

AUGUST 8, 2021; TENTH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church
Singers: Praise Team

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 34:1-8

HYMN #509 "To God Be the Glory"

CONFESSION OF SIN: *Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy and ask You for Christ's sake, grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

PRAYER

CHILDREN'S MESSAGE:

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *1 Kings 19:1-9 Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. 2 So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, "May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them." 3 Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, 4 while he himself went a day's journey into the desert. He came to a broom tree, sat down under it and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, LORD," he said. "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors." 5 Then he lay down under the tree and fell asleep. All at once an angel touched him and said, "Get up and eat." 6 He looked around, and there by his head was a cake of bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. 7 The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you." 8 So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he traveled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. 9 There he went into a cave and spent the night.*

GOSPEL LESSON: *John 6:35-51 Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry, and he who believes in me will never be thirsty. 36 But as I told you, you have seen me and still you do not believe. 37 All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. 38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me. 39 And this is the will of him who sent me, that I shall lose none of all that he has given me, but raise them up at the last day. 40 For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day." 41 At this the Jews began to grumble about him because he said, "I am the bread that came down from heaven." 42 They said, "Is this not Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know? How can he now say, 'I came down from heaven'?" 43 "Stop grumbling among yourselves," Jesus answered. 44 "No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him, and I will raise him up at the last day. 45 It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who listens to the Father and learns from him comes to me. 46 No one has seen the Father except the one who is from God; only he has seen the Father. 47 I tell you the truth, he who believes has everlasting life. 48 I am the bread of life. 49 Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. 50 But here is the bread that comes*

down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. 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."

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 AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONGS: songs chosen by Hannah...sung by "Praise team...Luke, Krista, Jacob, Hannah, Marretta, etc.)

**SERMON TITLE: "Worthy of the Calling"
August 8, 2021; Pastor Tom Olson; Ephesians 4:1-16**

VACATION: We had one of our nicest family vacations ever this year. We spent a few days at home with all our children and grandchildren playing together, then we spent about three days up in Cumberland, Wisconsin at our hobby farm, visiting Sharon's parents and swimming in Shell Lake and two other Lakes along with good food, a bonfire, kayaking, culminating in utter exhaustion and many happy memories.

CHILDISH: Packing ourselves into two bedrooms and a camper using a composting toilet is an amazing social experiment. I observed the four grandchildren have great fun and also have struggles as they at times wanted the same tricycle or toy. The thought came to my mind that all of us in the church have similar dynamics as we share times of worship and service and also as we disagree on ways to do things and our own selfishness comes out, especially if we are tired or don't feel well.

WORTHY: In today's ongoing exploration of the book of Ephesians, the Apostle Paul gives us an extremely important description of how to treat one another in the church. In fact, he goes so far to say that how we treat each other determines whether or not we are living a life "worthy of the calling." We are called to be followers of the one who gave His life on the cross for us, God in human flesh, the Lord Jesus Christ. He deserves to have a church on earth that demonstrates to a sinful, selfish world the definition of love, respect and honor for our fellow believers. If we can't do that, how can we even begin to love and care for broken and often difficult unbelievers who need to see and hear the gospel? Let's examine living a life "WORTHY OF THE CALLING."

I. CARING: BEARING IN LOVE

Ephesians 4:1-6 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. 2 Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. 3 Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit- just as you were called to one hope when you were called- 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.

HONOR: We all have different ways we can honor the Lord. The Apostle Paul was honoring God by sitting in prison on death row for the “crime” of preaching the Word of God and the Lordship of Jesus Christ rather than worshipping Caesar as “god.” Some of us may have to honor the Lord in that same way if we don’t choose to obey our government rather than compromise our faith. He goes on to teach from the crystal-clear perspective that comes from suffering about how the church can demonstrate a life worthy of Christ by CARING for each other and BEARING WITH THOSE WHO ARE DIFFICULT.

Let’s list the ways we can honor Christ in our church:

1. BE COMPLETELY HUMBLE AND GENTLE. Sometimes these two are combined into one word called meekness. Meekness is not weakness but is “strength under control.” Being proud and right and demanding is easy but being humble takes the power of God. Being loud and harsh is easy but being gentle can only come from the Holy Spirit. Notice that this is not an occasional activity but he uses the word COMPLETELY. That means as a full-time disposition of life to demonstrate.

I heard the story of a new pastor at a church. He was sort of backwards and lacking in gifting that he did not meet the expectations of the church he served so they asked him to leave. He offered to serve them until they could find a new pastor. He was so kind and gracious in the way he served them until they got a new pastor a number of months later that they actually regretted asking him to leave.

2. BE PATIENT. Another word for patience is “long suffering.” How long is long? I would say it is until the Lord leads in His way. What is that like? God leads in “joy and peace.” *Isaiah 55:12* “*You shall go out with joy and be led forth with peace...*” If our plans are not flowing with joy and peace, something is drastically wrong. We need to wait until God shows us what to do, not until we get our way.

3. BEARING WITH ONE ANOTHER IN LOVE: We sometimes say, “I can’t bear it any longer” or using a more modern phrase “I can’t take it anymore.” Then in a burst of emotion we go out and take some sort of extreme action, which we almost always live to regret. As many people as there are in this room are differences of opinions of how we should do things. God is honored when we keep up healthy relationships with people who don’t see things from our perspective. And honoring God is our main purpose, not accomplishing tasks.

4. MAINTAINING UNITY: There is ONE LORD and him alone do we obey. There is ONE FAITH and that is what is taught in Holy Scripture. There is one BAPTISM...and my how the church has fought over that issue. People ask me what I believe about baptism and my first response is this: “I am in favor of it.” Baptism is a wonderful blessing in all its forms and it is a means of grace by which God brings to us forgiveness, the gift of faith and the Holy Spirit if we take the verses about it literally. It is a testimony as well since all who are baptized are testifying to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. And there is ONE God and Father and his Name is YHVH or Jehovah, the creator, the Father of Jesus. This is where we find unity. Unity is maintained as we keep our eyes off of one another, off of the cares of life and “look to Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.”

We care, we bear, we love, we comfort, we communicate, we relate and we unite around the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. CARING: BEARING IN LOVE.

II. HARMONIZING: PART OF THE BODY

Ephesians 4:7-13 But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. 8 This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men." 9 (What does "he

ascended" mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? 10 He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) 11 It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, 12 to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up 13 until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

GIFTS: Paul reminds us that Christ is crucified, dead, buried, risen and victorious. He fills the universe and gives His church the gifts we need to do the ministry we are called to do. These gifts include apostles who gave us the New Testament, evangelists who gave us the good news of the gospel and pastors who are teachers of the Word of God. The purpose of this is to BUILD UP THE BODY OF CHRIST TO MATURITY. This speaks of the HARMONY of the human body as an example of the HARMONY of the mature church that is filled with the fullness of Christ.

COMPLEMENTARY: When we use our gifts that God has given us in a way that is complementary to the gifts, he has given others it creates a cooperation that is beautiful to see and experience. When any of us use our gifts in a way that doesn't complement what others are doing it can create discord and strife. I often tell people that "our greatest weakness is our strength in excess."

SOLOIST: I used to direct church choirs for many years. One thing that I learned is that sometimes a good soloist makes a terrible choir member. The soloist is used to projecting their voice to be clearly heard and this is fine for solos. But the soloist can easily project their strong voice above the normal choir voices and it is not in balance and they stick out. But some soloists can blend in perfectly. What is the difference? It is that they have learned to listen to the rest of the choir and make sure they are not louder than the people around them. The key to harmony is not the ability to sing well, it is the ability to listen well!

LISTENING: I ask myself if I am a good listener and I can honestly say that the answer is, "Sometimes but not always." A good question to ask ourselves is this? How can I better work in harmony with someone in the church that has such completely different gifts than I have? Some of the most dissonant notes put together in a chord on the piano are beautiful when played in a progression that leads to a harmonious conclusion. Working harmoniously is a life WORTHY OF THE CALLING...and so is...

III. MATURING: GROWING UP

Ephesians 4:14-16 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. 16 From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

CUTE: Babies cry and make messes but they are cute and that makes up for it...for a while. But if a baby stayed a baby for 5 or 10 or 20 years it would not be cute any more. It would be heartbreaking. As we mature in our faith we are no longer tossed around, we get convictions. That is part of maturing. We don't fall for cunning and crafty schemes...that is called discernment. We speak the truth...that is called honesty and integrity. We grow up into Christ, that is called spiritual formation. As we mature, we want people to see Christ in us.

MOLINA: I had a college men's chorus director from the Philippine Islands name Dr. Antonio Molina, I saw Jesus in him. When I went into the ministry, I assisted an old Norwegian Missionary named Oscar Brown and I

saw Christ in him. I have seen many people get old and weak and dying and at times I have seen more of Christ in their weakness than I ever did in their stronger days. I saw more of Christ in my father with Alzheimers than I did when he was completing his master's degree for getting awards for his excellent science teaching. Let's not wait for our bodies to get weak before people can see Christ in us. Let's pray it would happen now.

VIEW: God's view of our church is not taken from the quality of the facilities, or music, or programming, or numbers in attendance. God's view of our church is largely determined by how we treat each other. If we can't get that right, not much else matters.

JOHN: A story from the early church says that when people came to the elderly Apostle John with any number of doctrinal disputes and other issues, he had the same answer for everyone: "My little children, love one another." The hallmark of the early persecuted church was this...see how they love one another. I pray that will be the identifying mark of our congregation as well. It come from the same place we find forgiveness and eternal life, the cross of Christ. Look to the cross and learn to love. Amen

HYMN # "Bind Us Together"

HOLY COMMUNION

BENEDICTION

DOXOLOGY with Three-fold Amen

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson