

**MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH**

**August 21, 2022**

**11<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson; Singers:  
Fugleberg

**HYMN #349 "We Are the Church"**

**CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 60**

**MEN:** You have rejected us, O God, and burst forth upon us; you have been angry-- now restore us!

**WOMEN:** You have shaken the land and torn it open; mend its fractures, for it is quaking.

**MEN:** You have shown your people desperate times; you have given us wine that makes us stagger.

**WOMEN:** But for those who fear you, you have raised a banner to be unfurled against the bow.

**MEN:** Give us aid against the enemy, for the help of man is worthless.

**WOMEN:** With God we will gain the victory, and he will trample down our enemies.

**HYMN #553 "O What a Wonderful Day"**

**PASTOR ONLY:** *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. Amen*

**PASTOR & CONGREGATION:** *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*

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE: Take a test...final question: How do you get into heaven?**

**READER: Joel Carrizales**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Isaiah 66:18-24 "And I, because of their actions and their imaginations, am about to come and gather all nations and tongues, and they will come and see my glory. 19 "I will set a sign among them, and I will send some of those who survive to the nations--to Tarshish, to the Libyans and Lydians (famous as archers), to Tubal and Greece, and to the distant islands that have not heard of my fame or seen my glory. They will proclaim my glory among the nations. 20 And they will bring all your brothers, from all the nations, to my holy mountain in Jerusalem as an offering to the LORD--on horses, in chariots and wagons, and on mules and camels," says the LORD. "They will bring them, as the Israelites bring their grain offerings, to the temple of the LORD in ceremonially clean vessels. 21 And I will select some of them also to be priests and Levites," says the LORD. 22 "As the new heavens and the new earth that I make will endure before me," declares the LORD, "so will your name and descendants endure. 23 From one New Moon to another and from one Sabbath to another, all mankind will come and bow down before me," says the LORD. 24 "And they will go out and look upon the dead bodies of those who rebelled against me; their worm will not die, nor will their fire be quenched, and they will be loathsome to all mankind."*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *Hebrews 12:4-24 In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 And you have forgotten that word of encouragement that addresses you as sons: "My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, 6 because the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes everyone he accepts as a son." 7 Endure hardship as discipline; God is treating you as sons. For what son is not disciplined by his father? 8 If you are not disciplined (and everyone undergoes discipline), then you are illegitimate children and not true sons. 9*

Moreover, we have all had human fathers who disciplined us and we respected them for it. How much more should we submit to the Father of our spirits and live! 10 Our fathers disciplined us for a little while as they thought best; but God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in his holiness. 11 No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it. 12 Therefore, strengthen your feeble arms and weak knees. 13 "Make level paths for your feet," so that the lame may not be disabled, but rather healed. 14 Make every effort to live in peace with all men and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord. 15 See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. 16 See that no one is sexually immoral, or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son. 17 Afterward, as you know, when he wanted to inherit this blessing, he was rejected. He could bring about no change of mind, though he sought the blessing with tears. 18 You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire; to darkness, gloom and storm; 19 to a trumpet blast or to such a voice speaking words that those who heard it begged that no further word be spoken to them, 20 because they could not bear what was commanded: "If even an animal touches the mountain, it must be stoned." 21 The sight was so terrifying that Moses said, "I am trembling with fear." 22 But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly, 23 to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect, 24 to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

**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**

**SERMON: "ARE YOU READY FOR THE FINAL EXAM?" Luke 13:22-30 Pastor Tom Olson; August 21, 2022**

*Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

UCLA: Remember the scandal where parents paid a lot of money to buy their children entrance into the University of Southern California? It worked until they got caught and the outrage of our nation forced the authorities to punish those parents. We were outraged because bribes proved to be more effective than doing it the right way through study and hard work.

CAUGHT: But the point is that the people involved got caught and had to give an account or what they had done. Some of these famous, wealthy people even went to jail, which doesn't happen too often.

JUDGEMENT: But you and I well know that there are many who don't get caught. We must

never forget that God sees and knows everything and there will come a great day of Judgement when we all will have to give account for how we lived our lives. Some will get invited into heaven for all eternity and others will be left out. This is a sobering subject we need to face up to. We should not avoid it. Luke 12 & 13 are serious chapters with serious topics that Jesus taught his disciples. Let's look together at the topic: "Are you Ready for the Final Exam?"

## I. NOT EVERYONE GETS IN

*Luke 13:22-35 Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. 23 Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, 24 "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. 25 Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' 26 "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' 27 "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!'"*

QUESTION: The subject came up when someone asked Jesus this question: "Lord, are only a few going to be saved?" Jesus answers the question cautiously and takes the focus away from numbers and puts on our own personal responsibility. He urges his hearers to make every effort to be sure of their salvation. I marvel at how many people are careful with their finances and possessions, which are temporary, and yet they are so careless about making certain about where their soul is headed for eternity.

Notice the main points here:

1. ENTER BY THE NARROW GATE: I think some Bible verses make the meaning of the narrow gate clear:

*John 10:7&8 Therefore Jesus said again, "I tell you the truth, I am the gate for the sheep. 8 All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them. 9 I am the gate; whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out, and find pasture. 10 The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*

*John 14:6-7 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really KNEW me, you would KNOW my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*

*Revelation 7:13-17 Then one of the elders asked me, "These in white robes-who are they, and where did they come from?" 14 I answered, "Sir, you know." And he said, "These are they who have come out of the great tribulation; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. ... And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes."*

SUBSTITUTE: Jesus is God's Son who lived the perfect life we could not live. He was innocent and holy. Yet he was sentenced to death on the cross in our place. His Holy blood is the payment for all our sins. He freely gives salvation to all who believe.

*Ephesians 2:8-9 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.*

Christ is the narrow gate.

2. TIME IS RUNNING OUT: He said that the time will come for the "owner of the house to close the door." Many people put off salvation. They think they will have more fun living life without God and then get saved when they get old. But most such persons don't have more fun without God. Sin ruins them. They get hardened and seldom seek salvation later in life. I remember one hardened old man's last words to me before he died as I pleaded with him to

come to Christ. He said, "Get out of here." He was hardened by a life of sin and unbelief.

### 3. OUTWARD RELIGIOUS PERFORMANCE

WON'T GET US IN TO HEAVEN: People will appeal to their religious acquaintance with Jesus, "***We ate and drank with you, you taught in our streets.***" They might say, "I went to church, I heard sermons, I was confirmed and took communion." Those are all good things but they can't take the place of a relationship.

MARRIAGE: Can you imagine a marriage where after years you say, I got married, I have the certificate, I saw my wife around town and even had some meals with her over the years. One might ask, "Did you live with her? Did you share life together? Did you have a family? Did you have a RELATIONSHIP?"

DISTANT: Many people have a distant acquaintance with God but no real relationship where the Holy Spirit enters in to them with salvation. Some call it HEAD KNOWLEDGE VS HEART KNOWLEDGE. I remember one lady who was resisting an evangelist about getting saved because she thought that the town had a nice church building and that was proof that we were certainly Christians. But there was no relationship with Jesus involved, just a relationship with an old building.

THE ONLY WAY INTO HEAVEN IS TO BE "KNOWN" BY THE MASTER: Jesus said the Master will send them away with these words, "***Depart from me, I never knew you.***" God is not impressed with outward religious performance. He wants to have a personal relationship with His children.

## II. FAITH IS THE ENTRANCE KEY

***Luke 13:28-30 "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. 29 People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God. 30 Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."***

FLIP: Many of the religious leaders of Jesus' day were first in religion but on judgement day will be last in line and probably not in line for heaven at all. Humble souls like Simeon and Anna, unknown to the world who prayed and waited eagerly for the Messiah, will be first. Why? Because they had faith. Salvation is all about faith and not about position.

LEADERS: I have bumped into very powerful religious leaders over the years that may not even be saved. Pastor Elden Nelson once asked a pastor, "Why did you go into the ministry?" He responded that he did it because he wanted an easy job. And he made it an easy job and didn't seem to care about the flock he was given charge of.

LUTHER: Martin Luther was transformed when he discovered from the book of Romans that salvation did not come through the church system but came to all who have faith in Christ. Romans 1:16&17 changed his life: ***I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. 17 For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: "The righteous will live by faith."***

FAITH IS THE KEY

## III. EVIL LEADERS WILL FAIL

***Luke 13:31-35 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." 32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day-for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem! 34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not***

*see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"*

PERSPECTIVE: We must remember that Jesus ultimately "wins" and that evil leaders will ultimately be destroyed. Many people are terribly concerned about our corrupt politicians. Corrupt politics is nothing new. But one thing is for certain. They only can rip us off temporarily. They will die and most of them will go into eternity without salvation.

BREZHNEV: Leonid Brezhnev was a corrupt, atheist, communist leader of the Soviet Union from 1964 to 1982. He scoffed at God and persecuted Christians. But he too died and faced judgement. Not only that, Jesus had the last word, even at his funeral. Here is how one reporter put it:

*As Vice President, George Bush represented the U.S. at the funeral of former Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev. Bush was deeply moved by a silent protest carried out by Brezhnev's widow. She stood motionless by the coffin until seconds before it was closed. Then, just as the soldiers touched the lid, Brezhnev's wife performed an act of great courage and hope, a gesture that must surely rank as one of the most profound acts of civil disobedience ever committed: She reached down and made the sign of the cross on her husband's chest. There in the citadel of secular, atheistic power, the wife of the man who had run it all hoped that her husband was wrong. She hoped that there was another life, and that that life was best represented by Jesus who died on the cross, and that the same Jesus might yet have mercy on her husband.*

FACT: Rulers come and go but Christ remains seated at the right hand of the Father. Every one who dies will have to go directly to Him to give an account of his life.

QUESTION: Someone once asked me, "What will you tell God when he asks you why He should let you into heaven?" I have thought about that question for many years and only can come up with one ANSWER: "**Jesus died for me on the cross. He is my only hope of salvation.**" And I am certain that Jesus is the

key to the final exam. Do you believe in Him? He shed his innocent blood on the cross for you. Won't you call upon Him today while time remains? The final exam is coming soon! Amen

*Now may the peace of God, that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

**HYMN #626 "Saved by Grace"**

**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