfectly. We struggle to repent. But even in that, God changes that imperfect repentance into a robe of righteousness through Christ. Hold on to His Word. Look to the Ninevites, who repented in every way they could. Not because of who they were and their strength, but relying on God and relying on Jesus, who gives us that forgiveness and gives us the great gift of repentance. So hold on and don't be afraid to be clothed in that repentance, to wear that emotion of thanks and that gift that God has given you. Amen.

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