

**BULLETIN TEMPLATE:**

**Minnesota Valley Church**

**Date: Sunday, November 19, 2023**

**Church Year Date: Thanksgiving Sunday**

Prelude: Carol Gustafson

Singers: Fugleberg

Hymn #521 (Refrain Only 2x) "Thank You, Lord"

Responsive Reading: Psalm 67

PASTOR: May God be gracious to us and bless us

ALL: And make his face shine upon us,

PASTOR: That your ways may be known on earth,

ALL: Your salvation among all nations.

PASTOR: May the peoples praise you, O God;

ALL: May all the peoples praise you.

PASTOR: May the nations be glad and sing for joy,

ALL: For you rule the peoples justly

and guide the nations of the earth.

PASTOR: May the peoples praise you, O God;

ALL: May all the peoples praise you.

PASTOR: Then the land will yield its harvest,

ALL: And God, our God, will bless us.

PASTOR: God will bless us,

ALL: And all the ends of the earth will fear him.

Hymn #146 "We Gather Together

Thanksgiving Prayer

Hymn #144 "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come

Children's Sermon

Reader: Luke Johnson

**Epistle Lesson:** *Philippians 4:6-20 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable-if anything is excellent or praiseworthy-think about such things. 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me-put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. 10 I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you have been concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. 12 I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 I can do everything through him who gives me strength. 14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. 17 Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. 18 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19*

*And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*

**Gospel Lesson:** *Luke 17:11-19 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. 12 As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance 13 and called out in a loud voice, "Jesus, Master, have pity on us!" 14 When he saw them, he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." And as they went, they were cleansed. 15 One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. 16 He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked him-and he was a Samaritan. 17 Jesus asked, "Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? 18 Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" 19 Then he said to him, "Rise and go; your faith has made you well."*

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

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

Hymn #148 "Sing to the Lord of Harvest"

Announcements & Offering

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Songs to be chosen by Carol

**Sermon: "A GOOD LAND" Deuteronomy 8:1-11 Pastor Tom Olson; 11/19/23** *Grace to you and peace, from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

LAND: As a gardener, I have discovered that the land, the soil, is everything. It takes decades to build up poor soil in comparison to starting with good soil. But the land is also important for scenic beauty, resources, lakes and streams, forests and lumber, hunting and vacations. The land is a gift of God.

ISRAEL: The world is focused on the land of Israel. The Arabs want to drive the Jews off of that land. The land was occupied by the Jews until 70 AD when the Romans drove them out and scattered them all around the world. Then, after World War 2 and the great Jewish Holocaust, in 1948, the British, who controlled the land in those days, allowed Jews to move back there and start a nation that is smaller than two Minnesota counties, surrounded by millions of square miles, dozens of nations, controlled by Muslims who want to exterminate the Jews.

SCATTERED: Why were the Jews driven out by the Romans? We see it here in this text from Deuteronomy...sin, rebellion, unbelief and lack of thankfulness to God. It was their own fault.

USA: We also live in a good land but will lose it if we reject God and His Word as well. That makes this text extremely important and applicable to Thanksgiving. Deuteronomy 8:1-11 is about thankfulness for A GOOD LAND.

## **I. PREPARING FOR A GOOD LAND**

**Deuteronomy 8:1-5 Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the LAND that the LORD promised on oath to your forefathers. 2 Remember how the LORD your God led you all the way in the desert these forty years, to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep his commands. 3 He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. 4 Your clothes did not wear out and your feet did not swell during these forty years. 5 Know then in your heart that as a man disciplines his son, so the LORD your God disciplines you.**

PREPARATION: God prepared the children of Israel for the land of Israel through forty years of discipline in the wilderness. The older people who did not have faith in God's ability to give them the land needed to die first. In spite of their miraculous deliverance through the Red Sea, they still had their hearts in the land of Egypt, the land of wealth, delicious foods, idolatry and sexual sins. Even though they would be slaves, they wanted to go back to Egypt.

LATER: Forty years later the rebellious ones were all dead. Only Joshua and Caleb, the good spies who urged the people to trust the Lord, remained. God had kept their children all alive, fed, clothed and healthy. Now the new generation was willing to follow Joshua into the promised land. They had faith. They didn't want to return to the sin and idolatry of Egypt.

PROMISED: Notice in verse that they were going into the land that God had PROMISED to their forefathers. The promises of God always remain true. But they must be received by faith.

CONGRESS: Our new speaker of the house, Mike Johnson, was severely criticized for kneeling of the floor of the House of Representatives in prayer as he accepted the position of Speaker of the House. His critics said that we are a secular nation and prayer has no place there. Representative Johnson, an expert in US history educated them on the role of faith in our nation and government from the outset and quoted our founders. He reminds me of Joshua of old who called upon the nation to follow the Lord but the people longed for the sin, idolatry and decadency of Egypt.

NOW: Today's generation has heard of the deeds of God in our land in the past but are not prepared to follow the Lord in this generation. Perhaps God will send us into a time of discipline and exile in the wilderness until this unbelieving generation passes away! History tends to repeat itself.

SOBERING: One of the most sobering verses in Scripture for this harvest time of year is Jer 8:20 "The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved." We need more than ever to prepare ourselves as a nation for the promised land of God's blessing through true repentance of sin and faith in the Lord!

## II. KEEPING A GOOD LAND

**Deuteronomy 8:6-9 Observe the commands of the LORD your God, walking in his ways and revering him. 7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good LAND--a land with streams and pools of water, with springs flowing in the valleys and hills; 8 a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; 9 a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.**

COMPARISON: When I hear this description of Israel, it makes me think of our own nation. This particular state could fill this description: we have the several great rivers, thousands of lakes and streams of water, we have land that produces amazing crops. Even in this year of scarce rainfall, many farmers have experienced yields to their crops that could not have been imagined a few decades ago in the best of weather conditions. We have iron and copper mines and vast northern forests. Our neighbor in Wisconsin just logged his land and he said that there is so many hardwood logs on the market that the price he got for oak and maple logs was relatively low. Those forests were completely logged off in the 1800's and now today are filled with large, mature logs again. We have such abundance. I don't know of anyone who is dying of starvation in Minnesota...in fact, quite the opposite. We are too well fed. As of yet, nothing is scarce that I know of, except good hard workers. We also have so many other blessings such as good neighbors.

AWARE: Are we really as aware as we ought to be for this abundance? My parents and grandparents nearly starved in the 1930's at the height of the great depression. There were no paying jobs to be found. Relatives on the farm shared food with them in their great distress. Grandpa Olson had to go away and work for the WPA government work program or they would have starved to death. There were no free food pantries in those days. Grandma would often note how wasteful and unappreciative our generation was and would say, "I think we need another great depression to teach us to appreciate what we have." Maybe she was right. Maybe it will happen yet! God has given us a good land, filled with opportunities and wonderful people. This brings us to the final point of this text...

### III. GRATITUDE FOR A GOOD LAND

**Deuteronomy 8:10** When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good LAND he has given you.

FOUNDATION: This verse is the foundation of the national holiday of Thanksgiving. I am afraid that many young people today do not know that the day is not for the purpose of eating, but it is for the purpose of giving thanks to God for food and provision. I even heard someone seriously say that we are supposed to give thanks to the turkey for giving his life for us. They were serious. It is thankfulness to God from whom all blessings flow.

FORTUNATE: But also notice that the thanks is not merely for the food but for the GOOD LAND. This is such a good land that people from all over the world are trying in any way possible to come to America to live. We are fortunate enough to have been born here. I notice that many immigrants are working very hard to get ahead. In just 20 years or so they have moved from overcrowded housing in unsafe neighborhoods of St. Paul to owning their own homes in prosperous Apple Valley and

surrounding communities. They want to live here because they want their children to be safe, they want them to attend our good pre-school, they want to live without fear. They appreciate this good land, perhaps maybe even more than some of us who did not have to sacrifice to move here.

GRATITUDE: One of the best things we can do is be thankful to God for the good land, the good neighborhoods, the good services and access to food and clothing, the freedom to practice our faith. The first step to losing freedom is to lose our gratitude for it. Gratitude and thanksgiving are the open door to the fulness of the Holy Spirit and the manifest presence of God. The giving of Thanks is one of the primary and most fundamental of all Christian practices. Just remember 5:18

*1 Thessalonians 5:18 "Give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."*

*Ephesians 5:18ff. "Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit. 19 Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord, 20 always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

SPIRIT: May God give us a Spirit-filled Thanksgiving this year. I pray the presence of the Lord will be strong in your home and festivities. It is a good thing to give thanks. *Now may the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

Hymn #145 "Now Thank We All Our God"

Lord's Prayer

Benediction

Hymn #150 "Let All Things Now Living"

Postlude: Carol Gustafson