

August 15, 2021

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson; Singers: Osthus

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 34:17-19 The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears them; he delivers them from all their troubles. 18 The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit. 19 A righteous man may have many troubles, but the LORD delivers him from them all;*

HYMN #187 (AH) "Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing"

OPENING PRAYER: *Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen*

PRAYER

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: **Bread you only eat once. John 6:51** *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."*

FIRST LESSON: *Joshua 24:1-2a;14-18 Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. 2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Josh 24:14-18 14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! 17 It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. 18 And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."*

GOSPEL LESSON: *John 6:51-69*

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world." 52 Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" 53 Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. 54 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. 55 For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. 56 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. 57 Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. 58 This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever." 59 He said this while teaching in the synagogue in Capernaum. 60 On hearing it, many of his disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" 61 Aware that his disciples were grumbling

about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you? 62 What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! 63 The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. 64 Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. 65 He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him." 66 From this time many of his disciples turned back and no longer followed him. 67 "You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. 68 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. 69 We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God."

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

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

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

GLORIA PATRI: *Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by CAROL

THE HIGHER LIFE: A LIFE OF LOVE

Ephesians 4:17-5:2; Pastor Tom Olson; August 15, 2021

PROBLEM: My heart is broken for our culture. Our society is being lured into the dark side. They are drawn through many doors, the internet is dangerous, secular college professors poison young minds, television has many doors to darkness, peer pressure is another way down. Those of us who love the light of God have a big job on our hands.

SOLUTION: The question then arises, "How should we live as children of light in the dark world?" What difference can we make against such odds? The book of Ephesians is the place to turn for those answers. There could not have been a darker and more difficult place to reach with the gospel than Ephesus. Remember how they almost tore the Apostle Paul to pieces there as they roused the people into a riot in support of the pagan temple in their town shouting, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians?" Today Paul points us toward a higher life that shines like a beacon in the occultic, oppression of that place...it is a life that paganism can't offer...A LIFE OF LOVE.

I. CONSIDER: THE HARDENED PAGAN CULTURE

Ephesians 4:17-19 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. 18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. 19 Having lost all

sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

EYES: It is fair time and going to the fair is a great opportunity to observe people. I was recently walking through a crowd, looking in people's eyes to see what was there. I wanted to see how many people had bright, cheerful, and kind eyes. There were a few people that had "light" in their eyes but many people had downcast. Some had blank stares...you looked in their eyes and it was as if nothing was in there. Sharon and I discussed how people, many of them quite young with a potentially bright future ahead of them were so lifeless. We guessed that TV, computer internet and violent video games play a large roll in this emptying of the light from their eyes.

Notice what Paul says here about such a condition:

- Verse 17 says that the Gentiles have "futile thinking."
- Verse 18 says their understanding is darkened and that they are "separated from the LIFE OF GOD." Why? It says it is because of "ignorance" (lack of understanding of God's Word), separation from God (due to unbelief) and "hardening of their hearts."
- Verse 19 notice that sensuality and impurity cause a person to lose all sensitivity. To put it simply, sensuality hardens us (not just sexual but any inappropriate focus on our desires) ... This is a big struggle today, a very, very big struggle because "the love of many has grown cold" because of all the sensuality we take in with our eyes.

PURITY: The surprising this is this that the purer your life is the affectionate you can be. The less pure your life is, the less you will be able to be affectionate. This is because sensuality hardens us. The old hymn puts it well "Jesus priceless treasure, source of purest pleasure..." Just test yourself with salt...give it up for a month...you will start to taste your food again and find out how little salt you need in the future to flavor your food. Increased use of salt makes us insensitive to salt. I think of an old saying about the dangers of "too much of a good thing."

NEED: Look around, look in people's eyes...the pagan, unchristian culture that is being shoved down our throats is not making people happy and satisfied, it is making people insensitive (dull) and empty. Our culture needs demonstrations of the real LIFE OF LOVE that comes from God. People who don't know the Lord are missing out on so much satisfying pleasure. *Psalm 16:11 "You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* I sure want to avoid the painful lives worldly people are suffering with, I want the HIGHER LIFE: THE LIFE OF LOVE. I am sure you do too. Maybe you are here today and are sick and tired of the emptiness of sin...listen to some good news.

II. EXPERIENCE: THE LIFE-CHANGING GOSPEL

Ephesians 4:20-24 You, however, did not come to know Christ that way. 21 Surely you heard of him and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

ROME: We all know that our nation is in desperate condition but what is the solution? The Roman Empire of Paul's day was also very similar with heavy handed government, sensuality and fearful and hopeless religion.

But something happened that changed everything. JESUS WAS BORN IN BETHLEHEM! GOD VISITED US. He died, rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and sent out his disciples with the good news of forgiveness. As people received Christ, their lives changed and they demonstrated a new life of peace, contentment and hope. Mary Magdalene went from being a prostitute possessed by seven demons to being a new and righteous woman. People took notice.

VERSE 21: Notice here that the first step of transformation was to hear the gospel and be taught the Word of God and the message of new life in Christ. When God's Word is taught, lives change from darkness to light, from hopelessness to joy. The Word of God is powerful. I am looking forward to getting a midweek Bible class going again and we will go deeper into Ephesians.

VERSE 22: Notice that they were taught to "put off your old self." We all have years and years of sinful residue that needs to be purged from our lives so that better things can take that space. It is like cleaning a packed room out in order to make space for new and better things. The simple old word for this is repentance. Everywhere Jesus went he called on people to repent. When people came to John for baptism they came repenting of their sins. There is no point in putting on clean clothes if your body is filthy. Repentance is a great gift of God because it clears out our lives for the fullness of the Holy Spirit and that is where the peace and power of God resides.

VERSE 23: Notice that this new life proceeds from a new "attitude of your mind." When I learned to fly an airplane, I learned a new definition of "attitude." The attitude of the plane is the position of the plane relative to the ground and horizon. If the nose is up you climb but you stall and crash. If the nose is down, you go faster but will eventually crash into the ground. One is always trying to find that attitude where you are maintaining altitude at optimal speed and efficiency. So what is my attitude today? Am I climbing too hard and about to stall? Am I spinning downward and out of control? Or am I steady, content and flying safely? The attitude of our minds makes all the difference in the world. Filling our minds and hearts with good things, regularly, helps us maintain the right attitude. Having positive and encouraging friends helps our attitude. An important question to face up to is this, "What is my attitude?"

VERSE 24: This is an important verse. It is one of two verses in the Bible that clearly describes the image of God which was lost in the fall and returned in Christ. It is "true righteousness" and "holiness." When we have faith in Jesus, we have the righteousness of Christ given to us as a gift. There is no amount of self-improvement that will make us righteous in God's sight. But Christ gives us the "robe of righteousness" and God declares us to be holy in His sight. My favorite verse is 2 Corinthians 5:21 because it is the verse that opened up my eyes to the gift of salvation. **2 Corinthians 5:21- "God made Jesus who knew no sin, to be sin on our behalf, that in him, we might become the righteousness of God."**

III. RADIATE: OUR LIFE AS A LIGHTHOUSE

Ephesians 4:25-5:2 Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. 26 "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, 27 and do not give the devil a foothold. 28 He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. 29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. 5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved

children 2 and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

HOW DOES OUR LIGHTHOUSE OF OUR LIFE SHINE? Here is how...

VERSE 25. TELL THE TRUTH-We are living in a time when telling lies is very common...especially in politics and media. Starting a lie is easy but living with a lie is terrible. Honesty is the best policy. It sets you apart from others.

VERSE 26. CONTROL YOUR TEMPER-Have you ever lost your temper and not regretted it? I have always regretted it. A person who remains calm when everyone is losing their head is a powerful witness.

VERSE 27. SAY NO TO THE DEVIL-Demons are easy to invite in but hard to get out. Stay away from sin and the occult practices. Experimenting with them can destroy your life and ruin your family. I could tell you stories of what seances did to mess up a family. Close every door in your life to Satan and demons.

VERSE 28. DON'T STEAL BUT HELP THOSE IN NEED-The best way to overcome greed and envy is to give. Pastor Tryggve Dahle used to say, "Give until it hurts, give more until it stops hurting and then give more until it is fun to give." One person who came to our sale was buying purses and filling them with nice things to send to Mexico where her relative gave them to the poor. She went garage sale shopping just to give it all away. I enjoyed meeting her.

VERSE 29. BE AN ENCOURAGER-Fault-finding is easy. Encouraging takes effort. People need encouragement. So many are beaten down by criticism.

VERSE 30. FLOW WITH THE SPIRIT-The Holy Spirit-filled and Spirit-guided life is so much more exciting than a self-willed life. Nellie Sealy often went to the hospital in great pain and every time was looking for the doctor or nurse or care giver that needed ministry. She saw the leading of God in every circumstance of life, not matter how hard. That was an inspiration to me that I will never forget. She kept in touch with the Lord.

VERSE 31. REMOVE BITTERNESS-We all will get hurt or mistreated many times in life. If you let it get you bitter it will destroy you. One lady told me on Friday that her brother wanted an unfair percentage of their inheritance. She just handed it over rather than cause a division with him...she said money was not a reason to lose her relationship with her brother.

VERSE 32. BE KIND, COMPASSIONATE AND FORGIVING-Kindness (right motives) and compassion (understanding attitudes) are two of the fastest ways to help someone to become open to the gospel. I need to try harder to put myself in the other person's shoes and consider how they feel.

VERSE 5:1 IMITATE CHRIST-We have four gospels describing Jesus. God is saying that He wants us to know the life of Christ well. Luther called believers "little Christs" for the world to see. Or to put it another way, "We are the only Bible that someone who knows us will ever read"...imitate Christ.

VERSE 5:2 LIVE A SACRIFICIAL LIFE OF LOVE-In the 1970's there was a popular version of 1 Corinthians 13 put to music. The last line of that song sticks with me to this day: "If I have not charity, if love does not flow through me, I am nothing, Jesus reduce me to love." **RADIATE THE LOVE OF CHRIST.**

Christians are understandably frustrated with the direction our culture is going. But we need to see our culture the way Paul saw his pagan Roman culture. Rather than cursing the darkness, he wanted the church to shine as

a light in contrast to the darkness. CONSIDER the culture, EXPERIENCE new life in Christ, and RADIATE HIS LOVE. The darker it gets, the brighter the light shines. Amen

DON'T LET YOURSELF BE DISCOURAGE...this is a day of opportunity for the gospel. LIGHT SHINES BRIGHTER IN THE DARKNESS. Amen

HYMN #579 "O the Deep, Deep Love of Jesus"

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

Closing Song chosen by Carol

POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson

FIRST LESSON: *Joshua 24:1-2a;14-18 Then Joshua assembled all the tribes of Israel at Shechem. He summoned the elders, leaders, judges and officials of Israel, and they presented themselves before God. 2 Joshua said to all the people, "This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Josh 24:14-18 14 "Now fear the LORD and serve him with all faithfulness. Throw away the gods your forefathers worshiped beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. 15 But if serving the LORD seems undesirable to you, then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your forefathers served beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land you are living. But as for me and my household, we will serve the LORD." 16 Then the people answered, "Far be it from us to forsake the LORD to serve other gods! 17 It was the LORD our God himself who brought us and our fathers up out of Egypt, from that land of slavery, and performed those great signs before our eyes. He protected us on our entire journey and among all the nations through which we traveled. 18 And the LORD drove out before us all the nations, including the Amorites, who lived in the land. We too will serve the LORD, because he is our God."*

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