

“FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMILITY”
AUGUST 23, 2020 SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
(abbreviated COVID 19 service/50% seating capacity)
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

HYMN (#511 AH) (# 203 OVH): “Blessed Assurance”

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine;
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

REFRAIN:

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Perfect submission, perfect delight,
Visions of rapture now burst on my sight;
Angels descending, bring from above
Echoes of mercy, whispers of love.

Perfect submission, all is at rest,
I in my Savior am happy and blest;
Watching and waiting, looking above,
Filled with His goodness, lost in His love.

PRAYER

CHILDREN’S SERMON: *Romans 12:6 “We have different gifts...”*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Rom 11:33-12:8 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen. 12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God—this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer 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. 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you. 4 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.*

CONFESSION OF FAITH: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and earth; And in Jesus Christ, His only son, our Lord; Who was conceived by the Holy Spirit; born of the virgin Mary; Suffered under Pontius Pilate; Was crucified, dead and buried; He descended into hell; The third day He rose again from the dead; He ascended into heaven; And is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; From where He shall come to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit; The holy Christian Church; the Communion of Saints; the Forgiveness of sins; The Resurrection of the body, And the Life everlasting. Amen

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

SERMON TITLE: “FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMILITY!” Romans 11:33-12:8; Pastor Tom Olson; August 23, 2020

Our gardens this year are the best I have ever seen in my life. The vegetable harvest is coming in full speed! For most of the year we long for a vine ripened tomato or fresh sweet corn and then for two weeks we drown in them. It is a short, fast, intense seasons of harvesting, canning, freezing and eating. And as fast as it came it will be gone.

The same is true of spiritual revival. Most revivals are very short lived, but thousands of souls come to Christ in that period of time. Sometimes pastors and evangelists will even die after a true revival because they go day and night until they are exhausted. It is kind of like that when farmers harvest their fields...day and night until the grain is safely stored in dry bins to feed the world for another year. You can't sit around when it is harvest time.

We are in a time of harvest spiritually too. Souls are in desperate need of the assurance of salvation. People who don't know where they will go after death are terrified of this virus pandemic. We need to be there and be effective in getting the gospel to them so that they might find the assurance of salvation in Jesus Christ. But how do we be fruitful? Let's talk about it.

I. OUR BELIEFS: FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMBLE THEOLOGY

Romans 11:33-36 Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out! 34 "Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?" 35 "Who has ever given to God, that God should repay him?" 36 For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever! Amen.

DOCTRINES: One of the greatest destroyers of spiritual revival is proud theological fighting. Many great churches have been destroyed when believers choose a difficult doctrine to fight about, form sides and rip into each other. Often times the doctrine is one that is not clear in the Bible or some aspect of God that is beyond the human finite brain to understand in the first place. I recently was reminded of the “fileoquy controversy” between the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches. They fought over the phrase in the Nicene Creed that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father and the Son” which was embraced by the West and the East saying that the Holy Spirit “proceeds from the Father only.” Another big controversy is how much water to use in baptism and the best age for baptism, and the Bible doesn't make it as clear as I could wish. Another big controversy is predestination: does God pick people for heaven and hell, or for heaven only or does he make heaven available to ALL people who believe in Jesus as their Savior and it is their choice to reject the free gift available to all. Another controversy is when the rapture of the church will be or if the millennium of Revelation 20 is literal or symbolic.

PRIMARY: Christians can lose sight of the main things like the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, the blood of Jesus shed on the cross, Jesus resurrection and his imminent return. When we argue about difficult concepts and obscure doctrines our friends shake their heads and lose interest in what we say. The early church was so powerful because they focused on the gospel and had great love for each other.

ROMANS: The Apostle Paul has spent 11 chapters of Romans meticulously outlining the great doctrines of the faith and the great mysteries of God and then bursts out in this amazing SUMMARY POEM in Romans 11:33 *Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!* He reminds us that we are too finite to understand God's ways and we should be humble in our attitude toward other Christians who themselves are struggling to understand these things. Instead of being so "right in our own minds" about complex theology it is much better to say, "This is how I presently understand this." We should be willing to listen to others who may see something we don't see. People are much more inclined to respect our views if we are in awe and wonder of the greatness of God rather than proud about how much we know about the Bible. IF WE ARE TRULY CONFIDENT, WE HAVE NO NEED TO BE ARROGANT.

IMPRESSIVE: One thing that is sure to draw seeking souls to the Lord is when we weep over our sins and praise the Lord for being willing to go to the cross and give his innocent life in our place. We will bear much fruit if we hold to truth with humility. FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMBLE THEOLOGY.

II. OUR ATTITUDE: FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMBLE ANTHROPOLOGY

Romans 12:1-3 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer 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. 3 For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.

FAULTS: I don't know about you, but I find it much easier to see the faults of other people than to see my own shortcomings. If we are going to bear much fruit for the Lord, Paul says here that we should "not think of ourselves more highly than we ought." Who was I when Christ came to save me? I was a sinner, an enemy of God, self-centered, self-serving, disobedient and unbelieving. When I look at a group photo, who is the first person I look for? I look for myself.

HOW: So how do I get a humble view of myself and a high esteem for other people that they can feel? Paul says here that it comes from the "renewing of the mind." He goes on to say that this renewed mind will give us the ability to know the perfect will of God. **Romans 8:6 puts it this way, "The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace."** It comes from being filled with the Word of God. *Colossians 3:16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.* God's Word washes out the impurities and false concepts from our minds and it gives us a high view of our Creator and a humble view of ourselves. A MATURE CHRISTIAN SHOULD BE EASY TO LIVE WITH AND WORK WITH. Paul goes on to give us a practical way of doing this in *Romans 12:10 Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves.* What a great goal! FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMBLE ANTHROPOLOGY.

III. OUR SERVICE: FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMBLE ECCLESIOLOGY (CHURCHOLOGY)

Romans 12:4-8 Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, 5 so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. 6 We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith. 7 If it is serving, let him serve; if it is teaching, let him teach; 8 if it is encouraging, let him encourage; if it is contributing to the needs of others, let him give generously; if it is leadership, let him govern diligently; if it is showing mercy, let him do it cheerfully.

GIFTED: God has GIFTED each one of us to spread of the Gospel to the whole world. We are a team and we each have a part. If we humbly accept the gifts that God has given to us and use them in His church, we will collectively bear much fruit for his glory. It is like our garden. That garden needed the gift of manure for fertilizer, it need the gifts of those who made the tractor that plowed the soil, it needed the gifts of the horticulturalists who developed quality seeds to grow, it needed the gifts of the planters, weed pullers, harvesters, and those who can, freeze and preserve the food and others who prepare the food for eating. It really took many, many people to grow that garden and we also can't forget the Lord who provided the sun and rain.

LIST: Paul gives us one of many lists of gifts in the church. He mentions prophecy, encouragement, giving, leadership and mercy. The PROPHET has great zeal for the Word of God, pointing out sin and the need to repent, the SERVER loves to help behind the scenes, the TEACHER loves to have Bible studies and Sunday school classes, the ENCOURAGER loves to call and write to people and cheer them on, the GIVER has the ability to make money and share it, the LEADER loves to get things organized and running smoothly, the MERCIFUL person loves to comfort people in their sorrows and troubles.

COMPARISON: I have noticed that sometimes people get critical of those who don't have their gift. The prophet is critical of the merciful person who gives hugs rather than warnings. The leader is critical of the giver for becoming a financial success rather than being on his action team. The encourager is critical of the prophet who is seems too harsh in his defense of the truth. We need to realize that others have different gifts and that they need to operate in their gifting and not in ours. Then the body functions properly and is healthy. And as they say, "healthy sheep reproduce."

DISCOVER: Find out what your gift is, use it to God's glory and don't worry about others who are laboring in a different way in the body. Remember that Jesus said just giving a cup of cold water to someone who is thirsty in His Name is effective. WE CAN BE FRUITFUL THROUGH HUMBLE ECCLESIOLOGY.

God is making us into a fruitful garden through HUMBLE THEOLOGY, HUMBLE ATTITUDES AND HUMBLE SERVICE. As we stand amazed in the presence of the cross, we will be humble and we will bring in an abundant harvest of souls for the glory of God. Amen

PRAISE SONG: Hannah Carrizales

Make me a servant
Humble and meek
Lord let me lift up
Those who are weak
And may the prayer
Of my heart always be
Make me a servant
Make me a servant
Make me a servant today

In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified, Be Glorified
In My Life, Lord, Be Glorified Today.

In Your Church, Lord, Be Glorified, Be Glorified
In Your Church, Lord, Be Glorified Today.

PRAYER & LORD'S PRAYER: *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

BENEDICTION: The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

DOXOLOGY

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson