

“MAKING AN IMPACT”
AUGUST 30, 2020 SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
(abbreviated COVID 19 service/50% seating capacity)
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Lisa Gabbert

HYMN (#369 AH) (# 207 OVH): “Jesus Loves Me”

**Jesus loves me! This I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak, but He is strong.**

Refrain:

**Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
Yes, Jesus loves me!
The Bible tells me so.**

(Drive In only)

**Jesus loves me! This I know,
As He loved so long ago,
Taking children on His knee,
Saying, “Let them come to Me.”**

(Inside only)

**Jesus loves me! He who died
Heaven’s gate to open wide;
He will wash away my sin,
Let His little child come in.**

**Jesus loves me! He will stay
Close beside me all the way;
Thou hast bled and died for me,
I will henceforth live for Thee.**

PRAYER

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

EPISTLE LESSON: *Rom 12:9-21 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God’s people who are in need. Practice hospitality.*

14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

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: "MAKING AN IMPACT" Romans 12:9-21; Pastor Tom Olson; August 30, 2020

APPLICATION: As we march on in our study of the book of Romans this summer, we are now to the part of the book that leaves the foundational doctrines about God & salvation and moves into the relationship issues. We get what we might call practical advice on how the church members should interact with each other and with the world.

FOLLOW UP: You might remember a sermon I gave a couple weeks ago about what we do when we stumble and fall into sin. We saw the heart of God that wants to forgive and restore us back into his service. I used an example from the news headlines about Jerry Fallwell, Jr. falling into sin and being removed from his position as head of Liberty University. Let me quote a line from that sermon:

"What about Rev. Fallwell? He too is welcome to return to the Lord. Does that mean he should be president of Liberty University? Of course not, he needs to earn people's trust. If he is repentant, he would be more than willing to take a humble place of service in the kingdom of God. That is the test for him right now. Being forgiven is one thing but being reinstated to a position of responsibility and the same temptations is another. Some other man can take that position who is more mature and not be tempted by money, sensuality, yacht parties and the lure of the rich and powerful people. But restoration to God is available to him and you and me right now, no matter how we have sinned. God wants Israel to be saved and he wants all of us to come back to Him. THAT IS WHY JESUS GAVE HIS LIFE ON THE CROSS."

So, what happened? Did Rev. Fallwell repent and offer to service Christ in a humble place until trust can be rebuilt? No, instead what happened is that he agreed to "retire" if they gave him a 10.5-million-dollar severance package! This man who represented Bible-believing Christianity and conservative values demanded 10.5 million dollars to leave without a fight. Do you see why the world shakes their head and doesn't consider

Christianity (that is 50 times the money Sharon and I have saved for retirement in our lifetime). Is it any wonder that the church of Christ is looked down on in America today? There has got to be a better way for us to live and make an impact on our society than these and countless other scandals. And there is. The Apostle Paul show the church at Rome how to MAKE AN IMPACT on the world around us. Let's talk about it. MAKING AN IMPACT...

I. IMPACT ON THOSE AROUND US

Romans 12:9-13 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. 10 Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves. 11 Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. 12 Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. 13 Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

ONE: ***“Love must be sincere.”*** We need to learn to be honest and tell the truth and not appear to be loving for the sake of any agenda. I got a phone call the other day from a pastor that I barely know. He told me that he was thinking about me and wondering how I was handling all this COVID virus stuff. He asked about our congregation and wanted to see if we were doing OK as well. I thanked him for his concern, hung up the phone and said to Sharon, “I bet you anything that pastor wants to find out how we are doing after GCBC left so that he can be first in line to buy our building if we are not making it. I later found out that the same pastor has been talking to people about wanting to buy our building. That really hurts me because his love was not sincere. I would not have been one bit offended if he called and said that his church was looking for a building and was wondering if we wanted to sell. That would be sincere. But to call and say that he was concerned about me and wondering if I was OK was not sincere and that really made me lose respect for a man that until then I had no reason not to feel good about. Folks, we need to be real. When people come to this church, we are not nice to them to get them to join the church...we must be nice to them because Christ in us wants to love them through us. It must be sincere. The world can smell phony Christianity quickly. Insincerity kills the church.

TWO: ***“Hate what is evil, cling to what is good.”*** We should be heart-broken about what is happening at Liberty University. I pray that I can finish my ministry well and not bring any disgrace upon my Savior and His church.

THREE: ***“Be devoted to one another...honor one another.”*** This means that we consider the other person...our mate, our children, our neighbors, fellow church members. We invite them to our table. We listen to them and not just talk. We consider their needs. As times get tough and persecution of Christians grows, we will find out that Christ's church is our real family...or forever family.

FOUR: ***“Practice hospitality.”*** Hospitality has the root word hospital or hospice. It refers to hands on care in a time of need. Many people are frightened and lonely. I once asked my 29-year-old-son to describe his generation of millennials. He said one word, “Lonely.” It is as simple as saying to someone after church, “Come join us at our table.” It may mean inviting someone to your home for a dessert after Bible study. It may mean going to someone's home and ministering to them in their illness or loneliness. The church is not “a hall of fame for saints” but it is a “hospital for sinners.”

These are the things that impact those around us and open the door to sharing the gospel to them.

II. IMPACT ON THOSE WHO ARE DIFFICULT

Romans 12:14-16 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited.

HURT: Some people like to hurt us. I often say, "Hurting people, hurt people." Hurting people lash out and "persecute" us. Professor Alan Dershowitz has been saying very harsh things about Christians all his life and blames many of the problems in America on people who foolishly believe in a life to come. If college professors like him are successful, they will produce or have produced a generation of college graduates that hate Christians. And they go on to be the CEO's of corporations and are starting to punish people for their biblical beliefs. So how are we to treat those who abuse us? Paul says, "Bless them."

RICOCHET: It works...I have found great supernatural relief by literally praying for blessings upon those who are hardest on me. Sometimes it is like pumping a dry well at first but as we bless those who are hard on us the "water" of the Holy Spirit starts to flow and who gets the blessing? The one who is blessing those who hurt them, gets an immediate blessing...a ricocheted blessing. Think about the words of Christ from the cross, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." And to the thief who earlier on had been railing against him, He say, "Today you will be with me in paradise."

CROSS: But it takes humility to do this. And where do we find humility? We find it by looking at Christ on the cross. Now that is how we deal with those who are mean to us. How we deal with those who are downright evil.

III. IMPACT ON THOSE WHO ARE EVIL

Romans 12:17-21 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. 20 On the contrary:

*"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;
if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.
In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head."*

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

DOING: The sad fact is that some people are more than unkind. They are more than mean, they are evil. Their hearts are filled with such hate and anger that they are bent on destroying other people. How do we deal with people who are so evil? What do we do with those who try to destroy us? You must take the step beyond blessing and do something nice for them. You must "*overcome evil with good.*"

POTS: Paul says that we are to give food and drink to those who are evil to us. There are many attempts to explain what "heap burning coals on their head" means. I like one explanation that says that people carried pots of coals on their heads in order to start their home fires for cooking and warmth. If your pot of coals gets cold, it is a disaster resulting in hunger and coldness. When we do good to evil people, we are refilling their coal pot and bringing nourishment and warmth back into their empty, cold lives. It melts their hearts.

GRINCH: Remember the "Grinch who stole Christmas?" He was born with a heart that was too small. He thus tormented the people called "Whos." But the love and songs and faith of the people in Whoville eventually caused his heart to grow and make him into a beautiful being. They put the coals on his head and warmth came into his cold heart. And this can only be done by actions, not just words.

PERSONAL: Do you have someone terrible in your life you would like to never see again? How about baking them a nice fresh apple pie, with no agenda but the love of Jesus coming through your warm soul to their cold heart? That is how the murderous Saul of Tarsus became the warm, caring and sacrificial Apostle Paul. The love of Jesus melted his cold heart on the road to Damascus.

CONCLUSION: God wants to show the world what Jesus looks like in his church. This demonstration of the love of Christ through the people of God is what will convince the world to come to Jesus for salvation. I put it this way sometimes, "Love is the key that opens the door of evangelism." I am grieved at the situation at Liberty University that has brought such shame on the Name of Christ, but we can overcome that scandal by the way we care for those around us, including the harsh and even evil ones. One Muslim in charge of beheading Christians in the middle east, became a follower of Christ. When asked why, he said, "I saw the way they died and wanted to have what they had in my heart." Our actions do speak louder than words. Amen

PRAISE SONG: Lisa and Osthus Family

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: Lisa Gabbert

POSTLUDE: Lisa Gabbert