



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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February 28, 2024
Lenten Midweek 3
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 119c CW
Passion History: [Reading 2](#)
Sermon Text: [Matthew 26:57-75](#)

Pastor James Enderle

God on Trial Testimony

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 you think of many of the famous trials that we see in our world today, the ones that are broadcast on TV, there are always a few important questions that people ask. There was the Kyle Rittenhouse trial recently. Now there is the Fani Willis, the one in Georgia, where they are prosecuting Trump. The question always is; are they going to testify? Are they going to take the stand and give their testimony and defend themselves? Even if they defend themselves, are they going to answer, or are they going to plead the fifth. Maybe kids don't know what it means to plead the fifth, but often, as kids, you probably please the fifth. If your parents ask you a question you don't want to answer, if you were the one that maybe broke something or if you have a sibling who is crying and they say "Why are they crying" and you know what happened but you don't want to say, that's pleading the fifth. We often want to plead the fifth. We don't want to say what happened. We don't want to make ourselves guilty.

As we look at our words today, we are going to see some different **testimony** given and especially two people who in ways were on trial and were asked to give testimony. We are going to see Jesus and Peter and their different responses. We know that people are often afraid to testify. Why is that? We'll talk about why people are afraid to testify. Then we'll also see what the testimony of Jesus really means.

As we read the Passion History, our lesson today, we saw the events that led up to this. Jesus was arrested and brought on trial and then Peter is in a courtroom outside the courtyard, waiting to see what happens. The trial that Jesus is on is not much of a real trial. They might call it a "kangaroo" court. If you don't know what that is, it's not a kangaroo. It means it's not a real trial because it is unfair. They are looking for a reason to condemn Him and all the testimonies are false testimonies. They are lies. Finally,

those testimonies that accuse Him are actually things He said but they don't understand what He is talking about. He is confessing that He is the Messiah and they are saying that He said He was going to destroy the temple in three days and then raise it up. He was talking about Himself, but they heard that and they said "Oh, how can you do this?"

As this is going on, we see Peter out in the courtyard. What Jesus was facing was quite different than what Peter was facing. He knew that He was on trial and the people wanted to kill Him. What was Peter facing? It might seem so much different at first. He is being accused by a servant girl. Why is he afraid? Should he be afraid of this? We might say there is no reason to be afraid, but we know what Jesus is facing, so would it be true that if he associated himself with Jesus, would they also arrest him? Would he face the same thing that Jesus was facing? He didn't know that. So he was afraid.

I think often we don't want to give our testimony. We don't want to speak the truth because we're afraid. We are fearful to give the truth in our testimony because we don't know what is going to happen. He didn't want to give himself away, so instead he denied three times that he was associated with Jesus.

What about you? Why do we struggle? Why do you and I struggle to give testimony, to witness about who Jesus is? I think there are a couple different reasons. I think sometimes we are fearful. But in our world, in the United States, do you have to be fearful, to be physically afraid that if you testify about Jesus that something bad is going to happen to you? It's true for Christians in other countries that, yes, if they confess their faith, they could lose their life, but it's not true for us here. So why are we afraid?

I think often the truth is that we don't want to testify and witness about Jesus in both our words and also, even our actions, to do the things what Christians are supposed to do in a world that thinks those things are silly, because we want to be liked. We want people to like us and we don't want to stand out. The last thing they said about Peter was that his accent gave him away. They knew that he didn't belong. He was different. He was from a different area and he associated with Jesus.

Sometimes we don't want to stand out. We want to be liked by the rest of the world. The rest of the world, many of them don't like Christianity, so we want to blend in. So if people are talking about what you believe, what you think about this controversial topic, that controversial topic that we know the Bible is clear about, we don't say anything or say people can believe what they want. We struggle with that. We maybe struggle with fear, but I think we don't give our testimony because we don't want to stand out. We don't want to be disliked. We want to be a part of the crowd. We don't want to lose friendships or relationships with our family. But what is the truth?

What does Jesus say? That if we deny Him, what is the truth? If we deny Him, what we heard about on our Gospel Lesson this last Sunday was if we deny Jesus, Jesus will deny

us. If we say "I don't know who you are. I don't want to be a Christian. I don't want to associate with Jesus," Jesus will say "You belong to me." This is what Peter was struggling with at this time.

We heard in our lesson that Jesus told Peter he was going to deny Him three times and then he does and he hears the rooster crow. Actually, in Luke, when it talks about this, it says, ***The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter.*** ^(Luke 22:61) Can you imagine that? Jesus had told the disciples, "All of you will turn away from me" and Peter said "Never! I'll go to death!" Confirmation students are soon going to say "I'd rather lose my life than turn away from Christ." Here, shortly after Jesus tells Peter this is going to happen, it does.

But what did Jesus' face look like? Was it disappointment or sadness? Was it blood and spit from the people abusing Him? Was it love, a love that Peter didn't deserve? We don't know exactly, but we know that Peter went away and wept. We know he had every reason to do so because he had denied his Savior. But the truth is that we need to go back and look to our Savior's face; to not run away but to go to Him and to know the truth of what His testimony is about us. We know what He was going to testify about and what His testimony meant as He was being abused and there was false testimony accusing Him of all these things, but as He quotes the words of Daniel, He is saying He is the Son of Man, the Messiah, the One promised from long ago. Some people will say "Jesus never claimed to be God." Muslims especially will do that. "Never in the Bible does Jesus say that He is God." Clearly, right here He is using the words from the Old Testament about what it meant to be God and the Son of God, the Messiah, and He is saying "That's me." We know it's true because of the way the people reacted. They said, "Blasphemy!" You've heard it and they condemn Him to death. He says that He is the Messiah, the Savior of the world. We don't want to run away from His face. We want to go to it because then, as He is our Savior, what does He testify? Not only that He is the Savior but that He has died for your sins.

When we stand on trial, what will God look at? He won't look at our failures, the times when we struggle to testify about God, the times we don't deserve God's love because of our sins, the times we didn't testify with our actions, but instead, who will He look at? He will look at Jesus and His perfection. Why? He will look at Jesus because in baptism, we are clothed with that robe of righteousness that we have put on, Christ's forgiveness. And through His Word and through faith and grace, we know that Christ lives in us and it's not us, but Christ and His forgiveness that our God will see.

We know this is true because after Jesus suffered and was willing to take that punishment and the false testimony against Him, he stood true because He didn't care if people liked Him. He gave the truth because He knew what was important—for Him to go to the cross to pay for your sins and to rise again. And as He rose again, He then appeared to His disciples.

As the women were at the tomb, He said "Go and tell Peter and the disciples." Can you imagine when Peter heard that? He was saying His name and knew He had risen. Then when He appears to them in the locked room, what does He say? "Peace be with you." He repeats it and then says He forgives their sins, and anyone whose sins they forgive, they are forgiven. He comes to them and speaks forgiveness and peace.

We know that we can struggle with testifying, of pointing other people to Jesus because of what it means or what it might mean for us; that people might not like us; that it might bring hardship to our lives; it might cause you to lose something in your job and relationships. But think about what it really means for us eternally. When I confess my faith and I can share the good news of our Savior, I can bring others to know of Christ and His testimony. We can stand out and we do want to stand out because we have this true hope and peace, a testimony that we know is true and eternal.

So what should we have? We should have an accent. We should have a Christian accent that stands out from others. Even if we are caught off guard, even if we are surprised by what someone might say or accuse us of because of our faith, the Bible says you should always be prepared to give a reason for the hope that we have. [\(1 Peter 3:15\)](#) And as you know the Word and the Holy Spirit works in you, you can do that. So blessed are you when people accuse you of being associated with Jesus. Sometimes it will mean hardship, but think of this as an honor, for it means that we can point people to that Savior, the One who testified about who He is and what He has done for you and for me. He has come to save you. That is an amazing testimony and it is a testimony we have the opportunity to share with others. Amen.

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