

October 13, 2024 21st Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 90

PASTOR: Teach us to number our days aright,

ALL: That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

PASTOR: Satisfy us in the morning with your unfailing love,

ALL: That we may sing for joy and be glad all our days.

PASTOR: Make us glad for as many days as you have afflicted us,

ALL: For as many years as we have seen trouble.

PASTOR: May your deeds be shown to your servants,

ALL: Your splendor to their children.

PASTOR: May the favor of the Lord our God rest upon us;

ALL: establish the work of our hands for us--
yes, establish the work of our hands.

HYMN #544 "Power in the Blood" (Hopefully both piano and organ.)

CONFESSION OF SIN: Psalm 51:8-13 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Amen

CHILDREN'S SERMON:

READER: Toby Johnson

EPISTLE LESSON: *Hebrews 3:12-19* See to it, brothers, that none of you has a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God. 13 But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. 14 We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first. 15 As has just been said:

*"Today, if you hear his voice,
do not harden your hearts
as you did in the rebellion."*

16 Who were they who heard and rebelled? Were they not all those Moses led out of Egypt? 17 And with whom was he angry for forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the desert? 18 And to whom did God swear that they would never enter his rest if not to those who disobeyed? 19 So we see that they were not able to enter, because of their unbelief.

GOSPEL LESSON: *Mark 10:17-22* As Jesus started on his way, a man ran up to him and fell on his knees before him. "Good teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 18 "Why do you call me good?" Jesus answered. "No one is good--except God alone. 19 You know the commandments: 'Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, do not defraud, honor your father and mother.'" 20 "Teacher," he declared, "all these I have kept since I was a boy." 21 Jesus looked at him and loved him. "One thing you lack," he said. "Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." 22 At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth.

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: 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 AND PRAYER

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Chosen by Luke or Krista Johnson

SERMON: A WARNING FOR AMERICA, Amos 5:7-15
Pastor Tom Olson *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.*

CHOICE: God has not created a world of robots that obey Him on command. He has created a world of intelligent human beings that can make real choices and experience the blessing or the troubles that come with these choices.

VISITOR: We had a visitor at our home on Tuesday, a single mom in her thirties. She told us that she had made many poor choices in her life and was suffering for them. She described how she was choosing a new direction, finishing her education and trying to aim for a better future. She has a growing interest in following God and His Word, even though she knew very little about the Bible. She made real choices and was experiencing the consequences.

AMERICA: America is making real choices. God has given us that ability. He is not interfering. He is watching to see what we

do. We are in the same place as Israel was at the time of Amos the prophet. They had been making very poor choices and they seem to be very similar to our nation today. This is a warning for Israel but it is also **A WARNING FOR AMERICA**. Amos was unpopular and unheeded in Israel. I hope not in America, but it appears to be so. Amos 8 beginning at verse 7. First of all...

I. THE PROBLEM

Ecclesiastes 1:9 says, *“What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.”* You will notice how everything from the prophet Amos is almost the same as our situation today.

PROBLEM 1: HATRED OF PEOPLE WHO SPEAK THE TRUTH

Amos 5:7&10 You who turn justice into bitterness and cast righteousness to the ground 10 you hate the one who reproves in court and despise him who tells the truth.

WHISTLE: Some people make a lot of money in ways that are not appropriate. Those who expose them are called “whistle blowers.” It is a dangerous thing to do, to tell the truth and expose sin. Notice the phrase here in verse ten *“you despise him who tells the truth.”* Are we living in a culture that loves or hates the truth? It is obvious. We need more and more people who are willing to risk all and tell the truth about science, about medicine, about morals...

SIN: I saw a riveting interview with Candice Owens and Don Lemon. Don knew she was a Christian and baited her by saying that he was married to a man and asked her “What do you think of that?” Candice looked right in his eyes and said, “You are living in sin.” Don Lemon was stunned at her confident answer. Her spirit was kind toward him but she was uncompromising. She was speaking the truth in love. I think Don knew in his heart she was telling him the truth. But she will be hated for it.

EXAMPLES: Many doctors and scientist were censored and even threatened as they tried to speak the truth about ivermectin during COVID. Others are trying to speak the truth about what is happening to immigrant children at our borders. Others are trying to tell the truth about what is happening in the FBI and CIA and IRS and FEMA. Others are trying to tell the whole truth about the wars in the middle east and Ukraine. People who are making vast amounts of money off the system, hate the people who are telling the truth.

PREACHERS: Spiritually, there are very few preachers left who will tell the truth about sin and salvation, heaven and hell, right and wrong. The prophets of old told the truth and were punished and killed. It is no different today. Part of our population DESPISES THE PERSON WHO TELLS THE TRUTH. I am searching my own soul to see if I am telling the WHOLE truth to you folks.

PROBLEM 2: RICHES THROUGH EXPLOITATION

Amos 5:11 You trample on the poor and force him to give you grain. Therefore, though you have built stone mansions, you will not live in them; though you have planted lush vineyards, you will not drink their wine.

Another area we need to be warned about is exploitation of the poor. God is not pleased with those who get rich at the expense of poor people who work for them. Very rich people control the lawmakers and manipulate the system to keep the poor people down and prop themselves up at the expense of hard-working low income people. God will eventually come to the aid of those who are oppressed. The gap between the rich and the poor is really growing.

PROBLEM 3: TAKING BRIBES

Amos 5:12 For I know how many are your offenses and how great your sins. You oppress the righteous and take bribes and you deprive the poor of justice in the courts.

POLITICIANS: Have you ever seen the net worth of our politicians when they take office and when they leave office? They enter office with less than one million dollars in wealth, they earn less than \$200,000 a year and they leave office after one or two terms with millions, sometimes tens of millions, of dollars in wealth. Bribes, insider trading, kickbacks on foreign aid are common. Every election cycle, politicians rail against corruption and say they will stop it, but nothing changes.

COURTS: We also need to pray for good judges.

PROBLEM 4: FEAR OF SPEAKING UP

Amos 5:13 Therefore the prudent man keeps quiet in such times, for the times are evil.

AFRAID: People are afraid to speak up. They are afraid of losing their jobs. In some cases, they are afraid for their lives. The prophet Amos says that sensible people who want to survive corruption just simply stay quiet. That is why so few really good people run for office because they know it will destroy their lives if they do. Thomas Massie from Kentucky is an honorable man of principle who took the risk and ran for office and speaks up. But few people listen to him, even those in his own party.

II. THE REMEDY

Amos 5:14&15 Seek good, not evil, that you may live. Then the LORD God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. 15 Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the LORD God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.

Is there any hope for America? Is it possible that God might have mercy upon our land? Yes, Amos gives us a way to remove ourselves from the hand of God's judgement.

REMEDY ONE: v. 15 HATE EVIL AND LOVE GOOD: Our lives are transformed when we develop a hatred of evil and a love of what is good. We are blessed when we stay away from evil. Our lives are filled with joy as we focus on telling people the good news of the gospel. Let's talk about Jesus! That is what the early church did.

PRIORITY: The Apostle Paul described his priority in *Colossians 1:25-29* "*I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness...27... Christ in you, the hope of glory. 28 We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. 29 To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.*"

REMEDY TWO: V. 15 MAINTAIN JUSTICE IN THE COURTS: One of the most important jobs of a leader is to appoint good judges. These must be judges who rule on the basis of the law and do not take bribes. My friend, a surveyor went before a corrupt judge in the Appalachian hills and he had no chance of winning the case on the basis of law or truth. The judge was owned. Honorable judges are key to a stable and blessed nation.

REMEDY THREE: V. 14 BLESSED WITH THE PRESENCE OF GOD: Notice in the end of verse 14 Amos says, "*Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you.*" God is omnipresent at all times and sees everything. There is a blessed "MANIFEST PRESENCE" of God that comes to a nation that is following the Lord. God's presence is important.

PROFESSOR: A college professor was railing against God because of the presence of evil in this world. One of his students

responded and said something to the effect of, "Cold is not real, it is merely the absence of heat. Darkness is not real; it is the absence of light. Neither is evil "real," it is the absence of God." That student was said to be Albert Einstein.

TRANSFORMED: Evil becomes a reality when we push God out. But goodness prevails when "Jesus enters home and nation." Even corrupt politicians will be transformed if "we the people" let the light of God into our little sphere of influence. Evil and corruption cannot stand in the presence of the Lord.

John 16:7 But I tell you the truth: It is for your good that I am going away. Unless I go away, the Counselor will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.

FILLED: There is nothing we need more than to be FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT. The Word of God invites us to be filled. *Ephesians 5:18 "Do not get drunk with wine but be filled with the Holy Spirit!"* Our daily prayer should be that we be filled with the Holy Spirit, empty of sin and evil, "filled with God's goodness and lost in His love."

The song puts it well for our nation:

*Lord, I come to your awesome presence
From the shadows into your radiance
By the blood I may enter your brightness
Search me, try me, consume all my darkness
Shine on me, shine on me*

*Shine, Jesus, shine
Fill this land with the Father's glory
Blaze, Spirit, blaze
Set our hearts on fire
Flow, river, flow
Flood the nations with grace and mercy
Send forth your word*

Lord, and let there be light

CHOICE: One of the best political signs I have seen yet is one word and a date: “**JESUS 2024.**” If we would get that one right, everything else would fall into place. Above all else, “America need the Lord.” God wants it to happen but we are not robots. He gives us the freedom of choice. The choice is ours. The future is in the balance. God help us to choose well. Amen

May the peace of God guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen

HYMN #425 “Whiter than Snow”

Lord’s Prayer

Benediction

Doxology: *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