

October 6, 2024, 20th SUNDAY AFTER PENTECOST
Pastor Tom Olson, Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Ruth Antal (Osthus.Reynolds)

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 138

PASTOR: I will praise you, O LORD, with all my heart;

ALL: Before the "gods" I will sing your praise.

PASTOR: I will bow down toward your holy temple

ALL: And will praise your name

PASTOR: For your love and your faithfulness,

ALL: For you have exalted above all things
your name and your word.

PASTOR: When I called, you answered me;

ALL: You made me bold and stouthearted.

HYMN #529 "Glory to His Name"

CONFESSION OF SIN: Psalm 51:1-7 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge. Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me. Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place. Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

CHILDREN'S SERMON:

Reader: Joel Carrizales

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Genesis 2:18-25* The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." 19 Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. 20 So the man gave names to all the

livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." 24 For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. 25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

EPISTLE LESSON: *Hebrews 2:1-4* We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. 2 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, 3 how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him. 4 God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.

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

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

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible.*

And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, And was made man; And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And is seated on the right hand of the Father, And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.

And I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one

Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come. 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 SONGS PICKED BY RUTH

SERMON: “A SECURE HOME” Mark 10:2-16; Pastor Tom Olson; October 6, 2024
Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen

SERIES: This is the third message in our series about CHILDREN. Message one emphasized that **if we treasure children we are receiving Jesus**. Message two emphasized **the priority of not letting harm come to children** and today we look at **raising children in a secure home**.

CAVEAT: Without trying to heap guilt or regret upon people who have gone through the pain and tragedy of divorce, we are going to focus today on the importance of doing everything possible to keep mom and dad together and happy.

I. IS HELD TOGETHER WITH TENDER HEARTS

Mark 10:2-9 Some Pharisees came and tested him by asking, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" 3 "What did Moses command you?" he replied. 4 They said, "Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away." 5 "It was because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law," Jesus replied. 6 "But at the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.' 7 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, 8 and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one. 9 Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate."

TESTED: It is fundamentally important that we notice the context of this discussion. In verse 2 it states that **“the Pharisees came and tested**

Jesus.” They were not one bit interested in the subject of divorce, re-marriage, home or family. All they wanted to do was bring up a controversial subject to get Jesus to say something that would cause his hearers to turn against him.

PRACTICE: The men of Jesus’ day had put in place rules for divorce that were so easy that if they found a younger, prettier woman to marry, all they had to do is wait for their wife to burn the toast or break a dish and with that could divorce her without a certificate that Moses required.

PURPOSE: Our purpose today is not to do an exhaustive Bible study on divorce and remarriage. Sincere Bible scholars have written long books talking about the topic and the exceptions that the Bible gives. I have many volumes in my library and they don’t come to the same conclusions. That is for another day.

ISSUE: Jesus is getting to the root of the issue. Homes are breaking apart because of the condition of the human heart. He called it “hardness of heart.” Jesus put it this way in **Matthew 15:19-20** *For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. 20 These are what make a man 'unclean'...* A secure home is HELD TOGETHER WITH TENDER HEARTS. A healthy soul is priority. Wholesome reading and media is critical. Uplifting friendships are vital. Our walk with God must not be neglected. Participation in church is not negotiable. Doing “the next right thing” all day, every day is not just a good old saying, it is a matter of life and death for the family to stick together.

DEFINITION: Just as a side note, in this passage Jesus gives God’s definition of marriage as a man and wife, a male and female. Men need men friends, women need women friends, but that is not marriage. The two becoming one flesh is for a man and a woman only. If you don’t agree, your argument is not with me, it is with Jesus, the Son of God.

REALITY: There is no guarantee that your spouse will always be healthy, or able to work, or physically attractive or even mentally competent. But if you nurture that love in your heart for the one you choose to be your spouse, you can navigate the changes of life.

EXAMPLE: One of the most beautiful examples of this is a photo I have seen many times of a handsome man with his grotesque wife who was

caught in a terrible fire. Her face is all scarred. It is usually viewed side by side with their wedding photo where she is a stunning beauty. The man is asked how he can remain married to someone who looks like that. His reply is epic, "I didn't marry her body, I married her soul." That is the reply of a man who is holding his family together WITH A TENDER HEART.

The second aspect of Jesus teaching is that A SECURE HOME...

II. IS PROTECTED BY FAITHFULNESS

Mark 9:10-12 When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. 11 He answered, "Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. 12 And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery."

EXPLANATION: In those days, if you divorced your wife or husband, the assumption was that they were morally unfaithful and that they were an adulterer. The certificate of divorce of Moses would at least say that they were not immoral but that you just didn't want them anymore and that they were candidates for marriage. If the woman was viewed as immoral, if relatives did not take her in, her only way to support herself was to become a prostitute. That phrase, "he or she commits adultery" can also be translated "they are adulterated" or they look like adulterers.

POINT: I will leave that aside for the language scholars to debate. We need to see the forest and not miss it by focusing on the trees. The larger point for our purposes today is that moral faithfulness is key to providing a secure home for our children. This certainly includes immoral thoughts in the mind but the emphasis here is the actual break-up of the marriage.

CHALLENGE: Very few marriages are easy. Two people in marriage are two unique individuals. You will not always see eye to eye and sometimes the tensions can get large. Sometimes it is easy to want to just find someone else. In those vulnerable times of marriage, for the sake of your family, you need to fight to keep yourself from getting cozy with another potential mate.

PARTNERSHIP: One prominent counselor recently said, "the two of you in a failing marriage need to form a new partnership with the one

agreement that you are both going to try to find a way to work through the difficulty of the moment.

EXAMPLE: I have told you that my dad was not always easy to live with. He unquestionably was suffering from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder from his horrific World War 2 experiences. But my mom had the patience and grace to accept and forgive the moments when he was harsh in words or when he checked out, didn't communicate, and needed to be alone. Many veteran's wives have to develop this ability.

But as they got old, as stress of career and finances subsided and ambitions faded, the two of them became a very sweet couple that enjoyed a ride in the car, watching the birds in the feeder on a winter day or sharing a cheap meal at A&W together. Mom died at age 85 with my father holding her hand and saying, "I could not have had a better wife." Faith and faithfulness gave us children a SECURE HOME. Finally, A SECURE HOME IS...

III. IS A PLACE WHERE CHILDREN FEEL LOVED

Mark 9:13-16 People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. 14 When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. 15 I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." 16 And he took the children in his arms, put his hands on them and blessed them.

DISCIPLES: Time and again, the disciples did not value the opportunity to minister to little children and their parents. I personally believe that they were hoping that Jesus would become the leader of a great revolution to "make Israel great again," like it was under the leadership of King David (who, by the way, had a messed-up family life). The disciples rebuked the parents who wanted their children blessed.

INDIGNANT: The word that describes Jesus' response to the disciples was "indignant." That word means "annoyed and angry." Jesus is always passionate about giving little children priority. Now notice what Jesus does.

BLESSING: Jesus blesses the children. Blessings are powerful. One of my favorite parts of the communion service is to bless the children in Jesus' Name. That is not the only kind of blessing. Other phrases are important as we bless children. Let me give some examples of power-packed phrases that bless people into spiritual health and a new perspective on life:

- You are so precious to me.
- I love to be with you.
- God is watching out for you.
- Angels care for you day and night.
- You have an important purpose in life.
- I like to play with you.
- I want to spend more time with you.
- You make me happy.
- God has a good plan for your life.
- You can do it!
- God bless you and keep you safe.

BEDTIME: I have heard it said that we need to bless children every night before bed.

CURSING: Jesus told us to bless and not to curse. Cursing is attacking who someone is rather than their behavior. It is not a curse to say, "That was a bad action." But it is cursing to say, "You are a bad person." It is not a curse to say, "That was a stupid thing to do." But it is a curse to say, "You are a stupid person." There are words that hurt and words that heal.

POLITICS: It is very easy to curse, rather than bless. We do it with politics all the time, attacking the person, rather than discussing their policies. It hurts us all. No matter who wins the election in November, I will hold them accountable for their policies but I will faithfully pray for them and their families and that they can have wisdom from God.

WORDS: To love a child is to bless them with affirming words like Jesus did. Then they feel loved. A blessing is powerful. Love is spelled **TIME** and love is spelled **WORDS OF BLESSING**.

SUMMARY: Children are our future. We need to focus on them. That is why we bring them up front in every service. That is why we work hard to have a good Sunday school. That is why we have them come to Holy Communion for a blessing. That is why we strongly support our Bible College. Training young people to be mighty men and women of God is the best way to give our nation a future and a hope for good leaders.

REVIEW: It all starts in a secure home where **HEARTS ARE TENDER**, where **FAITHFULNESS IS A PRIORITY** and where **CHILDREN FEEL LOVED WITH WORDS OF BLESSING**.

May the peace of God that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Messiah Jesus. Amen

HYMN #371 "I Am Jesus' Little Lamb"

HOLY COMMUNION (Dave Fischer prep and help)

CHORAL BENEDICTION: *May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever-- Grant you peace, Perfect peace, Strength in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and see His face, Feel His grace forever. May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever.*

POSTLUDE: Ruth Antal