

MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; October 20, 2024
22nd Sunday after Pentecost; Singers: Fugleberg

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 119

PASTOR: How can a young man keep his way pure?

ALL: By living according to your word.

PASTOR: I seek you with all my heart;

ALL: Do not let me stray from your commands.

PASTOR: I have hidden your word in my heart

ALL: That I might not sin against you.

HYMN #551 “Standing on the Promises”

CONFESSION OF SIN: Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy and ask You for Christ’s sake, grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE:

READER: Glenn Gustafson

EPISTLE LESSON: *Hebrews 4:1-13* Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. 2 For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith. 3 Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, "They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his work has been finished since the creation of the world. 4 For somewhere he has spoken about the seventh day in these words: "And on the seventh day God rested from all his work." 5 And again in the passage above he says, "They shall never enter my rest." 6 It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them

did not go in, because of their disobedience. 7 Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: "Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts." 8 For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. 9 There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; 10 for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. 11 Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience. 12 For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. 13 Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

GOSPEL LESSON: *Mark 10:23-31* 23 Jesus looked around and said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" 24 The disciples were amazed at his words. But Jesus said again, "Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God." 26 The disciples were even more amazed, and said to each other, "Who then can be saved?" 27 Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." 28 Peter said to him, "We have left everything to follow you!" 29 "I tell you the truth," Jesus replied, "no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age (homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—and with them, persecutions) and in the age to come, eternal life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first."

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 not, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS & PRAYER

PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by CAROL

SERMON: “A MESSAGE FROM THE RICHEST MAN IN HISTORY” **Ecclesiastes 5:10-20** *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

AMISH: The best advice I ever got about wealth was from an article in a horse farming magazine written by an Amish man. He stated, “If you spend less money than you earn, life is good.” Jesus told his disciples that wealth can be a great hinderance in people entering the Kingdom of Heaven. Solomon says in Proverbs 30:8 that poverty can also cause us to curse God.

TOPIC: Today we talk about a very important topic: possessions, money, career and investing. There are many books, magazines and now, podcasts dedicated to this topic. One magazine is simply called “MONEY.” We go to the book of Ecclesiastes and get our advice about this important area of our lives. Ecclesiastes 3 gives us “A MESSAGE FROM THE RICHEST MAN IN HISTORY.”

I. MATERIALISM’S DECEPTIVE GRIP

Ecclesiastes 5:10-11 **Whoever loves money never has money enough; whoever loves wealth is never satisfied with his income. This too is meaningless. 11 As goods increase, so do those who consume them. And what benefit are they to the owner except to feast his eyes on them?**

ADDICTION: We read in Scripture that money in itself does not harm you but it is the LOVE OF MONEY that is destructive. Solomon tells us that money and wealth do not satisfy a person, in fact, they can become an addiction. He should know, since he was one of the richest men in history.

PORTAL: I remember when my Raymond James financial adviser in Ohio came out with an online portal to keep an eye on my retirement investments about fifteen years ago. I had about \$60,000 invested in a broad portfolio. I became addicted to checking it out and seeing how it was doing. If it went up a thousand dollars, I was so excited and if it went down I was crushed. It became an obsession that I had to stop.

DRAGONS: He also warns that storing up treasures can become a sickness. This is the theme of so many ancient stories about dragons hoarding gold and jewels and spending their days in dark caves guarding their hoard.

LOOK: Solomon reminds us that the only thing you can do with hoarded valuables is look at them. The sad part is that we have to hide gold, silver, jewels, rare coins. We don’t even get to show them to others for fear of them being stolen. You can’t eat them, you can’t make things from them, you just can hide them and look at them in private and hope they go up in value and hope they don’t get stolen.

CAVEAT: I am not at all downplaying the importance of saving for the future. I just brought Rebekah to our financial adviser to open up a Roth IRA and other investments so she can start saving for her future needs. The point here is that money and treasures can get a grip on your heart that steals your life and often ruins relationships.

Matthew 6:21 “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”

TRIP: At Kristen Peterson's recent funeral, I talked with her younger sister, Betty, my age, along with Betty's granddaughter in her 30's. Betty said that she had been thinking about taking a trip to Sweden with her daughter who was very interested in their family roots. I urged her to spend some of her savings and do it to create a memory together rather than leaving that money to the daughter at death with no memory attached to it. The daughter agreed that she would rather have the trip with her mom now than the money in the future. But it is hard to let go of that hard earned money that you have spent a lifetime saving.

Savings are important but not at the expense of living life well with our loved ones. MATERIALISM HAS A DECEPTIVE GRIP.

II. THE LABORER SLEEPS WELL

Ecclesiastes 5:12 The sleep of a laborer is sweet, whether he eats little or much, but the abundance of a rich man permits him no sleep.

SLEEP: Solomon had observed that the laborer, who in his day would make enough wages to buy his daily bread and basic needs, would sleep so well. But he noted that wealthy people who have abundant provision for the future often don't sleep well. It is no fun to be poor and needy, but it also is no fun to be rich and worried.

VW: Back when I had purchased my first new car in 1986, I didn't sleep as well as I did when I drove my old Datsun pickup truck. I worried about getting a dent in my door in parking lots, so strategic parking became a new layer of complication in my life. I worried about people riding in my car with muddy feet on the new carpet or spilling food or pop on the cloth seats. That was hard for a young pastor who led the youth group and hauled kids all over. Then I had to keep it waxed and shiny too and that took time and effort. Gravel roads stressed me out.

USED: We now choose to drive older, used cars and it helps me to sleep better. It is more relaxing. I can park anywhere by anyone and it doesn't bother me. Gravel roads are not a problem any more.

SALARY: There is something exciting about relying upon your labor to provide for your needs. When you want to get something, you work harder, you cut frivolous spending, you save until you can purchase it and it means so much to you when you do it that way. It is much better than using easy credit. And often times, we change our mind if we have time to think about if we really want that item. One Bible teacher used to recommend that you wait thirty days before you make a major purchase.

EXERCISE: The laborer also works until his body is tired and falls into bed to sleep quickly because of all the fresh air and exercise he has gotten through his labor. If we don't have labor jobs, we need to add labor and exercise to our lives to keep the body in shape. My dad was a firm believer in taking walks. He would haul us out to country roads when we were young and take us on hikes. Labor helps us sleep. This is practical stuff.

III. HOARDING IS FUTILE

Ecclesiastes 5:13-17 I have seen a grievous evil under the sun: wealth hoarded to the harm of its owner, 14 or wealth lost through some misfortune, so that when he has a son there is nothing left for him. 15 Naked a man comes from his mother's womb, and as he comes, so he departs. He takes nothing from his labor that he can carry in his hand. 16 This too is a grievous evil: As a man comes, so he departs, and what does he gain, since he toils for the wind? 17 All his days he eats in darkness, with great frustration, affliction and anger.

TRACTORS: One of my hobbies is an interest in old farm tractors. I have a Farmall and a Ford. It is all I can do to keep them running at their advanced age. They are both older than I am. But I use

them for jobs around our acreage. I especially enjoy them because I bought the Farmall in my teens and the Ford was my dad's.

ACQUAINTANCE: I know a man who also likes old tractors but he just can't stop buying them. If one sells cheap at an auction, he has to buy it and haul it home. Recently he started buying old caterpillar tractors. I believe he has well over thirty tractors and crawlers. He rents his rural farmstead and if he ever moves, I don't know what he would do with them. He works full time and many just sit unused and unrepaired because he doesn't have time to work on them. Collecting tractors is almost a sickness for him.

MYSELF: I have way too much stuff hoarded up too. We are coming to that stage of life that I need to deal with it. I have hundreds of books that I need to sort and give away. My accumulating tendency is a problem because Solomon reminds me here that I leave this earth the way I came, naked.

FAMILY: We start this life with nothing and end it with nothing. "Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling." I have never been in a hospice room with a dying person and any of their possessions in that room as they breath their last. Most don't even have clothes anymore. The only great possession they have in the hospice room is their family, and that is one thing we can potentially take with us to heaven.

CONTEMPLATE: Contemplating our inevitable death helps us keep a correct view about earthly possessions. I am sure you heard about the man who insisted that his wife put all of his money with him in his coffin before he was buried. She agreed. As they closed the coffin, she wrote out a check for his wealth and put it in with him. **HOARDING IS FUTILE.** Solomon ends his advice about money and work and possessions with this positive bit of instruction...

IV. ENJOY YOUR WORK AND POSSESSIONS

Ecclesiastes 5:18-20 Then I realized that it is good and proper for a man to eat and drink, and to find satisfaction in his toilsome labor under the sun during the few days of life God has given him-for this is his lot. 19 Moreover, when God gives any man wealth and possessions, and enables him to enjoy them, to accept his lot and be happy in his work-this is a gift of God. 20 He seldom reflects on the days of his life, because God keeps him occupied with gladness of heart.

ENJOY: This is some great advice...enjoy your WORK, enjoy your FOOD and enjoy your FAMILY and FRIENDS. These are gifts from God. It is a great thing to get up and go to work. It is even better if we really enjoy our work. I am so thankful that I love what I do.

When I visit elderly men, I am amazed at how much they like to tell me about their work. They talk about that more than trips, awards and wealth.

SUMMARY: Wealthy King Solomon puts it so well:

- Be aware of the GRIP of MATERIAL THINGS,
- LABOR with your hands and SLEEP well,
- HOARDING is futile
- ENJOY what you have.

CONCLUSION: Good advice from Solomon. One of the most precious possessions we have is TIME. We only have so much. Scott Erickson had 69 years. Once it passes, it is gone, forever.

Gloria Gaither puts it this way:

*We have this moment to hold in our hands
And to touch as it slips
Through our fingers like sand
Yesterday's gone*

*And tomorrow may never come
But we have this moment today*

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

HYMN #147 “We Plow the Fields and Scatter”

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