



**MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
**AND**  
**IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH**  
[www.mzluth.org](http://www.mzluth.org) and [immanuelshirley.com](http://immanuelshirley.com)

September 14, 2025  
14<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost  
First Lesson: [Acts 2:42-47](#)  
Psalm of the Day: Psalm 133  
Second Lesson/Sermon Text: [Colossians 3:12-17](#)  
Gospel Lesson: [John 17:20-26](#)

Pastor James Enderle

**I'M A CHURCH MEMBER**  
**I WILL BE A UNIFYING CHURCH MEMBER**

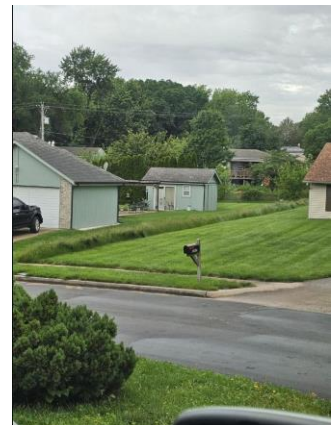
1. Divisiveness \_\_\_\_\_
2. Jesus restores \_\_\_\_\_ with \_\_\_\_\_
3. You have peace to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_
4. Not in \_\_\_\_\_ name but \_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_

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.

**SERMON**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from Jesus Christ, our Lord:

When we talk about a topic, sometimes it's good to address the opposite so we know what the wrong sides of things are. So when we're talking about "unity," we think about "division." You can think about all sorts of divisions. I found there are always stories about neighbors that have divisions about lines. I have a picture of two neighbors where they are arguing about the division line. People said this was funny because normally people are arguing about having more property, but in this one, they don't want it. So they aren't cutting that grass in between. So what division causes here is silliness. Instead of unity and everything looking good, the division really stands out.



Division happens in our lives in many ways. The next picture is "House Divided" with the Packers and Bears. It could have been the Brewers and Cubs. If you are family, spouses especially, can be divided. It can cause some division. But

those are more light-hearted divisions. In our world, there are divisions that have brought a lot of pain. There have been wars fought between Christians, between Catholics and Protestants. There have been genocides between people that, in our eyes, could be brothers, but they hate each other because they are a little bit different.

If you remember, there was a story about Rwanda. Hotel Rwanda is the Hutu and the Tutsi, about how they hated each other and there was this genocide. They were killing each other because of being just a little bit different in race.

Division is dangerous. Division isn't just dangerous, but as we see in our first point that we're going to look at, **divisiveness destroys**. You've probably seen this in your life. When you have division, it affects everything. It might be in work, if you're not getting along with colleagues. It might be within your family, where someone won't even come to a dinner because a word was said. And do you even remember what caused this division?

If you are having division in your own family, between a husband and wife, you probably dread coming home. We talk about these little relationships and then you look at the world. Are we united in the world right now? Or are we extremely divided and it's hard for people to even talk, to talk about their disagreements? We are so divided! How can we come together and has that division hit our church? Are we looking after what is good for everyone, or are we really focused on ourselves and not the good of everyone? Division truly destroys unity and it destroys relationships. It destroys and brings death, as we even saw this week. Division is so dangerous because it destroys so many things in our lives. But what is the answer?

In Scripture, in the verses before our text in Colossians 3, it said these words. <sup>5</sup>**Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.** <sup>6</sup>**Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.** <sup>7</sup>**You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.** <sup>8</sup>**But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.** Not only is there division in this world, this broken world, but our sin has caused division between us and God. We are not at peace with God. That was first seen in the Garden of Eden where there was pride and they thought they could be God. Then as they sinned, they hide. Before, they could walk with God, and now they are hiding! As God approaches Adam and Eve, instead of confessing and saying "I'm sorry," they blame each other and then blame God. There is no unity. But sin separates. What does that sin do after it separates? It says because of these things, the wrath of God is coming. God is perfect and holy, and it's like He's water and we're oil, and it just doesn't go together. So we need something to bring together that unity.

In the words that we read, we see: <sup>12</sup>**Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved...** <sup>13</sup>**Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a**

***grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. <sup>15</sup>Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace.***

So how is this division that's been destroying our relationship with each other and God fixed? It is fixed through Jesus. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since He has called you to peace. This is what Jesus does. He is the Mediator. A mediator brings two parties that are not talking, that are at war, together, to have unity. "Shalom" is the word in the Old Testament spoken to each other, a peace, oneness, and this is what God gives us. **Jesus restores unity with God.** We have Shalom. We have peace. We have this joy: let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts. So no longer is there a wrath but it says: ***...as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved...*** You are no longer distant from God. God says you are "chosen," "holy and dearly loved." No longer does He see us with sin. He says "now," not just in the future but now, because of the work of Jesus, you are holy, forgiven.

Isn't that amazing? This is what we come to church to hear because in the world, there is brokenness and there is divisiveness, but there is a solution. Jesus has brought unity between you and God. That helps us with one another. We should celebrate that unity as well.

We are going through this Unifying for Ministry process. Our churches, Morrison and Shirley, are talking about how we can work together, and I remember when we first started this process. I was at a gym where I work out, in Green Bay. The coach/owner of the gym asked me what we were doing and what was going on. I said, "We're working with the other church to kind of join our ministries." He said, "Oh that must be really hard. How do you come together? You have to talk about all the doctrines and agree on everything." I said "That's not a problem." I think it blew his mind because the rest of the world, the rest of the Church world, really has no idea how great the unity is that we have between the WELS congregations. They don't understand that fellowship that we have, and why we have the closed communion we have. It's because we share this beautiful unity in our faith. So when we talk with another church, like Shirley, we don't have to argue about doctrine.

In our congregation, too, what are the divisions that come up? What are the disagreements? Do we have doctrinal disagreements? Do we have meetings where people are shouting and saying "This person is teaching this false doctrine" or "This person is teaching this"? We can rejoice that we have this amazing unity through Jesus. And then our church has this blessing of a unified faith, not just here amongst each other—that's what the joy of being a member is—but with other churches, like Shirley and the WELS in general, and people all over the world, in China, in Africa, in South America, that are unified in faith. So what does that do as we are unified? Do you always feel unified?

We can say "We are unified in doctrine and faith" but there is still a problem. Notice what Paul writes in Colossians as he is encouraging Christians on how to behave with

one another. He says: <sup>13</sup>***Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.*** Do we always have unity, even with each other? It might not be a doctrinal problem, but maybe it's a problem because someone has sinned against you and we need to forgive. Forgiveness is hard, but the truth is it says: <sup>15</sup>***Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts...*** and <sup>12</sup>***...clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. You can have peace to forgive and build unity*** because you have been forgiven. Is it ever a choice of a Christian not to forgive? You might struggle to forgive, but should the words come out of a mouth of a Christian ever in their life, "I cannot forgive that person"? What does this say? Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

Jesus tells the parable of the man who is forgiven a huge debt. He had to go to prison and tried to work it off and he couldn't, so he begged for forgiveness and was released. Then he can't forgive another man who owes him a few bucks. God says it's not a choice to forgive, but we must forgive as Christians because there is no sin that God has not forgiven of you. And if I look at someone else and say "That sin is too great to forgive," what is God saying about my sin? Is there a sin that is too great to forgive?

There are a few things to remember to help you in forgiveness. Forgiveness is still very hard, because the thing that happened did happen. If it's a simple thing, I like to use the example of the first time a kid writes on the wall. They don't know any better so you should forgive because it's an accident. And when I can't forgive something that is an accident, is the problem with the person or with me? But what about the real pain, the pain that leaves scars on you and really, really hurt? Do I have to forgive that? Yes! But the first thing to remember is that it happened and it's real and it's garbage. It's still a really, really bad thing. The pain is real and we don't pretend that it's not or that it's okay. Forgiveness doesn't equal okay. I can forgive and there can still be consequences. But when I say that this is real, I can forgive because God and His peace and His love are greater than that pain. So I can forgive because I'm not defined by that thing that happened. I'm defined by the peace that God gives me. I am a chosen child of God, holy and dearly loved. So even if that thing happened, that doesn't define me. God defines me. And if you've been forgiven, you can forgive that great pain. Remember, it doesn't mean it all goes back to normal. You forgive and if even that pain that is there, that thing that happened is done by someone you maybe don't have any relationship to or they're not even alive and you're holding onto that grudge, does it hurt them? Who does it hurt? It only hurts you and then the other people you interact with in all your relationships, and your spiritual health. In the same way, if you are angry at people out in the world, we have to forgive, otherwise we hold onto this anger and guilt and it destroys. It destroys the peace in our hearts and the unity between one another. So forgive within your family. Forgive within this Christian family, your church, and in the greater world.

One encouragement in that is some of the people you might be upset with, have you ever even told them what you're upset about? Sometimes we're so angry and we can't

forgive someone and they don't even know what they did and we're still holding on. We are so angry but we don't even talk to them and say "This hurt." So forgive but maybe talk to them and say "This hurt, but I forgive you. I know that God has forgiven me and I forgive you." Sometimes we're so angry but we don't even share that with someone or even forgive. That unity is built by Christ to forgive us, all of us, through the blood of Jesus.

How do we have this unity in the body of Christ? We talked about it here, where it says: **<sup>12</sup>Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.** It talks about the peace and being thankful. Then he speaks about all the different ways we come together as a Church: singing hymns, psalms, prayers and understanding what the benefit of being here in worship is because that humility comes from God's Word, the fruit of the Spirit, only learned in God's Word.

Here it says: **<sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.** I think what often breaks down unity is whose name we are doing things in. Is it in "my" name, or are we thinking about others? One of the greatest ways to build unity is to say **not in my name but us in the name of Jesus.** When we come to church, are you thinking primarily "How can I be served?" Is it about "me" and what "I" need and what "I" want, or are you coming to church and thinking about everyone, the people out there, your brothers and sisters and "How can I pray for others," "How can I care for others," "How can we do things in worship and the church to serve the most amount of people," or are we saying "It must be MY way"?

Some of the ways that destroys us the most is gossip. When we talk about people behind their backs, it destroys that unity. What does God tell us to do? He tells us to go to that person, but what do we do? We tell other people and other people. Even if it's something that is true and I haven't approached that person, it destroys trust. Instead, we should teach and admonish one another. If you are hearing gossip about other Christians, about leaders, or just complaining about how things are done, what can you do? You can build unity by saying "Talk to that person." And instead of being angry or so upset, think about these things—compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

Why does this all matter if I'm thinking about myself or about us? Let's use a good Sunday example. What if you're in a football team? What if the Packers are playing and everyone is playing and running a different play? How is that going to work out? If your team is not unified in the plan for that play, and then even the plan for that whole game, everything is going to fall apart. It's kind of a beautiful thing to watch football and see everyone working





together and sacrificing for others. I think that's the reason we love football. So when they are all together, working in unity, it's awesome!

What about when someone becomes selfish? If you see a player showboating and doing something and then a penalty is thrown—last week a player was kicked out (not for the Packers, but for another team) before the game even started. He destroyed the whole game plan. Or, what about when a player just wants a bunch of money and then it makes it hard to sign the other players? What do you think about that player when you know they are making it all about them and not thinking about the team? I think you know what your opinion is when people are being selfish and not thinking about the whole team.

So how is that done in the Church? Are we coming to serve and to say "You first" and "Us," "How can we serve our community," "How can we serve the most amount of people in our church," or does it have to be just your way? An example is this morning. We have so many people here. What if we only had one service? It would be pretty hard to fit everyone in here this morning. We have another service at 10:30a.m., but if I say "Church must be at this one time," am I serving everyone else?

How can we then understand and ask God to help us when we are struggling to know how I can serve and focus on Jesus? Clothe yourself in compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Are those your feelings? Are you serving others? Think, "Is this for Jesus? Am I doing this to serve and with the Gospel in mind," because that's what matters. All other things are temporary—games and different things change. But what is eternal is God's love for you. You are a chosen child of God, holy and dearly loved. You can forgive as the Lord forgave you, because He gave up EVERYTHING to die for you and to bring you unity with God. Amen.

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