

BULLETIN TEMPLATE: Minnesota Valley Church

Association of Free Lutheran Congregations

Date: Sunday, July 7, 2021

Church Year Date: 6th Sunday after Pentecost

Prelude: Rebekah Olson

Call to Worship: Psalm 85:8-13

Hymn "When We All Get to Heaven" 9 AM (OVH) #272 "When We All Get to Heaven"

Hymn #190 vss 1&3 "Sweet Hour of Prayer"

Prayer

Song: "We Bring the Sacrifice of Praise"

Children's Sermon: "The Plumb Line"

READER:

Old Testament Lesson: Amos 7:7-15 *This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied. Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. 9 "The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam." 10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. 11 For this is what Amos is saying: "'Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.'" 12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. 13 Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom." 14 Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. 15 But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'*

Gospel Lesson: Mark 6:14-29 *King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." 16 But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" 17 For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, 20 because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he*

was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. 21 Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." 23 And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. 25 At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28 and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. 29 On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: Apostles' Creed- *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*

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 (please put on screen)

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.

Announcements

Offering: Pianist plays during offering

Hymn #262 "How Firm a Foundation"

Message: "In Christ"

Ephesians 1:3-14; Pastor Tom Olson; July 11, 2021

PERSPECTIVE: One of the great things about summer and vacations is that it helps us get perspective. Sometimes we get so involved in a work or family issues that we lose perspective and get overwhelmed. Getting away for a while can really help us regain perspective. Seeing a scenic mountain range or blue Caribbean water and white sand can help us with perspective. I have found that a drive can give me perspective. In my first parish in the ministry we had several demanding situations, two major building programs and issues between some strong-

willed people. I remember one time, before I was married, I needed perspective and I just got in my car and started to drive. I drove over 400 miles and stopped at unplanned places and talked to people. When I returned back to the parsonage late that day, I realized that my situation was no tougher than what the rest of the world was facing and I was ready to dig in again. I have often said that I need to drive about 90 miles away for the grip of my situation let go and allow me to think clearly. Our camping trip this week reminded me how much I like the bed I sleep in at our house! Perspective.

PAUL: The Apostle Paul gives us perspective in Ephesians 1, it is about the ETERNAL perspective. We need it because things in this life don't always go well for us. We have disease, accidents, financial reversals, relationship failures and simply the degeneration of old age. We need an eternal perspective, or we will be in despair. In our Old Testament Lesson Amos was a rejected preacher who faithfully gave God's true message and it was received with contempt. He needed perspective. In our gospel lesson, John the Baptist, was the most dedicated and faithful messenger of God in all of history and he ended up in prison after about six months of ministry. John was eventually beheaded at the hands of those who preached to. He needed ETERNAL perspective. Most of us don't have it that bad, but we need this eternal perspective that we find IN CHRIST. Let's look at it:

I. BLESSED IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

ETERNAL: Most of the blessings that we want are physical... food, clothing, home, friends, money, entertainment and so on. And from our perspective, that makes sense. But God has a different perspective. He knows how brief our physical life is and how long eternity is. *Psalm 90:12 "Teach us Lord to number our days, so that we may get a heart of wisdom."* God, in love, has given us eternal spiritual blessings in Christ, forgiveness, gifts of grace, an eternal home in heaven, the presence of the Holy Spirit, love, joy, peace and other fruit, a calling to be His witnesses... This poem by a soldier named Chester Nimitz summarizes it well:

"I asked God for strength that I might achieve. I was made weak that I might learn to obey. I asked for health that I might do greater things. I was given infirmity that I might do better things. I asked for riches that I might be happy. I was given poverty that I might be wise. I asked for power that I might have the praise of men. I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God. I asked for all things that I might enjoy life. I was given life that I might enjoy all things. I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for. Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered. I am, among all men, most richly blessed."

GOD GIVES US EVERYTHING WE NEED; WE ARE BLESSED IN CHRIST. That gives us perspective.

II. CHOSEN IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.

OMNISCIENT: God knew, from the beginning, that mankind would choose to embrace sin and reject Him. 1 Peter 1:19&20 and Revelation 13:8 tell us that God's plan of salvation was made before man was created. Jesus is called the "***Lamb slain before the foundation of the earth.***" Before we were born, our salvation was on God's mind and He chose us IN CHRIST. Romans 8 reminds us that "***ALL have sinned and fall short and also that ALL are justified freely in Christ.***" To put it in simplistic terms, our ticket for eternal life with God has been paid in full and simply needs to be claimed. We are separated from a holy God because of sin but we are chosen for salvation because of the innocent blood of Christ shed on the cross. That gives us perspective.

III. PREDESTINED IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:5&6 In love 5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will- 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

PLANNED: It was God's pre-determined plan that Jesus Christ's death and resurrection would qualify us to be ADOPTED AS CHILDREN of God. God not only wanted us in heaven, but He wanted us to call Him FATHER. The prayer He gave us starts that way "Our Father." Luther puts it this way in the small catechism, page 98 in the front of your hymnal,

OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN. *WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?* "God thereby tenderly encourages us to believe that He is truly our Father, and that we are truly His children, so that we may boldly and confidently come to Him in prayer, even as beloved children come to their dear father."

HEIRS: As children of God, we are co-heirs with Christ of all the riches of heaven for all eternity. That gives us perspective. Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg are consumed by wealth and power, because after about 80 years of riches they will die and likely spend eternity in the fire of hell. We don't have to run after wealth, because we are already exceedingly rich, FOR ALL ETERNITY. It is PREDESTINED. That gives us perspective.

IV. REDEEMED IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace & that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

AMAZING: God is amazing. Even though he created us and thus has every right to us, He gives us the ability to say no to Him. And we do. Every time we sin, we say “no” to God. Thus, we end up in the prison of sin. But God buys us back, HE REDEEMS US. In the Old Testament God demonstrated this by asking the prophet “Hosea” to marry a woman who was a prostitute named Gomer. She had a wandering heart and left him and returned to prostitution. She ended up becoming a slave to be sold in a slave market. God then instructed Hosea to go to the slave auction and buy back his wife. This was a living prophecy of what God does for His people...we wander away from God, we choose sin and death and become slaves of sin. God buys us back with the innocent blood of Christ and gives us the chance to be His children forever, if we accept it. ***John 3:16 says the “whosoever will”*** may come. And “whosoever means you and me!” That means we are loved.

WE ARE REDEEMED IN CHRIST. That gives us perspective.

V. PURPOSE IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:9 And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ.

INVITED: The witnessing tract of Campus Crusade for Christ called THE FOUR SPIRITUAL LAWS begins by saying “God loves you and has a wonderful plan for your life.” That is what we see in this verse. Jesus Christ demonstrates to us that God’s will includes plans for our lives. Notice this is according to ***“His good pleasure.” Romans 8:31&32 “If God is for us, who can be against us? 32 He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all-how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?”*** God has great pleasure in letting us know His will and inviting us to be a part of his exciting activity in the world. WE HAVE PURPOSE IN CHRIST. That gives us perspective.

VI. UNITY IN CHRIST

Ephesians 1:10 to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment-to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

SIGNS: Many times, we read the news and are tempted to say, “Things are falling apart.” But according to this verse that is not correct, even though it may look that way. According to this verse, things are not falling apart but they are FALLING INTO PLACE. The signs point to the imminent return of Christ and that blessed era when faith becomes sight and all things are put under the headship of Christ. The ***“lion will lie down by the lamb” (Isaiah 11:6)*** and ***“people***

will no longer practice war” (Isaiah 2:4). Satan will be bound and thrown into the bottomless pit. The “martyrs will be raised from the dead and will reign with Christ” (Revelation 20:4). People will once again grow to be hundreds of years old (Isaiah 65:20). There will be peace on forever with Christ on the throne of David (Luke 1:33)...how I long for that day! When we are close to Christ, we have unity.

MOONIES: On Thursday, representative of Sun Young Moon’s Unification Church came talk to me about the division in the church and how we need to be united...of course she meant under the Unification Church and giving our service and money to the widow of Rev Moon. The United Church of Christ was formed with that same motive, to make one united church. But unity is not a matter of belonging to an organization and given them your money. Unity is something we have in Christ. I told the lady from the Unification Church that the very same morning I had been to a prayer meeting at Berean Baptist church with a group of pastors from many denominations. There was great unity and love in that fellowship. We didn’t need to get unity from the Unification Church since we already had unity through Jesus Christ. JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH AND THE SOURCE OF OUR UNITY, (not Mrs. Moon)! That brings us perspective.

EVENTUALLY: One day, God is going to make a new heaven and a new earth. There will be no more sickness, sadness, pain or death. In that day we will not need perspective to cope with problems. But until that day we face challenges...perhaps not as hard as Amos the prophet or John the baptizer had to face, but real ones, none-the-less. Ephesians one gives us this eternal perspective we need as we face the very real disappointments of this life.

JOY: We may feebly struggle here on earth, but in Christ we have life and purpose. The pay may not always be great, but the benefits are “out of this world.” If you need perspective today, look to Christ with arms stretched out wide saying, “I love you this much.” Then press on with joy. Amen

Hymn #397 “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

Doxology (9 AM OVH #32; 10:30 AM AH #390) *Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Hm above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A-men. A-men, A---men.*

Postlude: Rebekah Olson

Old Testament Lesson: Amos 7:7-15 *This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. 8 And the LORD asked me, "What do you see, Amos?" "A plumb line," I replied. Then the Lord said, "Look, I am setting a plumb line among my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. 9 "The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam." 10 Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: "Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. 11 For this is what Amos is saying: "'Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.'" 12 Then Amaziah said to Amos, "Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. 13 Don't prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king's sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom." 14 Amos answered Amaziah, "I was neither a prophet nor a prophet's son, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. 15 But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.'*

Gospel Lesson: Mark 6:14-29 *King Herod heard about this, for Jesus' name had become well known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him." 15 Others said, "He is Elijah." And still others claimed, "He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago." 16 But when Herod heard this, he said, "John, the man I beheaded, has been raised from the dead!" 17 For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. 18 For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." 19 So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, 20 because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. 21 Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. 22 When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." 23 And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." 24 She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. 25 At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." 26 The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. 27 So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, 28 and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. 29 On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.*

READER: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!