

## MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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

May 25, 2025

Pastor James Enderle

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter

First Lesson: [Acts 14:8–22](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 65 (*Red Hymnal*)

Second Lesson: [Revelation 21:21-27](#)

Gospel Lesson/ Sermon Text: [John 16:16–24](#)

### **BECAUSE HE LIVES** **We Have Deep and Lasting Joy** **EASTER BRINGS LASTING JOY**

1. We struggle to understand \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
2. The \_\_\_\_\_ wants to take away your joy.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ from God doesn't depend on your \_\_\_\_\_.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ joy is found in the truth of the \_\_\_\_\_.

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 are some things in life that you can train for and become prepared for. There are so many sporting events where you practice and you practice and you get that muscle memory so you know exactly what you're doing. If you're a baseball player, you take that swing so many times. A basketball player becomes so understanding of those muscle memories of shooting the basketball, like a free throw, and it's so natural. You can practice these things. You can know exactly what it's going to be like.

But then there are certain things in life that you can practice, you can learn, you can do research for, but you can't really ever know what it's going to be like until it happens.

We talk about this sometimes with being a parent. You can watch a child, your niece or nephew, you can do babysitting, but it's different until it's your child. Then, even, each child is different so becoming a parent of this child or that child is different. But I think one of the greatest pictures of this, even more than just becoming a parent, is actually having a child. For a mother, you think about the classes that you go through to prepare you to give birth. I think of the Lamaze classes or where you practice the breathing and they tell you what it's going to be like, but I think if a mom is going to be honest, there is nothing that can prepare you. They're going to tell you it's going to be like this, it's going to hurt this way, or you should do these things, but there is nothing really that can prepare you to give birth. It's so different. It's so unique. It is just

something you have to go through to really understand. I'm sharing this, but I can't even share exactly what it's like.

But in our text, Jesus uses this picture to express some important things that we're going to look at. When we look at what Easter's joy is going to do, we look and we're several weeks away from Easter. We're over a month away, so why are we talking about Easter? We're still in the Easter season, but **Easter brings this lasting joy.** That's what today is really about. It's kind of awesome to have this Sunday when we are starting to move away from Easter. We're going to get to Ascension and Pentecost, but let's not zoom by Easter too quickly. Let's take a look at why it's so important and maybe why it was such a struggle for the disciples to believe and understand; to see what was going to happen and what they all went through.

We've been looking at John several times in the last few weeks. This is another time where Jesus is talking to His disciples right before He is arrested and crucified. Though Jesus had told them that He was going to be arrested and put on trial and killed and then rise again, I think every time He told the disciples this, they still struggled with that idea because here is this all powerful guy who could do all sorts of miracles. He has all these followers. And, is this really going to happen? So when He said it, they probably didn't really understand. But now He says some even more difficult things. ***"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me."*** Is this something that the disciples should have understood? It almost sounds like Jesus is going on vacation. "In a little while, I'll be gone for a little bit, and then I'll come back. I'm going to go on a trip. I'm going to be back." So they are probably confused because "We've gone with Him everywhere that He has gone." Last week we saw He actually talked about this very thing, though. "Where I'm going, you cannot go." He was starting to help them understand this, but the disciples are really confused. "What do you mean by this?" He understood this.

So then He gets to the heart of it. It's not just going to be that He is going to go away. There is going to be more to it. He explains the same thing. ***"In a little while you will see me no more, and then after a little while you will see me." "Very truly I tell you, you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices. You will grieve, but your grief will turn to joy."*** It's very important to understand that He is preparing them for grief and sadness. This is going to be very difficult. They aren't going to understand it and they don't understand it now. You can just imagine them as the days go on. Just a day later, that night He is arrested and then He is going to be murdered. You can just see Peter struggling with this grief as He denies Jesus.

So what do we do? How do we understand this? The truth is **we struggle to understand pain and suffering.** This is something that we cannot put our minds around and why is it necessary, why is it here. We have to understand that it's going to be here. We're not in heaven. There has been sin ever since Adam and Eve sinned. There is sin in each and every one of us. There are the sins outside—the sins that people do—and we have this broken world where disasters come, so we just do not

understand and we say "God, why? Why do you let this pain and suffering come? Why is there mourning? Why can't you just make it easy? Why can't you make life easy?" We know that is not this world. That's the next world. We understand that if there is sin and pain, there is going to be suffering, and we can't always avoid it. It is going to come when we don't expect it. But if we pretend that "It's not going to happen to me," or "If I have this sort of faith, then God is going to protect me," or "I'm not going to have to worry about those things," it's going to be doubly more difficult when that pain and suffering comes. It comes and God is trying to prepare us, to tell us life is not easy but to know that He is going to be there with you. We are going to see why and how in a second, but an important part is what He says in Verse 22. ***"So with you: Now is your time of grief,"*** can you imagine that, being the disciples and Jesus saying "Now is your time of grief. You are going to go through this difficult thing." ***"...but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy."***

This phrase is pretty fascinating to think about how ***"...no one will take away your joy."*** Is God's purpose for you to not have joy? When those sufferings come, when that pain comes, when those difficulties come, does He say "I don't want him to be happy. I don't want you to have any joy"? His whole point is that you don't lose your joy. God doesn't want to take away your joy, so who does? Who is the one who wants to take away your joy and see you struggling with all the things of this world and having no hope and worrying? It's the devil. **The devil wants to take away your joy.** The devil wants to pull you away and lead you in whatever thing you're going through to have no joy, to have no answers, and to have no hope.

Notice before it said that ***"...you will weep and mourn while the world rejoices."*** Isn't that a horrible feeling to think about? When you're upset and sad and other people are rejoicing. One of the simplistic versions of this is at a sporting event where one team wins and another team loses and you're sad and the other team is happy, but it pales in comparison because this is about the truth. This is about life and faith. It's not just like one team won and the other one lost and you go on. This is that someone actually wants to suck the joy out of you and wants you to be miserable. My prayer is that you aren't like that in life with others, but I think there are some people like that. You can tell when they don't want you to be happy or they kind of want to suck the life and the joy out of situations. It's hard. But understand it's not just the person, but the devil who wants to do this and what is his purpose? It's to lead you away from God. He tries to make it all about what you're going through—your feelings and your emotions—to think that what you're in is the worst thing ever and no one else has experienced it and God is leaving you, God doesn't care, and there are no answers. There is no hope.

The truth is, though, God does have answers. Our situation is not everything. What we sometimes get blinders on I think are our world and our culture right now. It very much has blinders on that we only see the near history and we can't see the whole scope of things. But isn't that what we do so often? We see things just for what we're experiencing right now and we forget to look at everything else.

When Jesus talks, He says ***"Now is your time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice, and no one will take away your joy. In that day you will no longer ask me anything. Very truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."*** Notice He says there to ask and you will receive. They haven't asked in His name. I think what this is really talking about is asking things according to God's will, not according to "my will," what I think is important and good, and really asking for the spiritual good, asking for spiritual joy. Notice He says that. ***"Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."*** What He is telling us here is that **joy from God doesn't depend on your circumstances**. We are so focused on the here and now and we say "How can I have any joy? This and this and I've lost this" and we lose the grand scheme and hope of what God has done. He is telling His disciples, "You will grieve now, but don't worry. You will see me again." This is only a temporary thing. There is something that is coming that is greater. We need to look at a bigger picture.

This is where the example of a woman in labor is very important. If you ask a woman when they are in labor, are they happy? Are things great? Are they joyful? They are going to say and scream, "No!" But then a few (hopefully short) hours later, holding that baby in their arms, what joy, what inexpressible joy there is because of what has come! When we look at and we can only focus on the here and now and not see how God works through our pain and suffering, we miss out on the true joy. We miss out and can't understand that God is working to bring even more.

One of the things we did in our men's study, we do it for our leadership team, is we share our blessing, challenge and prayer. One of the things I really love about this is we can share the good things that are going on—the blessings. But then you share the challenge and you can make that challenge a little bit more into a spiritual thing. Then you can pray about those things, or something else. But what I always like to tell people, and I think this puts things into perspective, is that your blessing can also be your challenge, which is also your prayer.

We often in our lives see things as one way or the other. If you see people arguing and debating things in politics and things in the world, they really like to express only one side of the issue. Aren't we all guilty of this? "This is true," while ignoring the other side of the issue. Notice how Christianity is not really that way. We are very honest and talk about the good and the bad. Here Jesus is saying "You WILL have suffering. You WILL grieve, but there WILL be joy." We have to see both sides but understand that there is an answer in all of it. That's what Jesus is saying. "You will have a time of grief, but I will see you again and you will rejoice and no one will take away your joy."

There are a lot of joys that we have in life. Again, holding a child is one of those joys. It's graduation season. Seeing a child/grandchild graduate, even you yourself, graduating, all the different joys in life, and those are great. But we also know those are

momentary and then we're onto the next thing. So what we need to find to help us in EVERY circumstance is an everlasting joy. An **everlasting joy is found in the truth of the resurrection**, in understanding that Jesus died and rose again. We might say "What does this thing that happened 2,000 years ago, why is that something that can give me everlasting joy? Why are we gathering together on Sunday mornings to come and hear someone talk and to sing songs about this guy, Jesus, who died and rose again?" We do it because it means EVERYTHING.

It means that our doubts and our fears, the times that I struggle with depression, the times that I'm going through a really difficult time and I'm just like "God, help me! I know I'm forgiven. I know that we're not perfect and we have fallen short and I've caused pain and suffering in other people's lives. I've tried to take the joy from other people's happiness by my sins, by my hatred and dislike." Jesus' death and His resurrection mean forgiveness. It means a peace and a hope that nothing else can give you. We can't make up for it. I can't go and fix all those things, the time that I took that joy away. But Jesus has. He has taken this sorrow of death and pain and turned it into one of life and joy. Because He has risen, we, too, will rise, so even in the hardest days, the hardest times we have, when we look at a loved one who is no longer breathing but in a casket, we can still have joy and peace because we know they are redeemed by the blood of Christ. The sorrow that we have will turn into joy because we will meet again. All the difficulties of this world will be flipped on its head and turned into beauty in heaven.

So sometimes there will be pain and sorrow in this life because the truth is God doesn't want us too attached to all the things of this world—the temporary. Again, it's not that God is taking your joy away, because your joy is in an eternal God and in Jesus, that love and forgiveness. I think this is an important point because you might say "Well, God has taken this away," or "This has happened and I no longer have this joy because this is gone." That doesn't mean God doesn't love you. And that doesn't mean God doesn't have a greater joy in mind, because He has your eternal joy in mind. The devil wants to take those things and cause you to hate God, to despise the things that are going on, but that's just the now. That's just the grief now that God is working to turn into joy, because God has loved you so much.

My prayer is that we can take that example of a woman in child birth. There is going to be pain. There is going to be sadness. And there are times when we aren't going to have answers for what has happened. So we put our trust in God, who does have a plan, and says your joy will be even greater than that of a mom holding a newborn, because in heaven, there will be no more pain and no more sadness. And now, you are forgiven. And now, you can have that joy, knowing now you have everlasting life. Amen.

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