



MORRISON ZION EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
AND
IMMANUEL EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH
www.mzluth.org and immanuelshirley.com

September 21, 2025

Pastor James Enderle

15th Sunday after Pentecost

First Lesson: [Romans 12:6-19](#)

Psalm of the Day: Psalm 115 CW²¹

Second Lesson/ Sermon Text: [Philippians 2:1-16a](#)

Gospel Lesson: [Mark 9:30-35](#)

I'M A CHURCH MEMBER
I WILL NOT LET CHURCH BE ABOUT
MY PREFERENCES AND DESIRES

1. One body, many _____, many _____
2. Naturally, we _____ ourselves _____
3. Jesus puts _____ and the _____ first
4. Have the _____ mindset _____

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.

CHILDREN'S DEVOTION



Does anyone know what this is? It looks like a truck on the picture, but this thing is a floor/door mat. Sometimes you get little holiday ones. It's starting to turn into fall, then we're going to have Thanksgiving, then Christmas and you maybe change your door mats. Do you ever notice the door mat? How many times when you come in the house do you wipe your feet and it clean your feet pretty good? It's pretty important.

There are a lot of things in your house that you notice all the time. You have a fridge and all these different things that help, all these sorts of things. But there's something on the floor that you really never notice but doesn't it serve everyone? Is there anyone that it's like "I'm not going to wipe your feet"? Wouldn't that be silly? Do you know when a floor mat becomes a problem? When it's got a bent corner or it starts making itself known and you start tripping over it.

A lot of times to be a "servant" means to be "unseen," to do things and serve other people even when no one notices and to not make it about yourself. What does that look like in your life?

I've got something here. My kids saw these when I was bringing them over. What are these? If one kid was playing with the penguin, it's not a problem, but what happens? What happens if another kid wants to play with it? We could have 100 stuffed animals in the house, but if one kid starts playing with the penguin, what does the other kid want to do? Play with this same one. Isn't that strange? There are 100 toys in the house but one person starts playing with one and the other person wants to play with that same one. There could be the potato stuffy, but everyone wants the penguin stuffy.



You can serve each other, though. Do you have to be the one who uses the penguin? If you're fighting over just one thing, is the house a common peaceful place? But how easy is it to say "Oh, I'll play with the other one." It's very easy for us to be selfish and say "That person wants this one so I want that one, too!" Do you always have to get your way? We think we do, but when we can serve others, when we can say "You first" or "You can play with that first," "You can have that first," that's how we can serve and let others have their way first, and we can show our love.

We can do that because Jesus loved us and gave up **everything** for us. He came to be a man. He came to die for you. And He gave up all His power to die on a cross and to forgive our sins, even to forgive us when we say "Mine!! I'm not going to give it up!" But when we can be peaceful and give other people their preferences, doesn't it work better?

The next time you guys are fighting over one toy, one game, one video game, or whatever you tend to fight over with your classmates or friends, maybe think about "Can I serve, can I give up my preference so that there can be peace and joy? Maybe I can do something else." That's what God leads us to do because of Jesus' love for us. Let's say a prayer.

Heavenly Father, we know that because we're sinful, we like to put ourselves first. We don't like to serve like the floor mat that doesn't care who it is and it just serves, but we like to make it more about ourselves and we want to pick our things and not share. But Lord, we know that you have loved us and forgiven us, so we can put others first and we can give up our preferences to serve you and to bring peace so that you may be glorified. We thank you for your love and forgiveness and that you have forgiven us even when we do these things. Help us to find peace in you and your love. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

SERMON

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

This week I was gone from Monday to Thursday on a trip to Northern Minnesota for a Pastors Conference. It was a little bit of a road trip. There were four pastors traveling somewhere between 7-8 hours. We fit into this big truck and went on our way.

When was the last time that you were on a road trip with a bunch of people? How do those road trips go, especially when it comes to listening to music? I have a picture here of Goofy. If you are traveling with your spouse or someone your age, someone with the same likes, it's not such a big deal. But what about when you travel with your kids, or if you have ever gone on a road trip with your grandkids? What music do you pick? And who gets to pick? Is it the driver that gets to pick, or is it the passenger(s)? What if someone loves Country or someone loves Rap and someone loves Hard Rock? How do you decide what to pick? It can be pretty challenging and it can be a big point of contention as you decide whose preferences you get for music.



I remember this as I was growing up. When I was really young, my family listened to Country. Then as I grew up, I was the youngest of five so I started to get the taste of my older siblings, and I listened to Alternative music to Rock. But my parents still listened to Country, so we came together with a little bit of a compromise. We would listen to Oldies music. We put the 60s and 70s hits on and it was a good compromise.

How does it go for you as it comes to compromise and preferences, not just on road trips but in life? Do you make it all about you and pick the music, or do you let other people pick, or do you make a compromise? Sometimes it's very easy to make it all about our own preferences and our own desires and put ourselves first.

As we see Paul writing to the Philippians, you can say that there may be this issue in the church in Philippi as he is writing to them. We see he spends quite a bit of time on it. Paul focuses on unity in the church in many of the sections of Scripture, so we know it's a key thing, not just for this church but for many churches, for our church. So we look at his words to be encouraged on how we can make sure that we're not making church all about our preferences and desires.

He starts out by talking about the blessings we have in Jesus. ***Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion...*** These are all

the things you have from knowing Jesus and having the Holy Spirit and having His Word. Then he says: ***...then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.*** He is encouraging us to be of one mind and like-minded. But what did we just talk about in the last few weeks? There is the body of Christ—we are all the body of Christ. What is true about being the body of Christ? We have many members. And if there is one body with many members, as much as we might be a foot, a leg, a spleen, all these different body parts, what do you actually have? You have a mind. So as much as we're **one body with many members, we also have many minds.**

So as we gather with several hundred people, are there going to be the exact same minds? We're sinful people with different minds, with different opinions, different preferences, different desires, different types of music we like, different types of ice cream we like, all sorts of different preferences and desires. We can't pretend that's not true. That's a good thing when it comes to the diversity and who God has made us. He has given us different gifts and different talents. So there is the encouragement to be like-minded and have one mind, to have that mind focused on Jesus, but we do have to understand that we are sinful people, all with different likes and preferences. If we pretend that's not true, then we're going to stomp on people and not think about the fact that other people have preferences that "I" might not have. It's okay to have different views and opinions because we all have been created in different ways.

But then the encouragement is to be like-minded, of one mind, because then he says: ***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*** Notice there it said ***not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*** Is that what we do naturally? Is that what the world is telling us to do? The truth is **naturally, we value ourselves above others.** We do that because of our sinful nature. We also do that because of the world we live in.



This is a very famous ad. You can probably "hear" the jingle by Burger King. "Have it your way." You can get all the pickles. You can get all the stuff you want on the burger the way that you want it. It's all about your preferences.

The next one is maybe a famous one as well. You might know this song. "I want it My Way." It's Frank Sinatra singing all about his way. Isn't that what the world teaches you over and over again and how we can customize everything and make it all about you and buy what you want? The world over and over again is telling you to make it about yourself, to value yourself as more important, and in order to get



ahead, to get that position at work, to get ahead in the world, you have to value yourself above others. This is what the world is going to tell you over and over again. So as much as our sinful hearts tell us this, the world is telling us this, we need this constant reminder from God to do NOTHING out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, to value others above ourselves. This is an extremely hard thing to do.

What does this look like when we go into the world or into the church? That feeling of doing things with a selfish ambition and self-set focus creeps into the church, too. The question I often have, one of the main focuses of the conference that we went to, one of the reasons I love the CrossTrain Program that I'm in is that we talk about transparency and accountability. I have a peer coach/another pastor that I meet with every week. Then I have another pastor that I meet with once a month. One of the main things we are supposed to do is talk about our struggles, talk about the things that we want to improve, especially spiritually, physically and emotionally. There is a transparency and if you're in the program, they say you can't hide stuff. If you want to be in this, you need to share what you're really struggling with.

A question to consider is do you have someone like that in your life? Are you transparent with anyone? Is there anyone who would call you out and say "You know you're being a little prideful here? That's a sinful action." A big problem is that's often a blind spot, so I would even include not just your wife or your husband in this. You and your spouse can maybe see the blind spots together, but you might not notice them. But do you have another Christian who is able to talk to you in an open, honest way? That's the blessing of being part of the Church. Hopefully you have those Christian friends who will point those things out and be transparent with you. Maybe you're thinking "I want to find that," or "I really wanted to do that with this person, to have this very open, transparent relationship."

What about the Church? Are we transparent and open and honest about what we struggle with, the Christian Church as a whole? In the book that we're looking at, Thom Rainer's, I Am A Church Member, he talks about how 9 out of 10 churches are not growing. They are either shrinking, or if their community is growing rapidly, their church isn't growing very much at all, so we're not outward focused. We are more self-serving. He lists 10 things. This is a way for us, from a person who does work with churches, to see what the descriptions are of a church that is more self-focused, focusing inward and not focusing outward. It's not saying we do all these things. It's saying what do I see myself doing? How do I help with one of these things in the wrong way? Or what are things we have improved on? What are things that we can still improve on? I'll read them and summarize them really quickly.

Ten characteristics of a self-serving church

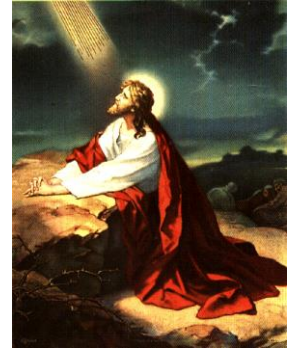
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|-------------------------------|---|
| 1. Worship Wars | 6. Inordinate demands for pastoral care |
| 2. Prolonged minutia meetings | 7. Attitudes of entitlement |
| 3. Facility focus | 8. Greater concern about change than the gospel |
| 4. Program driven | 9. Anger and hostility |
| 5. Inwardly focused budget | 10. Evangelistic apathy |

1. Worship Wars. When you are so concerned about what instrument needs to be played. "This instrument can't be played. This instrument needs to be played." Or "That song, Not Unto Us, great song!" Or someone might say "I just can't stand it." Different people have different preferences but can we enjoy different types of music?
2. Prolonged Minutia Meetings. You are focused on the tiny details and you get these really long meetings.
3. Facility Focus. Instead of focusing on the mission and the Gospel, you are really focused on just maintaining facilities.
4. Program Driven. Instead of saying "How can we, each person, go out and do the mission and focus on the Christian life of each person?" we say, "We have to have this program to do that or that program to do that," or "It's the job of the Called Worker" or "...those people to do that." "It's not my work."
5. Inwardly Focused Budget. Is all the money focused on here, inwardly? Or are we focusing and spending money on sharing the Gospel to other people.
6. Inordinate Demands for Pastoral Care.
7. Attitudes of Entitlement. "My grandfather was here. This has been my church or our family's church forever, so we need to do it my way because that's how it goes."
8. Greater Concern About Change Than the Gospel. Another book we were reading described it this way. Are you more concerned about comfort than the Great Commission? Are we going out and sharing and saying "I can change so that we can get more people" or "If I have to move or do something different so that a new person..." or "So that we can share the Gospel with other people, that might mean I have to change what I like."
9. Anger and Hostility. We're not talking about these things in a peaceful, calm way but with anger and hostility.
10. Evangelistic Apathy. "It's okay, we've got enough people. We don't need to go share. Someone else can do that."

I think this is a transparent view to say this is what a church that is looking inwardly looks like and we can say "What are we good at?" and "What are we not good at?" and we can all apply it to ourselves. And if you see yourself in one of those things, you can ask God to help you, to say "How can we be more outwardly focused, to think about other people?" How we can do that is exactly what we see next.

This is what Paul encourages us. He says: ***In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!*** The whole way and reason that we can do any of this, to not put myself first, which I do naturally, is because **Jesus**

puts you and the world first. You might say that was easy for Him. "That's easy for Jesus to do because He is God." Do you remember the Garden of Gethsemane? Why is Jesus praying and what is going on in the Garden of Gethsemane? Do you remember some of the words that it describes about Jesus? He was full of sorrow and troubled. He was overwhelmed with sorrow, to the point of death! He asked "Could this cup be taken from me?" What is He saying? He's filled with emotions of worry and sorrow because He knows what is ahead. He is going to go to the cross and it's not going to be easy. He is going to pay for the sins of the world. He says "God, I know this needs to happen, but is there any other way?"



Did Jesus maybe want something done a little bit different? Have you ever thought about that, the emotions and the thoughts that were going through Jesus then? Jesus is perfect, so He didn't do it in a sinful way, but He's anxious about what is coming up ahead. Overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death and saying "May this cup be taken from me?" Does Jesus know what it's like to not get His preferences, to not get His way? Then after all of this, He goes out to the disciples and they are sleeping. He is alone.

So if you have struggled and said "I just am not getting my way" or "I'm frustrated," Jesus knows what you are feeling, but He did it so that He could go to the cross. In Philippians it describes why He is so sorrowful. It's not just death, but death on a cross, the worst suffering, and then suffering hell for you and for me. But what amazing joy and peace this gives us because that means every time that we fall short, that we make it about ourselves, we are forgiven. It's wiped away because Jesus has suffered and died for you and for me and our sins are now separated from God. You have peace with God and forgiveness. He loves you and forgives you and that gives us this amazing peace that we can now serve others, to not make it about ourselves but to serve Him.

So how do we live? What do we do? We are encouraged then: ***In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus... Have the same mindset as Jesus.*** And we see the words before: ***Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves...*** This is what it means to have that same mindset of Jesus. Later it says: ***Do everything without grumbling or arguing...*** This is the struggle of when I know something might not happen the way I want it, but what do I do? How do I react when things don't go my way? Do I grumble and argue? Or do I, as Romans talks about, live at peace with others? Who is it that decides if you live at peace with others? You! You get to decide if you're going to argue and grumble or speak with peace and humility, to value others in a better way.

I want you to think about life and all the opportunities that you have to serve, especially think about marriage. Did you get married so that you can have your way every day? So that you can be with your husband or your wife and YOU get your way? What is

marriage about? It's about serving. Then once you have kids, is having a family about getting your way every night and getting to eat the food you want every day? Or is it about serving and putting others first? When we do that, we see the joy that we have in life.

Luther describes it this way. He says, "A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject of all, subject to all." We get to serve all. What does this look like in your daily life? Think about how going after my own preferences can be a problem. It's hard to see then. If you are out on the road, do you like driving on dirty roads and getting your car dirty? Or do you like driving slow on the country roads? Would it be your preference to go the speed limit or much faster? I'm sure it would be your preference, but when you make it about yourself and "Maybe it's not the right time to pass, but it's going to be my choice and I'm going to go," what happens? You put yourself in danger. You put someone else in danger. You put that truck in danger. And they are doing things for your good and for their good, things that have to be done, but notice how easily we can get so frustrated and make it about our preference.

When we put others first, when we humble ourselves and ask ourselves to value others as more important, not looking after our own interests but others, we can see what happens. You're not going to be able to do this all on your own strength. Notice in Verse 13 it says, **"...for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose."** God's Word is the Spirit. It's the love of Jesus that enables us to do this. But what this will look like, as Paul writes, is that this world **warped and crooked**, But when we can serve, when our church can make it about other people's preferences, when you in your family and at work can make it about other people's preferences and serve out of love, it makes a difference because you might want it all about yourself but that thing that you wanted is probably a short-term thing.

But what lasts forever? The message of Jesus and that salvation that we get to share; and as you go out and live that life as a Christian, you can point people to that hope and peace. Don't go on that road trip and argue, or even in our world today put in your ear buds and just ignore what everyone else does. Come together in peace and harmony, to serve and love, knowing that this is all for an eternal good. Amen.

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