

October 2, 2022, 18th Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Tom Olson
Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Dave Reynolds (Osthus Sing)

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 100

Ps 62:5-8

50+: Find rest, O my soul, in God alone;

49-: my hope comes from him.

50+: He alone is my rock and my salvation;

49-: he is my fortress; I will not be shaken.

50+: My salvation and my honor depend on God;

49-: he is my mighty rock, my refuge.

50+: Trust in him at all times, O people;

49-: pour out your hearts to him,

for God is our refuge.

HYMN #142 “Faith of Our Fathers”

CONFESSION OF SIN: Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Amen

CHILDREN’S SERMON:

READER: Bob Hawksford

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: 2 Timothy 1:7-12
For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline. 8 So do not be ashamed to testify about our Lord, or ashamed of me his prisoner. But join with me in suffering for the gospel, by the power of God, 9 who has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, 10 but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel. 11 And of this gospel I was appointed a herald and an apostle and a teacher. 12 That is why I am suffering as I am. Yet I am not ashamed, because I know whom I have believed,

and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him for that day.

NIV

GOSPEL LESSON: Luke 17:1-6 *Jesus said to his disciples: "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come, but woe to that person through whom they come. 2 It would be better for him to be thrown into the sea with a millstone tied around his neck than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin. 3 So watch yourselves. "If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. 4 If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, 'I repent,' forgive him." 5 The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" 6 He replied, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you.*

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

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

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible.*

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, And was made man; And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And is seated on the right hand of the Father, And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come. 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 AND PRAYER

HYMN #397 “My Faith Looks Up to Thee”

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

SERMON: “ARE YOU VEXED WITH EVIL?”

Habakkuk 1:1-4 Pastor Tom Olson; 10/2/22

I COPIED DOWN NEWS HEADLINES THIS WEEK FROM JUST ONE NEWS OUTLET:

- HURRICANE SLAMS INTO FLORIDA
- DISTRICT ATTORNEY STABBED BY DAUGHTER
- YOUTUBE REMOVES PRO-FAMILY SPEECH
- TWITTER AND CHILD PORNOGRAPHY
- NEWSOM SIGNS ONSLAUGHT OF PRO-ABORTION BILLS
- BODY GUARD CONVICTED OF STRANGLING HIS WIFE
- VANDERBILT GENDER SURGERIES ON MINORS
- MALE PILOTS CAN WEAR SKIRTS
- 5 FOOTBALL PLAYERS SHOT AFTER SCRIMMAGE
- CHEMICAL CASTRATION
- 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL SHOOTING FATHER
- MICHIGAN MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO KILLING AND EATING MAN

VEXED: Don't you just get vexed and tormented by reading these news headlines this week? This is nothing new. It reminds me of *2 Peter 2:7-8* “*God rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)*”

We can identify with Lot. So does the prophet Habakkuk in our Old Testament Lesson.

Habakkuk 1:1-4 The oracle that Habakkuk the prophet received. 2 How long, O LORD, must I call for help, but you do not listen? Or cry out to you, “VIOLENCE!” but you do not save? 3 Why do you make me look at INJUSTICE? Why do you tolerate wrong? DESTRUCTION and violence are before me; there is STRIFE, and CONFLICT abounds. 4 Therefore the law is paralyzed, and justice never prevails. The wicked HEM IN the righteous, so that justice is perverted.

I. EVIL IS NOTHING NEW

THE FALL: In our confirmation class we studied Genesis 3, “The Fall.” We were reminded that evil

entered the perfect world shortly after it was created. The first two people on earth, Adam and Eve, got caught up in rebellion against God. They followed Satan. They opened the door of trouble to the world. They brought death.

SCIENTISTS: Even well-educated people open the door of death. Whoever invented the COVID virus and let it out of the laboratory, brought death to millions of people.

FOUR: Habakkuk points out four areas that are tormenting his soul:

- VIOLENCE
- INJUSTICE
- STRIFE
- CONFLICT

SAME: Has anything changed? Aren't these the same areas of trouble we face today? VIOLENCE is running rapid. People loot and steal and the authorities appear to be helpless. Even Minneapolis has carjackings where people as young as teens come and take your car at gunpoint. The INJUSTICE of pro-life leaders being targeted by the FBI and treated like mobsters breaks our heart. STRIFE is epidemic. Many homes are filled with strife. People can't agree and this results in conflict and it wears us down.

COMPLAINT: I hear so many people saying, “How long Lord?” just like Habakkuk. I hear many people who are so tired they just want to lie down and have God take them home to heaven where they can rest in peace.

PERSPECTIVE: This has been the cry of God's people time out of mind. Hebrews 11 tells us that even Abraham, one of the richest and most important men of his day, was “*seeking (and longing) for a better city where righteousness dwells.*” The early church was under great persecution, like the church is in India and other places today. Early believers used to greet one another with the word “MARANANTHA” meaning “Lord, come back soon.” Gary Kalstad says that to me often. The assault of evil has been continual from the garden of Eden until this present day. We need to learn how to cope with it. This brings us to the second point:

II. LET GOD KNOW HOW YOU FEEL

SPEAK: Habakkuk didn't pretend that everything was fine. He did the only thing he could do with his consternation over evil. He poured out his heart to God in utter honesty...he didn't hold back.

TESTIMONY: I recently heard a testimony of a man who was filled with anger and sin when he was a teen. He was so miserable. He said, "I got down on my face and cried out to God." When he did this, God met him in his sorrow and grief and brought healing balm to his tortured heart.

Psalms 18:6 "In my distress, I called to the Lord..."
Psalms 120:1 "In my distress, I called to the Lord..."
Psalms 40:1 "I called to the Lord, and He heard me..."

COMMON: Well over 58 Bible verses directly talk about calling to the Lord in our distress... Remember that the evil around us is as old as the Garden of Eden and common to all times...and when it overwhelms us we need to call out to the Lord and bear our soul to Him.

III. EVIL PREVAILS AT TIMES

FACT: One thing that we need to grasp is that evil often prevails in this world. The history of the world is really the history of wars and suffering. An old farmer in my first parish would say, "*This world could be so nice if people would learn to get along with each other.*" But it is not just people, the weather is also prone to destruction. The hurricane in Florida is a testament to that. Ever since the Fall of mankind into sin, the whole world is under a curse. This will be lifted when Jesus returns.

PILGRIMS: I think it would be good if we would call ourselves "Pilgrims" as did some Christians in the past. The Pilgrims who came to America pretty much lost everything they had and fled for their lives from persecution for trying to purify the church. They came to America and many of them died from illness. But they saw themselves as pilgrims passing through a dangerous, sinful land on their way to the safety and joy of heaven.

DIAGNOSIS: When I got my diagnosis this week that I am prone to strokes, just like my mom and grandmothers, it was a good awakening for me that my time might be shorter on earth than anticipated. I have a new sense of urgency to get my earthly affairs into better order and focus on preparation for heaven. But this is something we all should be doing, even without such a health diagnosis. We are one car accident or heart attack away from departing this life.

TORN: I love my life and family and church and friends, but I also am frustrated with the dark side of this life and look forward to waking up in heaven

where there is no evil to live with and no sin in my own heart as well.

IV. RESPOND WITH FAITH

Habakkuk 2:4b ...but the righteous will live by his faith-

ANSWER: Chapter 2, verses one through four, is actually part of the Old Testament lesson for today and I can see why. It ends this very dark complaint and prophecy of the coming destruction of Israel with a glimmer of hope. And it gives us the answer of how to live here below.

Habakkuk 2:4b "...but the righteous will live by his faith." The old song puts it this way, "Faith is the victory that overcomes the world."

DEFINITION: The simplest definition of faith is TRUST in God. It is the ability to keep focused on the Celestial City at the end of our life journey. It is the ability to see that in spite of evil and sin, the good King is on the throne and will ultimately eliminate evil and usher in his perfect and eternal kingdom for us to enjoy. Faith can give us the victory, even in the hardest of times.

VICTORY: We skip ahead to the last chapter of Habakkuk to see the victory of faith in the hardest of times. Chapter 3:17-19

***Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,
18 yet I will rejoice in the LORD,
I will be joyful in God my Savior.***

***19 The Sovereign LORD is my strength;
he makes my feet like the feet of a deer,
he enables me to go on the heights.***

CONCLUSION: Are you vexed with evil? Jesus put it this way: ***John 16:33 "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." AMEN.***

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

HYMN #565 "My Faith Has Found a Resting Place"

HOLY COMMUNION

CHORAL BENEDICTION: Tune “Edelweiss”

May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever-- Grant you peace, Perfect peace, Strength in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and see His face, Feel His grace forever. May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever.

POSTLUDE: Dave Reynolds