

BULLETIN TEMPLATE:

Minnesota Valley Church

Date: Sunday, February 18, 2024

Church Year Date: 1st Sunday in Lent

Prelude: Rebekah Olson

HYMN #173 “What a Friend We Have in Jesus”

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 25:8-13

PASTOR: Good and upright is the LORD;

ALL: Therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.

PASTOR: He guides the humble in what is right

ALL: And teaches them his way.

PASTOR: All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful

ALL: For those who keep the demands of his covenant.

PASTOR: For the sake of your name, O LORD,

ALL: Forgive my iniquity, though it is great.

PASTOR: Who, then, is the man that fears the LORD?

ALL: He will instruct him in the way chosen for him.

PASTOR: He will spend his days in prosperity,

ALL: And his descendants will inherit the land.

HYMN #449 “I Need Thee Every Hour”

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE: Making a Chisel

Reader: Luke Johnson

Old Testament Lesson: *Genesis 22:1-18* Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied.

2 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains I will tell you about." 3 Early the next morning Abraham got up and saddled his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told

him about. 4 On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. 5 He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you." 6 Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, 7 Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" 8 Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together. 9 When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. 10 Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son. 11 But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. 12 "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." 13 Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided." 15 The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time 16 and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, 17 I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, 18 and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

Gospel Lesson: *Mark 1:9-15* At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. 10 As Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. 11 And a voice came from heaven: "You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased."

12 At once the Spirit sent him out into the desert, 13 and he was in the desert forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. 14 After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

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 Receive Offering

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Songs to be chosen by Hannah

SERMON: "TRIALS OF LIFE" James 1:12-27 Pastor Tom Olson; *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen*

GRIP: We need to face up to the topic of THE TRIALS OF LIFE. We all need to be tested, time and again. We need to know how we

really are doing. For example, we need our eyes periodically tested to see if they are good enough to drive safely.

PILOTS: When I was an active airplane pilot, I had to be examined once every two or three years by a certified official to see if I had the knowledge and skills to fly safely. He asked a lot of questions. You have to fly for an examiner and demonstrate your flying skills. Skills can be lost over time. Our age can take a toll on our abilities. The pilot must be tested again and again.

STRENGTH: We also need trials to increase our strength and abilities. God is making us into something useful for His purposes. God is not in the business of making us happy. God is in the business of bringing us to maturity.

So today, in light of this, we look at James 1:12-27 at the theme "The Trials of Life." I hope that this message helps you see the value of the challenging situations God is allowing to come into your lives.

I. THE MECHANICS (REALITY) OF TRIALS

James 1:12-14 Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. 13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.

WHEN: We need to notice that trials are going to come our way. It says WHEN twice. Verse 12 "WHEN HE HAS STOOD THE TEST." Verse 13 "WHEN TEMPTED." The only way to move on to maturity is to go through trials and temptations.

ASSURANCE: Verse 12 indicates that keeping the faith through trials assures us that we will one day be granted eternal life. It is easy to say, “I believe in God and I am trusting the death of Christ on the cross for forgiveness” but it is another thing to go through tests to see if that confession is real.

PERSECUTION: In countries where there is persecution for being a Christian, the believers have a tested faith. I just read last night about Christians being beaten to death in Uganda. In India, Christian schools are being forced by the Hindu government to remove the symbol of the cross. China forced the same thing there several years ago. Christian persecution is high in Muslim, Communist and even secular countries. They are put to death. Their faith is tested.

AMERICA: In America there is starting to be a price for following Jesus. Growing segments of corporate America don't want Christians. In some states now, Christians are being barred from having foster children. People are having their faith tested by trials.

TEMPTATION: Verse 13 talks about TEMPTATIONS as well. This is another way that we find out how real our faith is or how mature we are. You never know if you are faithful to your spouse until an opportunity to be unfaithful comes. You never know if you are honest until you get the opportunity to get ahead by dishonesty.

DESIRES: Verses 14 and 15 show us that we have desires that want us to follow the temptation through. But those verses also remind us that the end result of falling into sin is disastrous.

EXAMPLE: I saw an interview the other day with a woman in her 30's who wanted desperately to find a husband and get married and have a normal home and family. She was attractive but no one wanted her. She had been extremely wild in her 20's and had been intimate with many handsome and wealthy men. She thought those men really were attracted to her. She thought she could have any one of them when she was ready to settle down. But she came to

realize that those men never cared for her. They were only using her. And the good moral guys that she did not consider back then had mostly found good moral wives and were no longer available. Those who were still available were no longer interested in her because of her wild reputation. They no longer saw her as a potential decent mother of children. This gal in her 30's wept hysterically when she realized that her wild life had destroyed her future. I wonder if this is what the Bible is talking about when it says that people will be “weeping and gnashing their teeth.”

GOOD: It is good to be tested and brought to our senses as soon as possible. It is good to see that God's ways are the best ways and lead to happiness in this life and for all eternity. It is good to put our old nature to death and let the new nature in Christ grow strong.

SUMMARY: THE MECHANICS OF TRIALS AND TESTS are summarized in these words: They are INEVITABLE, they are GOOD and they are NECESSARY. This is because we don't want to let sin ruin the precious few days of our brief lives on earth.

II. THE GOAL OF TRIALS

James 1:16-18 Don't be deceived, my dear brothers. 17 Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

FIRSTFRUITS: The goal of trials and temptations is to make us into the FIRSTFRUITS of all he has redeemed.

MODEL HOME: I was trying to think of what might be a helpful comparison and I thought of a MODEL HOME. We have had hundreds of new homes built in our area in the past ten years. One of the first things that the contractor builds is a MODEL HOME. It is close to the main road in an obvious location. It is a very nice example of a typical home that would be built in that development.

The model home is what sells people on the development. It is a “Firstfruit” of what is to come.

DEMONSTRATION: That is what God is doing with us through bringing us to salvation and leading us to maturity through trials and tests. He is using our lives to show the world what He can do with a faulty sinner. He is making us an example to draw other seeking souls to salvation in Christ. The **GOAL OF TRIALS** is to make us into radiant examples of God’s power.

III. THE SCOPE OF TRIALS

PRACTICAL: Starting in verse 19, James lists the scope of the work God is doing to show His glory through us. He lists several practical areas that God is refining us. As we look at them, we will realize that God is working in our lives in these areas.

1. LISTENING TEST

James 1:19a My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak

One of the primary areas that God wants to show His glory through us is by making us into good listeners. I don’t know about you, but this is a tough area to get good at. It implies more than just hearing, the word is listening. Good listeners draw people to Christ.

2. ANGER TEST

James 1:19b-20 ...and slow to become angry, 20 for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

The Holy Spirit is working with our anger. When we feel that life has been unfair to us, we so easily get angry. When we get angry, the devil shows up. Ugly things happen. God shows His glory in our lives when we are slow to become angry at others. Controlling anger draws people to Christ.

3. MORAL PURITY TEST

James 1:21 Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you.

We are living in a time when the opportunities for immorality abound. It is epidemic. It is ruining lives. How do we fight it? The answer is here: fill yourself with the Word of God. It is the Word of God that can save us. The battle is won or lost in our minds. Moral purity is a great testimony to the power of God in our lives. Moral purity draws people with ruined bodies to Christ for cleansing.

4. THE SELF-EXAMINATION TEST

James 1:22-25 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. 23 Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror 24 and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. 25 But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it-he will be blessed in what he does.

The one that really shines for God’s glory is not the person who is always pointing out the faults of others, but the person who reads God’s Word and applies it to their own self. They look into the mirror and say, God change that person into the image of Christ. A self-examined life draws people to Christ.

5. THE SPEAKING TEST

James 1:26 If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless.

The fifth area where God is forging in us His character is our speech. I know of a very outspoken Christian who is loud, critical and a real know-it-all. What he doesn't realize is that he actually is turning people away from God by the way He talks. He would be so much more effective if he had gracious speech. I know personally that my tongue is not always Spirit-led. Edifying speech draws people to Christ.

6. THE COMPASSION TEST

James 1:27 Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world.

LOVE: We can have a very upright and self-controlled life but still be relatively ineffective. The capstone of maturity is found in ***1 Corinthians 13:1 ...if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.*** That love is to be shown toward widows and orphans...in our culture that may include single mothers as well, along with their absent father children.

ORPHANS: One of the great works of the early church in Rome and around the world was to care for the orphans. Unwanted children would be taken to the trash heap to die of exposure. But the Christians would rescue these babies and raise them up to become amazing citizens. Most orphanages are supported by Christians.

WIDOWS: Penniless widows also received loving care in the early church. It was this kind of demonstration of the love of Christ that made the pagans take note that Christians were a different kind of people than they were. Compassion for those who are suffering is a radiant testimony for Christ. Our nursing homes and apartment buildings are filled with lonely people who need someone to love them. And love is spelled T-I-M-E.

SUMMARY: I praise the Lord for the trials and temptations that He is using in our lives to make us mature. Once we realize the benefit

of trials and temptations, then our hard times start to make much more sense. We even can say with the Psalmist, "It is good that I was afflicted." Are you happy today that God is using trials and temptations to let the world see the beauty of Christ in you? It will be worth it all when we see Jesus. *May the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

Hymn #502 "I'm Pressing on the Upward Way"

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: Rebekah Olson