

**BULLETIN TEMPLATE: Minnesota Valley Church
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations
Date: Sunday, July 23, 2023
Church Year Date: 7th Sunday after Trinity**

Prelude: Jan Ellingson

Hymn #172 “Crown Him with Many Crowns”
(Rebekah, Piano; Jan, Keyboard)

Confession of Sin: Psalm 51:1-12: Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your unfailing love; according to Your great compassion blot out my transgressions. 2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin...10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. 11 Do not cast me from Your presence or take Your Holy Spirit from me. 12 Restore to me the joy of Your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

Hymn #173 “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”
(Rebekah, Piano; Jan, Keyboard)

Children’s Music

Reader: Diane Plait

Old Testament Lesson: *Jeremiah 23:16-29* 16 *This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Do not listen to what the prophets are prophesying to you; they fill you with false hopes. They speak visions from their own minds, not from the mouth of the LORD. 17 They keep saying to those who despise me, 'The LORD says: You will have peace. 'And to all who follow the stubbornness of their hearts they say, 'No harm will come to you.' 18 But which of them has stood in the council of the LORD to see or to hear his word? Who has listened and heard his word? 19 See, the storm of the LORD will burst out in wrath, a whirlwind swirling down on the heads of the wicked. 20 The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly. 21 I did not send these prophets, yet they have run with their message; I did not speak to them, yet they have prophesied. 22 But if they had stood in my council, they would have proclaimed my words to my people and would have turned them from their evil ways and from their evil deeds. 23 "Am I only a God nearby,"*

declares the LORD, "and not a God far away? 24 Can anyone hide in secret places so that I cannot see him?" declares the LORD. "Do not I fill heaven and earth?" declares the LORD. 25 "I have heard what the prophets say who prophesy lies in my name. They say, 'I had a dream! I had a dream!' 26 How long will this continue in the hearts of these lying prophets, who prophesy the delusions of their own minds? 27 They think the dreams they tell one another will make my people forget my name, just as their fathers forgot my name through Baal worship. 28 Let the prophet who has a dream tell his dream, but let the one who has my word speak it faithfully. For what has straw to do with grain?" declares the LORD. 29 "Is not my word like fire," declares the LORD, "and like a hammer that breaks a rock in pieces?"

Epistle Lesson: *Romans 8:12-17* *Therefore, brothers, we have an obligation-but it is not to the sinful nature, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, 14 because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. 15 For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs-heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory.*

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 (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, Offertory Prayer

Praise and Worship Songs: PICKED BY JAN, Sung by Hannah and Becky

“WHO CAN I TRUST?”

Matthew 7:15-23; Pastor Tom Olson; July 23, 2023

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

I would like to share with you one of the most important questions that you will ever ask in life. It is a question we need to ask often, perhaps on a daily basis. It is a question that will affect our politics, our finances, our child-raising, our marriages, our job choices and ultimately our eternal destiny. Here is the vitally important question: “Who can I trust?”

Which political leaders can we trust?

Which financial advisors can we trust?

Which schools can we trust?

Which plumbers, electricians, auto mechanics can we trust?

Which potential husband or wife can I trust?

Which preachers, Bible teachers and spiritual guides can we trust?

From this passage in Matthew 7, Jesus gives us principles for spotting false teachers, people we cannot trust. Underneath each warning is a positive principle to help us discern

I. GENUINE: YOU CAN TRUST THOSE WHO ARE GENUINE; THE SAME INWARDLY AS OUTWARDLY

Matthew 7:15 "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

TALK: One thing I have learned in life is that some people who love to talk about spiritual things, the Bible, morality and even Jesus Christ, cannot be trusted. There are people who have no religion that can be trusted better than some professing believers. There are people who are outwardly Christian but inwardly very selfish and dishonest. I have met Christians who are habitual liars and deceivers. They are people I wish I had never met. Jesus calls them “false prophets” or “wolves in sheep’s clothing.”

WARNINGS: The big question is this, “How do you spot them?” “How do we avoid getting caught in their traps?”

- **FACE THE REALITY:** Be aware that there are untrustworthy people out there and be discerning when you meet new people. Some people are just foolish and others are deceivers and criminals pretending to be godly. There is a reason that our church constitution doesn’t allow a new member to hold office for one year. Everyone needs time to prove who they really are.
- **TALK IS CHEAP:** Don’t put much stock in what people say but instead look at their lives. The Bible tells us not to be judgmental, but it does tell us to be discerning. Look at their lives, their family relationships, their business dealings and see if they are bearing good fruit. “The proof of the pudding is in the eating,” is an old saying reminding us that underneath all the whipped cream might be something bitter.
- **CHECK REFERENCES:** Talk to people who know or better yet, are related to this person. See if they will recommend them.
- **PSALM 23:** This very well-known Psalm is a great standard of discernment: The green pastures and still waters brings up a question: Does the person refresh your soul or drain you? Does the person walk the paths of righteousness? Does the person stick with you “in the valley of the shadow of death” or only hang around only in

good times. Does the person have a path of “goodness and mercy” following them in their lives?

- I am not saying we can’t help troubled people but I am saying that we can’t trust them or put them into positions of authority or responsibility.

You can trust a person if they are GENUINE: THE SAME INWARDLY AS OUTWARDLY.

II. GOOD FRUIT: YOU CAN TRUST THOSE WHO PRODUCE A HARVEST OF GOOD FRUIT

Matthew 7:16-20 By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? 17 Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

TIME: One of the phrases I learned during the COVID pandemic when we were trying to discern whether or not to take certain medicines such as Ivermectin or Monoclonal Antibodies or the M-rna Vaccines was this phrase: “TIME IS THE FRIEND OF TRUTH.” People can fool you for the sake of profit in the short-run, especially if you are panicking or fearful. But the truth comes out in the long run. Many dictators such as Joseph Stalin of Russia and Chairman Mao of China fooled millions of people in the short-run, but in the long run the truth came out about them and their agenda after they took away most rights of the people and killed millions who questioned them.

FRUIT: What is the fruit that the Bible tells us to look for in our associations with others. Galatians 5 gives a clear list of the bad fruit to avoid and the good fruit to be attracted to.

BAD FRUIT: *Galatians 5:19-21 The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.* If you see these things practiced in a person’s life, stay away from close relationships with such people. They are warning signs which we must heed. And it takes time to see it because some people can stay in control just long enough to get you under their thumb.

GOOD FRUIT: *Galatians 5:22-26 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.*

POTENTIAL: When you find a person to be loving, joyful, kind, patient, gentle and such, you know you have a person who you might want to have a closer relationship with. These fruits are the result of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, sometimes developed in a family over generations.

ROOTS: Notice how he especially points out two key root issues in verse 26: PROVOKING AND ENVYING. These are the two hallmarks of serious trouble sources- they are behind the scenes provoking people to be upset and they are filled with envy of those who have what they want.

PROVOKING: Some people keep provoking you until you blow up in order to make you look like the bad guy. Watch out for this.

ENVY: Then there is that poison of the soul called envy. As they say, ENVY IS A GREEN-EYED MONSTER...so much trouble flows from the fountains of envy and bitterness. It is a root of

much crime today. Some people don't want to work for what they have, they just want to take it by force. Politicians try to get the poor to envy the rich and then support high taxation with the promise the money will go to the poor, which it seldom does, because it gets diverted to the politicians and their families along the way. We see this so much in our national leadership today. They exploit envy for their own gain.

YOU CAN ONLY TRUST THOSE WHO HAVE LIVES THAT BEAR GOOD FRUIT.

III. RELATIONSHIP: YOU CAN TRUST THOSE WHO WALK WITH GOD IN A LIVING WAY WITH AN ETERNAL PERSPECTIVE

Matthew 7:21-23 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'"

FAKE: Don't easily trust what you see on TV as far as religion goes. Miracles can be faked. Testimonies can be faked. One rich and famous TV preacher got exposed by his nephew that wrote a book about what really went on behind the scenes. He had to admit that he was a fake. He probably started out well but the money made him compromise.

REAL: Those who will be welcomed into heaven are those who know the Lord. I have met some preachers who serve small churches, live in simple parsonages and get modest income. Many of them are not real great speakers who ever get invited to preach at conferences, much less on TV. But they walk with God, they love their people, their treasures are in heaven and they remain faithful unto death. These are the pastors that I like to have

friendships with...I don't really care to hang around the big shots. Some of my favorite pastor friends preach to less than 50 people every Sunday. They are heavenly-minded and not consumed with the things of this world. Above all else they have a burden for souls and prioritize introducing people to Jesus above promoting their ministries. The Bible calls them "faithful Shepherds." They love their flocks.

SOULS: I hope we can above all else care about eternal souls. I love the admonition that we give to husbands and wives at our Christian wedding ceremony we use in the AFLC. It reminds us that the most important part of marriage is to help our partner spiritually to heaven forever: READ IT HERE FROM THE BOOK: ...and above all else to help each other on the way to everlasting life...

WIFE: I will never forget my mother returning home from her uncle's funeral. She and his elderly wife went up to the coffin and my great aunt said to my mother: "Jeg håp at han har fred med Gud." I hope he has peace with God. She was a good wife and above all else wanted her husband to be in heaven.

CONCLUSION: So how do you trust someone in your life? This is a very important question that can lead to happiness or nightmares. The key is to learn to spot people who are GENUINE, the key is to observe the FRUIT in their lives, and the key is to find people who walk humbly with God with an ETERNAL perspective. There are dangerous and deceptive people ready to take advantage of you and your children. Learning who you can trust is absolutely vital for a good life. Now you have the keys from God's Word to protect your family. And let's remember that we can totally trust the one who gave His life on the cross to save our souls, Jesus Christ. Amen

May the peace of God that surpasses understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen

Hymn #515 "Room at the Cross for You"

(Rebekah, Piano Only)

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Doxology (AH #390) *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: Rebekah Olson