

**MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; June 9, 2024**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; Singers: "youth" praise team**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson/Praise Team Singers

**CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 130**

**PASTOR: O Lord, hear my voice.**

**ALL: Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.**

**PASTOR: If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins,**

**ALL: O Lord, who could stand?**

**PASTOR: But with you there is forgiveness;**

**ALL: Therefore, you are feared.**

**PASTOR: I wait for the LORD, my soul waits,**

**ALL: And in his word, I put my hope.**

**PASTOR: Put your hope in the LORD,**

**ALL: For with the LORD is unfailing love  
and with him is full redemption.**

**PASTOR: He himself will redeem Israel**

**ALL: From all their sins.**

**HYMN #184 "Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise"**

**PASTOR ONLY: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen**

**PASTOR & CONGREGATION: We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen**

**CHILDREN'S MESSAGE:**

**READER: Carol Hoikkala**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: Genesis 3:8-15** Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. 9 But the LORD God called to the man, "Where are you?" 10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." 11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?" 12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it." 13 Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate." 14 So the LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, "Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. 15 And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

**GOSPEL LESSON: Mark 3:20-35** Then Jesus entered a house, and again a crowd gathered, so that he and his disciples were not even able to eat. 21 When his family heard about this, they went to take charge of him, for they said, "He is out of his mind." 22 And the teachers of the law who came down from Jerusalem said, "He is possessed by Beelzebul! By the prince of demons he is driving out demons." 23 So Jesus called them and spoke to them in parables: "How can Satan drive out Satan? 24 If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. 25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. 26 And if Satan opposes himself and is divided, he cannot stand; his end has come. 27 In fact, no one can enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man. Then he can rob his house. 28 I tell you the truth, all the sins and blasphemies of men will be forgiven them. 29 But whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will never be forgiven; he is guilty of an eternal sin." 30 He said this because they were saying, "He has an evil spirit." 31 Then Jesus' mother and brothers arrived. Standing outside, they sent someone in to call him. 32 A crowd was sitting around him, and they told him, "Your mother and brothers are outside looking for you." 33 "Who are my mother and my brothers?" he asked. 34 Then he looked at those seated in a circle around him and said, "Here are my mother and my brothers! 35 Whoever does God's will is my brother and sister and mother."

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

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

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** 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:** *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 & PRAYER**

**PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2** praise songs chosen by CAROL

**SERMON: "FOCUS ON THE INVISIBLE" 2 Corinthians 4:13-18** Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

LIFE: We all have good days in life. But you have to admit, that a lot of life is difficult. Many jobs are hard to endure. Relationships are difficult, even among true Christians. Health problems are difficult. Raising children is difficult. And getting old is difficult. There are joys in life but there are also many sorrows.

*Psalm 90:10 "The length of our days is seventy years--or eighty, if we have the strength; yet their span is but trouble and sorrow, for they quickly pass, and we fly away."*

ELECTION: I believe that this presidential election this year may be the most difficult one in American history with deep distrust

and mounting frustrations. Someone I know truly believes the United States is going to break up. The middle east is a powder keg. Over 500,000 men have died in the Ukraine war and there is serious talk about sending European and American troops over there to fight Russia. Americans are very divided about that issue, especially with the potential of nuclear bombs being used. This picture is very bleak.

How do we cope with these difficulties of this life?

#### **I. FOCUS ON ETERNITY**

*2 Corinthians 4:13-15 It is written: "I believed; therefore I have spoken." With that same spirit of faith we also believe and therefore speak, 14 because we know that the one who raised the Lord Jesus from the dead will also raise us with Jesus and present us with you in his presence. 15 All this is for your benefit, so that the grace that is reaching more and more people may cause thanksgiving to overflow to the glory of God.*

VAPOR: If you want to make it through this life without getting depressed or bitter there is only one thing that can help: FOCUS ON ETERNITY. This life is but a vapor.

*James 4:14 "...What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes."*

FOREVER: Life beyond the grave is forever in heaven or hell. There is nothing in this life that can't be put into perspective by focusing on eternity. There is no sin so tempting that can compare with the eternal cost of sin. There is no trial so difficult, that it can compare with the beautiful eternal life with God in heaven that is being prepared for us by Christ himself.

PAIN: I have known of many people that have suffered with chronic pain and wanted to die. One woman suffered so much with great grace because she was a child of God and focused on

the relief she would get in heaven. She passed away a number of years ago and now is pain-free with the Lord in heaven.

**RELATIONSHIPS:** For many people, relationships are painful. They are disappointed with marriage or broken hearted about how things have gone with their children. There are things we can do to make relationships better such as forgiveness, learning to communicate, taking time to do activities that draw you closer to a person... But in many cases, one party is just unwilling or two personalities are simply incompatible. People are so broken inwardly that they cannot have healthy relationships. In that case, remember that in heaven, all relationships will be perfect. I find that encouraging.

**CLASHING:** I believe that two Christians who clashed in this life will be best friends in heaven. Their emotional hurts will be healed, past wrongs will be wiped out and personality traits will be perfected. Even mortal enemies will be friends in heaven if they get saved before they die.

**HEALING:** It will be a joy in eternity to make up for lost years with a child or even an ex-spouse who hurt you greatly. I like the song lyrics that says "Earth has no sorrow, that heaven cannot heal."

***Revelation 21:3&4 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. 4 He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."***

**BENEFIT:** Paul reminds us in verse 15 that it is for our benefit to think about the resurrection of our bodies to eternal life. He said that this perspective leads to joy. **FOCUSING ON THE INVISIBLE, ON ETERNITY** gives me a lot of joy. Another important **INVISIBLE FOCUS** is...

## **II. FOCUS ON SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT**

***2 Corinthians 4:16-17 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all.***

**ANYONE:** No matter who we are, we can grow spiritually. We can be a child or elderly. We can have a body that is wasting away with age or disease and still be developing spiritually. We can have a very low IQ and still be growing spiritually more than an intellectual genius.

**IMPORTANT:** The inner person of the heart is of extreme importance. These bodies that we pamper so much only last for about 80 years or so. But the inner person, our spirit, our mind, our will and our emotions last forever and ever. This is so very crucial to prioritize.

**ENCOURAGEMENT:** Don't lose heart if your body is failing and getting weak. Be encouraged that you have what really counts. You have a growing relationship with Jesus Christ that is making you a more beautiful soul for all eternity.

## **III. FOCUS ON THE UNSEEN FORCES**

***2 Corinthians 4:18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.***

**FORCES:** Everything we see with our eyes is temporary. The unseen things are powerful and eternal. This election year we see political candidates. They are temporary. Biden and Trump will both be dead in a few years and I suspect we will not meet either of them in heaven, because neither have a testimony of faith in Christ. But the unseen forces behind them are powerful: the battle in our

land is between God and Satan, not between political parties. There are powerful spiritual forces at work.

**PRAYER:** Our Saturday evening prayer meeting for revival in America and our proclamation of the gospel of Christ are what will change America much more than politics. The unseen is where the real power struggle is and we wrestle in prayer.

**EYES:** The Sunday School song says, “O be careful little eyes what you see.” Paul tells us here to get our eyes off of the visible temporary things and fix our eyes on what is unseen and eternal.

**WEAPONS:** We do well to learn how to fight the battles of life with the weapons of spiritual warfare which are faith, righteousness, truth, peace, the Word of God and prayer. These are the only weapons that will defeat the invisible powers that are trying to destroy us. Voting in November a certain way won’t save us. Only a strong move of the Holy Spirit will save us.

**VICTORY:** What unseen powers are you dealing with in your life? ...fear, anger, gluttony, lust, bitterness, an uncontrolled tongue, hard people, jealousy? If we get the victory over unseen powers in prayer, we will see great improvement in the things we see. You can’t change another person but you can bind the demons that affect them and God can transform their hearts.

***Ephesians 6:12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.***

**CONCLUSION:** The secret of victorious living is to be so close to Christ and so filled with the Holy Spirit and you are operating in the power and reality of the INVISIBLE REALM. Everything starts to make sense when you FOCUS ON THE INVISIBLE...Focus on ETERNITY, SPIRITUAL

**DEVELOPMENT AND UNSEEN FORCES.** Then the things we see will all fall into perspective. Let’s pray together about this:

*Dear Father in Heaven, Help me to see things the way you see them. Help me to see people, the way you see them. Help me to see the invisible forces that are the real causes of what is happening in the world today. Help me to operate in the gifts and power of the Holy Spirit to get at the root causes of the struggles that are raging against me and against our nation. Give me spiritual eyes, discernment and faith to pray with power. I acknowledge that Jesus Christ is King and Lord over all and that He has the power to work through me to make a significant difference in our world. I pray in Jesus Name. Amen*

*And now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

#### **HYMN #607 “Be Thou My Vision”**

**LORD’S PRAYER:** *Our Father, Who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy Name. Thy Kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those that trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, The power, and the glory, for ever and ever. Amen*

#### **BENEDICTION**

**CLOSING SONG:** Picked by Carol

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson