



# MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org)

March 3, 2024

Pastor James Enderle

3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday in Lent

First Lesson: [Exodus 20:1-17](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 19 CW

Second Lesson: [1 Corinthians 1:18-25](#)

Gospel Lesson/Sermon Text: [John 2:13-22](#)

## Rethinking Religion: Rethinking the Worth of Worship Rethinking Our Passions

1. What are you \_\_\_\_\_ about?
2. Passion shows \_\_\_\_\_ and what we \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_ is passionate about \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ passion in and \_\_\_\_\_ all \_\_\_\_\_

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:

As we have been beginning the call process to call a pastor and now a teacher, one of the questions that was asked as I was talking to one of the previous called pastors was "What is the culture like up by you?" You think about that and what culture is like, what are the people interested in? I think sometimes you think about culture and wherever you might be in the world, culture is often what people are passionate about. It's what kind of shows through in their culture. Are they passionate about a family or this specific thing?

What would you say that we are passionate about? What is our culture all about? I'd say during hunting season, people are very passionate about hunting. I'd say one of the things people are really passionate about is... (Pastor Enderle holds up a Kansas City Chiefs jersey). My jersey is a little different color. I'd say up in this area, people are very passionate about football. It's been easier to be passionate about these guys (Chiefs) because they've been doing pretty well; maybe a little better than up in this area right now. When you are passionate about that; people are passionate about hunting; they are passionate about football; they are passionate about sports, different types of sports. *What are you passionate about?* And how do you show that? When you are passionate about football, what does it look like? Do you go home on a Sunday and have the TV on and you watch one game and you watch the other game and maybe

your team isn't playing until Monday, but you watch all those games and you watch Thursday night. You're passionate about it because you like watching. You like your team. Then you do things like this and you buy the clothing and you wear that around. You show that you are passionate about that.

You can think about what other things you might be passionate about. Maybe it's some sort of music. Maybe you're passionate about high school basketball. Maybe you're passionate about whatever your kids are involved in. Maybe you're passionate about keeping fit. There are all sorts of things that you can be passionate about, but what does that lead you to do? It leads you to let other people know about that. You can talk about that so easily. If someone is talking to you about something you're not passionate about or you're not interested in, you kind of want to change the subject. You'll listen but when you connect, when you are passionate about something together, you can talk about that forever.

In our lesson today as we are talking about **rethinking religion and rethinking worship**, I want us to think about our passions and what we are zealous for. In our section, we see that Jesus is zealous for the house of God. Here he is going to use zealous, but we don't really use zeal or zealous in the world much anymore, so I think passion is a good word to use. For Jesus, what happened here was there were some problems with the peoples' priorities and their passions. I would say what our *passions show is our priorities and what we worship*. This was the problem for the people. When Jesus approached the people here in John 2:13, it said: ***When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. To those who sold doves he said, "Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father's house into a market!" His disciples remembered that it is written: "Zeal for your house will consume me."*** We see that Jesus has a passion about something but the people had their passions and priorities in the wrong place. They had set up these tables in the temple courts.

The fact that they sell these things isn't the wrong thing. People would come to worship from other places and would come to do sacrifices. Maybe they didn't have the animals on their own. So they actually had to buy them. The problem is where they were doing it. They were making this money in front of worshiping God because they were doing it in the temple courts. This was actually part of the worship. This is where the Gentiles would be worshiping. Those who would come into the Jewish religion couldn't go all the way into where the others would worship, so they were taking up the worship spots. It wasn't just that they were selling, but we can kind of assume that if they had to buy these things, what were they probably doing? They were probably charging too much and making it unfair for people. It's important for us to see this isn't just saying you

can't fundraise at church. Someone will say you can't raise money in this way. It's not saying that. It's saying their priorities were messed up. They were focused on this and they were deceiving people. They were doing this when and where they should be worshipping God.

So what happens is then Jesus shows where His zeal is. First He showed that His zeal is for God and what God says is good and right. But then, why does He do that? We see that Christ is not only zealous for God, but we see *Christ is also passionate about you*. He does this for the good of the people and for our good, to show us what is right and good. He is concerned about their souls. So the zeal of the Lord was upon Him. He wanted to do what was right before God and right before others and to protect them.

How do we deal with this? How do we deal with our zealousness, our passions? We know that you can be passionate about many things. Paul even writes that he was zealous before he became a Christian. He was one of the most zealous people you could be. In [Acts 22](#) he says, ***"I was just as zealous for God as any of you are today."*** But what was he zealous in doing? He was zealous in persecuting Christians. We can be very passionate about something, but we always have to check what that passion is about. What am I being passionate about and is this showing something wrong in my spiritual life?

It's not that passions are wrong, but do I begin to put this passion above God? We look at the Ten Commandments that we read. We want to worship God above all other things. We should have no other gods. The truth is when I put these passions above God and I'm finding my identity in them, I'm worshipping these other things instead of God. How does that look? What does that look like in the world? What do you spend your time, talents and treasures on? They say if you want to look at what is important to you, what do you put your time into? What do you put your money into?

If it's football you're putting your time into and you're putting all that time into watching the games, maybe going to the games, purchasing tickets, and you show other people you are passionate about it. Maybe you are passionate about your work or a hobby. It's not that you can't be passionate about those things. God wants us to use our gifts and talents for those good things. But am I putting Christ in all those things?

The question we have to ask is can we have *Christian passion in and above all those things*? I guess the question you have to ask a little bit is when people see you and think of you, what do they think about? If you would ask your children, "What do you think mommy or daddy is passionate about?" I think again, use football as an example; at home would our kids be able to tell that we're passionate about football? Yes. We go home on a Sunday. We watch football. We wear the clothes. So they would say we love football. What else? What else do you show in your life to those dear to you? If it's not your children, maybe friends or other people in your life, what do you show that

you're passionate about? Again, it's not saying you can't be passionate about these things, but can you show Christ through them? Am I showing that this is the most important thing of all, or can I also be passionate about God? Can I show my passion is in Jesus and what He has done for me? Think about that. Talk to your family and kids and say "What do you think that daddy or mommy cares about?" How do you show that? You might say you're at work, so you're probably passionate about work, but when you are at home, what do you show that you care about. What is important to you?

But then, this is the second part. There are two parts to your homework on the Sermon Notes. The second part of your homework is to think about your kids or those loved ones in your life. What do you want them to be known for or what do you really care about them for in the future? Right now they might be focused on something. They are in school. Maybe they are learning an instrument. Maybe they're learning a sport. Those are all good things. Use those talents. Grow in those things. But also talk to your kids about what you want them to be good in and where you want them to be found in. Is it all about that sport that maybe they are going to do for a couple years? Maybe they are going to get really good at it but is that what is going to define them in their life.

Our passions and what we worship start to define us. What I put as most important says a lot about who I am. So what do you want for your kids? What do you want them to focus on? If they are out of high school and college and you say "I really am concerned about this for your future" not in a bad way but to say "This is what I really want to instill in you," what is it? How do you do that as a parent? We can say that a lot with our words of what is important to us, but is it the biggest place that we do that through our actions and our words and how we prioritize in our life and what we show is our passion? We can say all we want about what is important but I think we show it in our words and actions. Then to say in those different passions, whatever you are doing you can show Christ in those things. You can follow the Ten Commandments in how you live your life and to love God and to love others.

Yes, we come here to worship, but how does God also say that we worship. In [Romans 12:1-2](#), Paul writes this: ***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.*** If I know God's will, if I come together, if I worship God here and I am in His Word in other places, if I prioritize that, then in the rest of my life I can also worship Him with my whole life, using all those gifts and talents, using all the things He gives me in work, in school, in all the different places He puts me, to serve Him and to be a witness about who Christ is.

Then we go back to who Christ really is. When the people questioned Jesus and what He did, it says ***The Jews then responded to him, "What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?" Jesus answered them, "Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days." They replied, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?" But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.*** So while Jesus is showing His passion for God and for others about God's Word and the temple at the beginning of His ministry here, He then explains what it really means that Christ is passionate for you and for me and for the whole world. He is saying "Destroy this temple." That is His body. He was going to die and then three days later be raised again. What does that mean? He came to this world. His whole ministry was about coming to be passionate for you by always worshiping God in the right way; to have His priorities in the right place so that when we don't, we know we have a perfect Savior who did that in our place. Then He worshiped God so much and said "God, I submit to your will and follow your ways;" to go and to be crucified to pay for the sins that we commit so that our punishment was on Him and we no longer receive God's punishment. We know that it is true, that it is real, because then He rose again. He said he would be raised in three days. Jesus is so committed to you, so passionate about you that He came to live and die for you and rise again.

Isn't that something to prioritize and to be passionate about? How can we share that with others? If you have that peace and comfort to know that you are forgiven, that Christ has died for you and that we make mistakes, that we aren't always putting our priorities in the right place, it's almost impossible in this world. We're so busy and have so many things going on. But Christ has been perfect for you.

So in the midst of our struggles and confusion, we lean on Christ and His certainty. We can have a joy and a passion in the midst of whatever we may face—life and death. Whatever struggles there are, we can share that joy and peace. It's true that a real passion in something is contagious. When you have that peace, when you speak to others about what Jesus means to you, then others see that. That's the opportunity to bring others to know of Christ and His salvation. But it's hard to do that if I don't have my priorities in the right place or if I don't see all the passions I have and understand I can serve God in those things and show my Christian life and then point people to Jesus.

So the question is—what are you passionate about and how do you show that? How do your kids know what you are passionate about? How do your friends? What do you want to be known for in your passions? We know we're not perfect in those things, but my prayer is that we show we are passionate about Christ. It's not based on how passionate we are if we are saved or not but based on the fact that Christ was passionate for you and has redeemed you and forgiven you. He has washed you clean and made you a child of God, now and into eternity. Amen.

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