

**August 10, 2025 Ninth Sunday after Pentecost  
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

**PRELUDE:** Rebekah Olson

**CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 33**

**PASTOR: Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD,**

**ALL: The people He has chosen as His own inheritance.**

**PASTOR: No king is saved by the multitude of an army;**

**ALL: A mighty man is not delivered by great strength.**

**PASTOR: A horse is a vain hope for safety;**

**ALL: Neither shall it deliver any by its great strength.**

**PASTOR: Behold, the eye of the LORD is on those who fear Him,**

**ALL: On those who hope in His mercy.**

**HYMN #543 "What a Fellowship"**

**SUNG CONFESSION OF SIN:**

**HYMN #482 (vss 1-3) "Out of My Bondage, Sorrow and Night"**

**CHILDREN'S SERMON:**

**READER: Dave Osthus**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Genesis 15:1-6 After this, the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: "Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your very great reward." 2 But Abram said, "O Sovereign LORD, what can you give me since I remain childless and the one who will inherit my estate is Eliezer of Damascus?" 3 And Abram said, "You have given me no children; so a servant in my household will be my heir." 4 Then the word of the LORD came to him: "This man will not be your heir, but a son coming from your own body will be your heir." 5 He took him outside and said, "Look up at the heavens and count the stars--if indeed you can count them." Then he said to him, "So shall your offspring be." 6 Abram believed the LORD, and he credited it to him as righteousness.*

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *Luke 12:22-34 Then Jesus said to his disciples: "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 Life is more than food, and the*

*body more than clothes. 24 Consider the ravens: They do not sow or reap, they have no storeroom or barn; yet God feeds them. And how much more valuable you are than birds! 25 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life? 26 Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest? 27 "Consider how the lilies grow. They do not labor or spin. Yet I tell you, not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these. 28 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, how much more will he clothe you, O you of little faith! 29 And do not set your heart on what you will eat or drink; do not worry about it. 30 For the pagan world runs after all such things, and your Father knows that you need them. 31 But seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well. 32 "Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. 33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. 34 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*

**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 Hannah Carrizales**

**SERMON: “A CORD OF THREE STRANDS IS NOT EASILY BROKEN,” Colossians 4:2-13 Pastor Tom Olson *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen***

ROPE: We have a tire swing in a big old tree. The children were using it and that rope broke as they were swinging. That surprised me. I have had tire swings in trees for years without the rope breaking. I have used the good old-fashioned braided hemp or nylon rope. After doing some research I found out they my rope I bought for this swing was a polyethylene rope with a straight core covered with a thin woven jacket. It is a stretchy rope and has a purpose, but it does not hold up. So I purchased a climbing rope on line, the kind that people rely on to save their lives if they slip off a cliff. It is a strong woven rope. We might call it “a chord of three strands.”

PRACTICAL: We are to chapter 4 of the book of Colossians. Like all of the Apostle Paul’s letters, the last chapter is filled with practical advice for living. Here he gives us a chord of three strands that make for a successful life. If you have these three strands in your life, you will not easily fall into deep trouble. Colossians 2...the first strand is...

## **I. INTEGRITY: AUTHENTIC LIVING**

*Colossians 4:2-6 Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. 3 And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains. 4 Pray that I may proclaim it clearly, as I should. 5 Be wise in the way you act toward outsiders; make the most of every opportunity. 6 Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.*

GARY: God’s Word repeatedly points us to the value of a life of integrity. That is an authentic life. It is like my late friend, Gary Kelm, who lived an honest and transparent life. If he had something on his mind he said it straight out, honestly and plainly. You always knew where you stood with him. His personal private life and his public life were one in the same. I always called him, like Jesus called Philip, “a man in whom there is no guile.” Here are the aspects of INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTIC LIVING Paul recommends:

1. DEVOTED PRAYER: “*be devoted to prayer.*” you can’t live an honest life without having a clear relationship with God. This is found in prayer. The acronym ACTS describes prayer well: Adoration, Confession of sin, Thanksgiving and Supplication, which means asking God for help. The most important part of our church council meeting is the time we spend in prayer. Our lives need to be filled with prayer. Conversation with God all day is the goal. Paul asks for prayer to have power in his ministry. I desperately need your prayers to stand up here and preach effectively.
2. WINSOME WITNESS: Verse 5 urges us to be wise in the way we act toward non-believers. He urges us to “*make the most of every opportunity.*” We need to remember that people who are lost and heading into eternity without salvation, will judge Jesus by the life they see us living. If we treat them well, speak to them with kindness, be generous in our actions, help them in their times of need, they will be much more open to hearing the gospel.
3. PRODUCTIVE SPEECH: Paul tells us to have “tasty conversation.” Most people know us by our words. What we talk about is so important. When one person calls me on the phone and I see the name I say, “Yes, this person always gives me a boost.” I see another name on the caller ID and I go, “Oh no, this person is going to waste my time and drag me down.” One Bible teacher said there are three kinds of people: a. ENERGY GIVERS, b. ENERGY TAKERS, c. ENERGY WASTERS. To be an ENERGY GIVER our speech needs to be
  - a. FULL OF GRACE: generally positive, encouraging, bathed in the promises of God, hopeful for the future, and rooted in a big view of God who is working out all things for good, even when it doesn’t look like it.
  - b. SEASONED WITH SALT: food without salt is bland. Speech can be dull or it can be delightful. It can be boring or it can be filled with interesting information. It can be stuck in the past or it can be dreaming about great things for today and tomorrow.
  - c. INSIGHTFUL: he says “*that you may know how to answer everyone.*” Every person is different. Some people need comfort; others need a kick in the pants. A widow recently contacted me who needed to answer an adult child’s request for money. She said to me, “You

knew my husband well, what would he advise me if he were still alive.” I said, “I know your husband loved his children and that in this case he would say “No” to the request because he would know that it would create a dependency that was not good for anyone. I actually told her he would say, “No way!” That child needed tough love. But that same husband would also have given that same child something other than money. He was have taken time to talk with her, to counsel her, to listen to her heart. He knew HOW TO ANSWER. It reminds me of an obscure verse in the Old Testament. *1 Chronicles 12:32 “The men of Issachar had an understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do.”* INSIGHTFUL.

INTEGRITY AND AUTHENTIC LIVING require DEVOTED PRAYER, A WINSOME WITNESS AND PRODUCTIVE SPEECH. The second strand of this “chord of three strands” is...

## II. ATTITUDE: ENCOURAGING FRIENDS *(keeping a right attitude through encouraging friends)*

*Colossians 4:7-9 Tychicus will tell you all the news about me. He is a dear brother, a faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord. 8 I am sending him to you for the express purpose that you may know about our circumstances and that he may encourage your hearts. 9 He is coming with Onesimus, our faithful and dear brother, who is one of you. They will tell you everything that is happening here.*

PEERS: The company we keep is one of the largest factors in determining what our life is like. If you hang around with a group of grumblers and complainers, you will have a very negative life. But if you have a friend, a spouse or a child that is an encourager, you can have a very positive and productive life.

ARV: Paul was going to help the Colossians by sending them his friend, THE ENCOURAGER, named Tychicus. His purpose was to let them know how he was doing and to have Tychicus “ENCOURAGE YOUR HEARTS.” We need that so much. Our hearts get poisoned by negativism and we need someone to pour into them good things. That is why I miss Arvid Erickson so much. I had coffee with him often, he couldn’t drive so I took him out to breakfast at the Buckboard Café and

we would talk, he went fishing with Gary Kalstad and I until he could barely get in the boat. Gary and I loved him like a father...but the thing we loved about him was that HE WAS AN ENCOURAGER. Arvid seldom talked about politics. He talked about God, ideas for the church, hunting, fishing, growing up in South Minneapolis, people he met on his childhood paper route, ball games in vacant lots, building up his business, the man who sharpened saws, his neighbor who encouraged him to become a cabinet maker, pastors who led him to the Lord like Erwin Brandt at Emmaus in Bloomington. His conversations always left me encouraged. I want to be like him to young people that I could influence.

ESSENTIAL: We need to stay away from people who drag us down and find a Tychicus for our lives. That second strand is an encourager. Finally, the third strand is...

## III. SECURITY: PRAYING COLLEAGUES

*Colossians 4:12-13 Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured. 13 I vouch for him that he is working hard for you and for those at Laodicea and Hierapolis.*

SPIRITUAL: The third strand of the chord that gives us a successful and productive life is SECURITY. I am speaking about security rooted in the spiritual realm. It is found in a dedicated prayer partner. Paul had Epaphras. Notice that he is described here as one who “*IS ALWAYS WRESTLING IN PRAYER FOR YOU.*” Paul calls him MATURE and FULLY ASSURED. Maturity and assurance is the result of prayer. You can’t have maturity or assurance without a deep connection with God in prayer. I am so blessed by my Thursday 9 AM pastor’s prayer meeting. I would choose a minister’s prayer meeting over a ministerial business meeting any day. I look forward all week to our campfire prayer meetings and our prayer time before the service. Nothing catapults me into the pulpit like people praying for the service.

ANGELS: This week I read about Dr. Livingstone, the renowned medical missionary to Africa in the mid-1800’s was going to be put to death by an African tribal leader. But it never came to pass. That chief later became a believer and told Dr. Livingstone that 39 giant warriors

were guarding the mission compound the night they came to kill them. Later, Dr. Livingstone was back in Scotland at his church and told them this story. The secretary of the church asked the date of the 39 giant warriors were there and the church records indicated that they had a prayer meeting for him that night with 39 people in attendance. Praying friends are vital.

**PARTNERS:** To have a serious prayer partner is the third strand of the cord of a strong and successful life. Billy Graham likely did so well because he had these three strands in his life. Loners and those who don't walk in integrity will crash and burn eventually. But those who have **AUTHENTIC LIVES, AN ENCOURAGER AND A PRAYER PARTNER** will run the race well and will bear much good fruit. Prayer meetings are essential to me for spiritual survival and success.

**NUTSHELL:** Let's put this in a little nutshell here. In order to have an increasingly fruitful Christian life, we need to ask ourselves the hard questions about our personal integrity, our prayer and our speech, we need to connect with someone who is encouraging and someone who will keep us in prayer. This is the chord of three strands that is not easily broken. How strong is your life rope?

**PRAYER:** Father, we want to be strong in our fight against the devil. We want to be fruitful and win many lost souls to Christ. Please help us to have integrity, a life that radiates with your presence. Help us all to find and to be encouraging friends and prayer partners with other believers. Make our church a deeply spiritual place where we can grow to maturity. In Jesus' Name. *May the peace of God that passes understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

**HYMN #578** "Amazing Grace, How Sweet the Sound"

**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