

October 10, 2021; TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST

SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON

Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

Singers: Praise Team

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 90:12-17

HYMN #191 "This is My Father's World"

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: *Amos 5:11-15 You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. 12 For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. 13 Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil. 14 Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. 15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Mark 10:17-22 As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good-except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.*

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 Carol...sung by "Praise team...Luke, Krista, Jacob, Hannah, Marretta, etc.)

SERMON TITLE: "FROM REBELLION TO REST"

October 10, 2021; Pastor Tom Olson

Hebrews 3:12-19

I would like to begin by asking you a very important question today. Are you living the ABUNDANT LIFE that God has promised you? Are you filled with the love, joy and peace of God? Or are you in a constant state of struggle and striving with God...wanting to be in control of your life resulting in anxiety and unhappiness? Today we want to learn from the history of Israel and move from REBELLION to REST.

I. REBELLION: HARDENED BY SIN

Hebrews 3:12-15 See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as you did in the rebellion."

HISTORY: We need to take a moment to review the background here. The nation of Israel had come out of Egypt after hundreds of years of slavery. Moses led them out by the hand of God. They crossed through the Red Sea on dry land and when they got to the other side, the sea that had parted closed up and drowned the army of Pharaoh. Their chariots still lie at the bottom of the Gulf of Aqaba according to some researchers. God led them to the Jordan River and promised to give the land of Canaan into their hands from the wicked people living there. But they rejected the encouraging word of Joshua and Caleb and believed the doubts and fears of the ten others that checked out the land. They lost FAITH in God's ability to do it. They lost FAITH in the God who opened the sea, destroyed Pharaoh's army, let them by a pillar cloud in the day and a pillar of fire in the night.

UNBELIEF: God wanted to give them rest in a good and productive land. God promised to drive out the cruel and wicked people who lived there. But they chose unbelief resulting in the loss of the promised land for 40 years. It was all due to their disobedience when God told them to claim the land. They refused to go through the open door. Their hearts were hardened by sin and unbelief.

HARDENED: Notice that God says here that our hearts get hard "through the deceitfulness of sin." That is why so many people get crabby and harsh as they get older. They keep rejecting God and sin hardens their hearts.

OTIS: We had a man named Otis a few houses from us that spent his life as a tavern owner. He never went to church that I know of. After years and years of bar room talk, swearing, dirty stories and so on, he just got more and more hard and then he retired. We were scared of him. And he was very lonely. I never saw visitors there. The life of sin and unbelief made him a hard lonely old man.

ALETTE: It was such a contrast that we had a unmarried retired woman across the street from us, name Alette, who had dedicated her life to teaching children, especially in orphanages. She spent her time tending flowers, singing, talking to children and filling her world with joy. I remember she once taught me this saying, “A smile is a gift you can give every day.” Two people who lived a couple blocks from each other. One chose God’s path and finished her life with joy. The other chose sin and finished his life alone and angry.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CONSEQUENCES: One great reason to reject sin and rebellion is the realization of where it leads...it leads to a miserable death alone in the wilderness like the children of Israel. How wise it is to choose at a very young age to stay away from believe the Word of God and obey follow His leading.

QUESTION: I would like to ask a personal question today. Did you once have a tender heart and have you allowed sin of some kind to make it hard? A few Sunday’s ago a man in his 70’s confessed to me that he has been rebelling against God for most of his life and he wants to change after 50 years of going in the wrong direction. Israel took 40 years to decide to change. Would you like to replace critical unbelief with a warm and thankful heart of faith? God wants to fill you with His Holy Spirit and the joy of the Lord! Let’s keep looking at this passage...

II. REST: REPLACING UNBELIEF WITH FAITH

Hebrews 3:16-4:2 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief. 4:1 Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith.

FALSEHOOD: I liked Travis Hensersky’s observation that the essence of sin is lying. We lie to ourselves. And the root of that lie is that we don’t believe that God is good and is in control. Let’s look at the road to rest.

MEMORIES: The first point that the writer of Hebrews wants us to understand is that these unbelievers had experienced the mighty and miraculous hand of God. They had seen time and again that God was with them and was able to deliver them from any dangers, even the mightiest army in the world, Pharoah’s army. This is why God was so angry with them and made them wander in the wilderness for 40 years until the rabble of unbelievers was dead. This was not the first time that wickedness overtook them. You remember the golden calf they worshipped and the orgies they had as Moses was on the mountain to get the TEN COMMANDMENTS.

WARNING: This is a warning and an invitation to us. We are warned that even though we once had a close walk with God, we are very vulnerable to fall away and get hardened by sin and return to unbelief. That is why it says here in 4:1 ***“since the promise of rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it.”*** Most of us have had so many sermons, Bible studies, prayer meetings and encounters with God that we are tempted to rely on past faith and dabble with present sin. But that sin hardens us quickly and before long we are really in bad shape spiritually.

INVITATION: But there is an invitation here as well. It is the same invitation that you listened to when you got saved... ***“the promise of rest still stands.”*** God continually stands with open arms inviting us back to faith, rest

and peace in Him. Are you tired of doing life your way resulting in emptiness of soul? Are you tired of the wages of sin? Is your soul empty and dead inside? Come back to the cross again. Be honest about your sin and unbelief. Tell the Lord that you want to quit fighting and simply trust Him and walk in His good ways. The peace will return as you enter a place of rest called “Beulah Land.”

BABYLON: The Hebrews chose sin and idolatry for hundreds of years and God finally had enough and sent them into exile in Babylon for 70 years. It was there they realized how good it was to live in God’s land in God’s way and they longed to return and put God first. Isaiah prophecies this 4

Isaiah 62:4-5 “No longer will they call you Deserted, or name your land Desolate. But you will be called Hephzibah, and your land Beulah; for the LORD will take delight in you, and your land will be married. 5 As a young man marries a maiden, so will your sons marry you; as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride, so will your God rejoice over you.”

HYMN: There is an old southern gospel hymn that talks about this:

Far away the noise of strife upon my ear is falling;
Then I know the sins of earth beset on every hand;
Doubt and fear and things of earth in vain to me are calling;
None of these shall move me from Beulah Land.

Let the stormy breezes blow, their cry cannot alarm me;
I am safely sheltered here, protected by God's hand;
Here the sun is always shining, nothing there can harm me;
I am safe forever in Beulah Land.

I'm living on the mountain, underneath a cloudless sky,
I'm drinking at the fountain that never shall run dry;
Oh, yes! I'm feasting on the manna from a bountiful supply,
For I am dwelling in Beulah Land.

INVITATION: The writer to the Hebrews calls to us right now saying, “Today if you hear His voice do not harden your hearts.” I invite you today to move from **REBELLION TO REST, FROM THE HARDNESS OF SIN TO THE PEACE OF FAITH IN A LOVING AND ALL-POWERFUL GOD.** That peace is always found in the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Won’t you stop striving and come back to Him today? Come and dwell in Beulah Land! Amen

HYMN #431 “Softly and Tenderly”

LORD’S PRAYER

BENEDICTION

CLOSING SONG (chosen by Carol)

POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Amos 5:11-15 You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine. 12 For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts. 13 Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil. 14 Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. 15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.*

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