

**BULLETIN TEMPLATE:**

**Minnesota Valley Church**

**Date: Sunday, October 23, 2022**

**Church Year Date: 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**

**THEME:** Deep and sincere sorrow for sin and clinging to the grace and mercy of God for salvation and not our own religious deeds.

Prelude: Carol Gustafson

Singers: Fuglbergs

HYMN #521 (refrain only) "Thank You, Lord"

Responsive Reading: Psalm 5:11-12

**LEADER: Let all who take refuge in you be glad;**

**ALL: Let them ever sing for joy.**

**LEADER: Spread your protection over them,**

**ALL: That those who love your name may rejoice in you.**

**LEADER: For surely, O LORD, you bless the righteous;**

**ALL: You surround them with your favor as with a shield.**

Hymn #522 "Grace Greater than Our Sin"

**Confession of Sin: *I lay my sins on Jesus, The spotless Lamb of God; He bears them all and frees us, From the accursed load. I bring my guilt to Jesus, To wash my crimson stains, White in His blood most precious, 'Till not a spot remains. Amen***

Children's Sermon:

Reader: Jacob O'Flanagan

Old Testament Lesson: *Genesis 4:9-18 Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?"*

*"I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?"*

*10 The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. 11 Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. 12 When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a restless wanderer on the earth."*

*13 Cain said to the LORD, "My punishment is more than I can bear. 14 Today you are driving me from the land, and I will be hidden from your presence; I will be a restless wanderer on the earth, and whoever finds me will kill me."*

*15 But the LORD said to him, "Not so; if anyone kills Cain, he will suffer vengeance seven times over." Then the LORD put a mark on Cain so that no one who found him would kill him. 16 So Cain went out from the LORD's presence and lived in the land of Nod, east of Eden.*

*17 Cain lay with his wife, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Enoch. Cain was then building a city, and he named it after his son Enoch.*

Epistle Lesson: *2 Timothy 4:6-8 For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. 8 Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing.*

*2 Timothy 4:16-18 At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them. 17 But the Lord stood at my side and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. And I was delivered from the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and will bring me safely to his heavenly kingdom. To him be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

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

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

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** Apostles' Creed- *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: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 *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 Concerns

**PRAISE AND WORSHIP:** Songs to be chosen by Carol

**SERMON: A TRULY REPENTANT HEART,** Luke 19:9-17 Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

**EXODUS:** I have given considerable thought lately to why certain elements of our society really don't like the Christian church and are not interested in it. I recently looked over a church display of confirmation photos of hundreds of young people that were "forced" to study the Bible and memorize all sorts of material and I would guess 90 percent of them left the church the Sunday after "publicly professing their faith (pretty much at "gunpoint," "You do this or else...") and then never returned to the church again...at least until they were in a coffin.

**REFLECTION:** We need to seriously consider why it is that people are quitting the church by the tens of thousands in America. Instead of

blaming the devil or the government, we need to do some serious soul-searching about the church's roll in the issue. Our day today is so very similar to the time of Christ. There was an inward focused religion that was expected of the people and a very secular and anti-Biblical government ruling with a strong hand. Jesus came along and offered a spirituality and a salvation by grace, without coercion, that was like fresh water to parched souls. As the thousands began to follow Christ, the established religion and the government became very threatened and joined together to persecute the church.

**TODAY:** Times are very similar today and we can learn a lot by looking at this parable where Jesus reveals the heart of His kingdom and His church. That heart is THE TRULY REPENTANT HEART. Let's talk about it.

## **I. PRIDE: THE RESULT OF COMPARISON**

*Luke 18:9-12 To some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everybody else, Jesus told this parable: 10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men-robbers, evildoers, adulterers-or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'*

**CONTRAST:** Jesus begins by showing us the opposite of what he wants as modeled by the spiritually PROUD religious leaders of His day. These Pharisees and Sadducees and Scribes were people who tried with all their might to obey the laws of God found in the Old Testament. The Pharisees were what we might call the conservatives...the ones who took the Word of God literally right down to the last letter of the law. But they often missed the "spirit of the law" which is LOVE. They got caught up in the details and really looked down on those who were not obeying the law as exactly as they were. You can hear it in his prayer which I might paraphrase this way, "I thank you God that I am special in your eyes because I obey your commandments

*perfectly and I thank you that I am not a sinner like that tax collector over there."*

PHARISEES: The Pharisees were well known for being greedy, pushy, uncaring toward others including their own parents. They found religious excuses to justify their unloving, self-serving and domineering ways. They even had a way of putting their money in a religious trust where they controlled it and but they were not able to use it to help their own poverty-stricken parents. They were proud that they tithed even the seeds in their garden to the Lord's temple. And that money came back to them as well since they were religious professionals.

EXAMPLE: Listen to what Jesus called these people: *Matthew 23:27-28 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of the bones of the dead and everything unclean. 28 In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.*

FAILURE: I am not surprised that people are somewhat afraid of and disgusted by organized religion. Too many children have been molested by priests, too many protestant ministers have had affairs, too many churches have forced teen-agers to go to confirmation and publicly profess a faith that they don't have, too many churches have tried to force their views about morality upon a public that doesn't share those views or profess to be Christian. We live in a country where at least 40 percent or more of the people don't claim to believe the Bible or hold to the Biblical definition of marriage, family or morality. Jesus never forced anyone to believe in Him or follow Him. He merely invited people to follow and taught them. His disciples were often disgusted that He would not take over and rule by force or at least send fire from heaven to punish those who didn't accept Him.

Here is an example: *Luke 9:51-56 "Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, 52 and sent messengers before*

*His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" 55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner of spirit you are of. 56 For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them." And they went to another village.*

The church kills itself when it gets caught up in spiritual pride like the Pharisees.

## II. HUMILITY: THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

*Luke 18:13 "But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me, a sinner.'*

EXEMPLARY: Now Jesus gives the example of what the true Kingdom of God looks like. In this parable it looks like a sinner, filled with shame and regret over his life, collapsed in the corner of the temple and asking for God to have mercy on Him. He is not pointing the finger at anyone except his own sinful heart. His only hope is the grace and mercy of God. The song puts it this way, *"Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling."*

ADVERTISEMENT: There is nothing that is a better advertisement for our church than a room full of people who are deeply sorrowful for their OWN sin who are filled with the JOY of Christ's forgiveness and mercy. When a sinner comes into a humble service and does not feel scorned, he listens. We are not judgmental when all of us here are well aware of our own sin and humbly grateful for God's mercy and love as demonstrated on the cross.

DOCTRINE: We also need doctrinal humility. We need to hold firmly to the truths of the Bible as we understand them. BUT WE SHOULD NOT PUT DOWN PEOPLE WHO DON'T SEE

THINGS LIKE WE DO. We should instead love the Word of God and TEACH it with joy and enthusiasm. That is why I would much rather have a confirmation class of two boys who love to discuss the Word of God, like I have, than a traditional confirmation class of a dozen teens that don't want to be there and are being forced by parents, many of whom don't even like church themselves, but are just doing their cultural expectation.

DISCUSSION: I was visiting recently with an old friend from high school who probably has not gone to church very often since confirmation some 47 years ago. She asked me how it was to be a pastor. I told her that it is much better today than it was when we went to confirmation in the 1970's. I said that people go to church now because they want to, not because they are expected to. It is much more humble and sincere than it used to be. She found that interesting and hopefully it made her curious about visiting a church again.

CUMBERLAND: One man who attends our tiny country church has attended a large, influential mainline church over the years. I asked him why he bothers to come to our simple, small services. He said, **"I come because I really want to."** That church is about as small and humbled as it gets and perhaps is finally at the point it can be rebuilt with reality and sincerity rather than pride and self-righteousness. That will make it attractive to seeking souls who don't trust institutional religion. **HUMILITY IS THE WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

### **III. JUSTIFICATION: THE GIFT OF FAITH**

*Luke 18:14 "I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."*

JUSTIFIED: This parable so beautifully demonstrates the great foundational truth of "justification by faith alone." Jesus shocked his audience when he announced that the clean living but proud Pharisee when home unforgiven and unsaved and the sinful but humbly repentant tax

collector when home justified. In confirmation we learn that justification means "JUST AS IF I NEVER SINNED." When we bow in humble repentance before God and cling to the Lamb of God, dying in the cross to wash away our sins, we are justified, forgiven, adopted into God's family and saved by His grace. Legalistic religion demands that you clean yourself up before God can accept you. True Christianity teaches that we cast ourselves upon the mercy of God and He receives us, makes us His own, cleanses us and takes us to heaven when we died.

SUBSTITUTE: It is all on the basis of Christ's choice to come to this world and live the perfect life we could not live and then be sentenced to die as a pure and innocent sacrifice to pay for the sins of the whole world. Why would he do such a thing? Love! Luther writes in the catechism, ***"All this He has done that I might be his own..."*** He did it because he wants us to be in heaven as His friend and joint heir of the riches of God, forever. That is why the Apostle Paul so vehemently finishes off the book of Galatians with this thought: ***Galatians 6:14 "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ..."*** JUSTIFICATION IS THE GIFT OF FAITH.

### **IV. SALVATION: THE WITNESS OF BABIES**

*Luke 18:15-17 People were also bringing babies to Jesus to have him touch them. When the disciples saw this, they rebuked them. 16 But Jesus called the children to him and said, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 17 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it."*

HOW? How is the church to regain its respect and standing in our secular culture and once again become the soul-saving, life-changing and culture-impacting force it is meant to be? Jesus gives his hot-headed, sword-wielding, position-seeking disciples the answer right here: receive the children and become like children.

ROE V WADE: Those of us in the pro-life movement were in one way glad for the decision

to overturn Roe vs Wade, but in my heart, I knew it would not really make much difference. States can ban abortion but since 50% of Americans still want it legal and available. One state bans it and the next builds a facility across the border or puts it in a mobile unit. We still are at the stage of changing hearts and minds rather than forcing our beliefs.

**FAILURES:** When Minnesota banned most fireworks and Wisconsin built big stores on the border. They they banned normal gas spouts and stores put them on the shelf and called them “water spouts.” Laws that work have to be embraced in the hearts of the people who are being governed or they are bound to fail.

**SOCCKER:** Schools no longer have Wednesday church night because parents don’t want it. Soccer is on Sunday morning because parents don’t want to go to church anymore and would rather be in the park. You can’t force people to accept something they don’t want.

**JESUS: JESUS NEVER FORCED HIMSELF ON ANYONE.** He tells his fighting disciples to stop turning away children and instead to become like children. Children are our examples.

**INFANTICIDE:** The early church didn’t have abortion to fight with but they had infanticide. People delivered unwanted babies and brought them to the garbage dump to die of exposure. The Christian churches would go to the dumps and rescue these babies and raise them as their own children. Those babies were undoubtedly the most grateful and supportive Christians of the next generation. The battle was **WON WITH LOVE AND SACRIFICE** rather than demands and decrees. The selfless acts of love changed a whole culture, not laws.

**KEY:** That is why this parable gives us the key to the future of the church in our land. That key is **HUMBLE REPENTANCE FOR OUR OWN SIN.** It will take a lot of humility to undo the damage of hundreds of years of burning heretics, bloody crusades, abuse of children, ostentatious buildings and properties, fights and divisions, forced compliance...but we can start by being a humble church. The old hymn “Lead On, O King

Eternal” puts it so well: “*For not with swords loud clashing, nor roll of stirring drums, but deeds of love and mercy, they heavenly Kingdom comes.*” It all starts when we sincerely pray from the depths of our hearts “**God be merciful to me a sinner.**” Amen

Hymn #404 “And Can It Be That I Should Gain”  
Lord’s Prayer  
Benediction

*Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A-men. A-men. A---men.*

Postlude: Carol Gustafson