

**October 12, 2025 Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

**PRELUDE:** Rebekah Olson

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** From Psalm 111

**PASTOR:** Great are the works of the LORD;

**ALL:** They are pondered by all who delight in them.

**PASTOR:** Glorious and majestic are his deeds,

**ALL:** And his righteousness endures forever.

**PASTOR:** He provided redemption for his people;

**ALL:** He ordained his covenant forever--holy and awesome is his name.

**PASTOR:** The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding.

**ALL:** To him belongs eternal praise.

**HYMN #205 "Give to Our God Immortal Praise"**

**SUNG CONFESSION OF SIN:**

**HYMN #442 "My God, Accept My Heart This Day"**

**CHILDREN'S SERMON:**

**READER:**

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *2 Timothy 2:1-13* You then, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2 And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. 3 Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets involved in civilian affairs—he wants to please his commanding officer. 5 Similarly, if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not receive the victor's crown unless he competes according to the rules. 6 The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. 7 Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. 8 Remember Jesus Christ, raised from the dead, descended from David. This is my gospel, 9 for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God's word is not chained. 10 Therefore I endure

*everything for the sake of the elect, that they too may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus, with eternal glory.*

*11 Here is a trustworthy saying:*

*If we died with him,*

*we will also live with him;*

*12 if we endure,*

*we will also reign with him.*

*If we disown him,*

*he will also disown us;*

*13 if we are faithless,*

*he will remain faithful,*

*for he cannot disown himself.*

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *Luke 17:20-37* Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, 21 nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is within you." 22 Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. 23 Men will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. 24 For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. 25 But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. 26 "Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. 27 People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. 28 "It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. 29 But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. 30 "It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. 31 On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. 32 Remember Lot's wife! 33 Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. 34 I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. 35 Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left." 37 "Where, Lord?" they asked. He replied, "Where there is a dead body, there the vultures will gather."

**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.*

### **Gideon Bible Society Presentation**

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER**

**PRAISE AND WORSHIP:** Chosen by Hannah Carrizales

**SERMON: "GOING THROUGH HARD TIMES" Ruth 1:1-19**  
**Pastor Tom Olson, 10/12/25** *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

**BLACKSMITH:** I love to watch blacksmiths at work. A blacksmith uses heat and hammering to shape steel. It is a torture to the metal, but the end result is items that are beautiful and useful. One blacksmith I knew took discarded truck leaf springs and hammered them into over 500 beautiful hunting knives.

**HAMMER:** One of the great insights of the Christian life is when you discover that God is a blacksmith hammering us into the image of Christ. *Jeremiah 23:29 "...is not my Word like a*

*hammer...*" Once we know that, everything else starts to make sense. The process is called SANCTIFICATION.

**TOOL:** One of the main tools that God uses in our lives to accomplish significant progress in our souls is HARD TIMES. That is what is described in the first chapter of the book of Ruth. The title of my message is GOING THROUGH HARD TIMES from Ruth chapter one. Some of you are experiencing this right now. First of all...

#### **I. LOSING EVERYTHING YOU HAVE**

*Ruth 1:1-19 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there. 3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.*

**FAMINE:** A severe famine struck the region around Bethlehem. It was so bad that a Elimelech, felt he had no choice but to take his wife and two sons and find food in the land of Moab, a foreign country. Elimelech died and his sons married Moabite women. But the two sons also died.

**DESTITUTE:** This situation is even more difficult than we may realize...no government safety net in those days. Naomi was in a foreign land and her relatives who could help her were way back in Bethlehem. The only hope her son's wives had of survival was to find another man to marry who would provide for them. Women did not have any moral work options.

CHARITY: Naomi was at the mercy of those who would give her charity. She was too old to remarry. The situation could not have been much worse. She renamed herself Mara, which means bitter. She was losing hope. An old poem that speaks to this, I will read a couple of stanzas:

*Wit's End Corner*  
by Antoinette Wilson

*Are you standing at Wit's-End Corner,  
Christian with troubled brow?  
Are you thinking of what is before you,  
And all you are bearing now?  
Does all the world seem against you,  
And you in the battle alone?  
Remember — at Wit's-End Corner  
Is just where God's power is shown.*

*Are you standing at Wit's-End Corner?  
Then you're just in the very spot  
To learn the wondrous resources  
Of Him who faileth not.  
No doubt, to a brighter pathway  
Your footsteps will soon be moved.  
But only at Wit's-End Corner  
Is the " God who is able " proved.*

The Bible tells us that God, the great blacksmith, was actually working out the plan to save the world through this broken woman named Naomi and her destitute daughter-in-law, Ruth. Secondly...

## II. STARTING OVER

***Ruth 1:6-9*** *When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her*

***daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah. 8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. 9 May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."***

FOOD: News came from Bethlehem that the Lord had ended the drought and that the people back home had food to eat. Naomi saw that the only alternative for her was to go back and see if anyone of her old friends and relatives would have mercy and help her survive. She started walking and her daughters-in-law walked with her. It is obvious that Naomi was a beautiful soul and that these two young ladies loved her very much.

HUSBANDS: But as much as Naomi needed the help of these younger women, she knew that their only hope was to return home to their own mother's house, and seek to find a husband to provide. They may have to settle for an old man with many wives. Those were hard days.

FLORA BELL: I have a friend who wanted to get married and was looking for a wife in southeast Asia, where they are easy to find. One girl begged him to marry her because her mother owed rent that she could not pay and she was going to be forced to become the fifth wife of the old man who owned the place they were renting. So, you can see that poverty and desperation go on today. That is why I long for Jesus to come back soon and make things right on earth.

FAITH: This was the desperate situation of Naomi and these two young women. But God was in the picture. So, they walked back toward Bethlehem. Perhaps some of you here today feel like you are in a desperate situation. Don't lose your faith. Trust God's promises. Faith is spelled P A T I E N C E. God is at work even

when it seems like He is ignoring you. You must have faith and keep doing the next right thing. Finally...

### III. THE POWER OF ONE TRUE FRIEND

*Then she kissed them and they wept aloud 10 and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me- even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons- 13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!" 14 At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but RUTH CLUNG TO HER. 15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her." 16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that RUTH WAS DETERMINED to go with her, she stopped urging her. 19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"*

DETERMINED: Three words stick out to me from this text, these are the words; RUTH WAS DETERMINED... Naomi could not persuade Ruth to go back to her mother. Ruth was a very special young woman. She was DETERMINED to stay with Naomi. It is significant that she said, "Your God will be my God." She saw the beautiful spirit that the Lord had forged in Naomi and she wanted it too.

ACTIONS: This reminds me of a famous anonymous quote: ***"Preach the gospel at all times and if necessary, use words."*** The Apostle Paul puts it this way, 1 Peter 3:1-5 with words that could apply to both men and woman: He tells wives to show respect to their unbelieving husbands ***"...so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, 2 when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3 Your beauty should... be that of your inner self, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is of great worth in God's sight."***

RADIANT: There is no greater way to share the gospel than to have people stop us and ask us why we are different than other people. They want the peace and joy we have. Then we share with them the difference it made to invite Jesus into our hearts as Savior and Lord. That is far more effective than standing on a street corner and screaming at people.

ANCESTOR: Even in the midst of the bitterness of life's crushing blows, the beauty of the Lord drew Ruth to Naomi and ultimately to her destiny. Ruth became the great-grandmother of King David and the ancestor of Joseph and Mary. An ancestor of Jesus!

HOW: So how do we LIVE THROUGH HARD TIMES? There is only one way to do it...LIVE BY FAITH. God is pleased when we stand on His promises, even when we can't see any hope.

***Proverbs 3:11-12 "My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline and do not resent his rebuke, 12 because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in."***

YOUTH: Those who are younger but facing hard times are also on a journey. God is the great blacksmith who is heating and bending and pounding on us to make us into the image of Jesus Christ so that the world might be drawn to Christ through our lives, just like Ruth was drawn to God through the life of Naomi.

FRIEND: Ruth was a friend that was closer than a brother to Naomi. With a friend like that you can keep going forward. Maybe God is calling you to be a friend of someone who's life has been shattered by HARD TIMES. Do you know someone who needs such a friend?

AUTHOR: I will never forget, many years ago, a world-famous author and speaker disappeared from the limelight. Someone found him and asked him why he dropped out of society, writing and speaking. His answer touched me deeply, He said something like this, ***"I have a friend who is terminally ill, he is dying and I needed to take a year off and just be there for him. He needed someone to help him as he gets weak and dies."*** This famous author and lecturer thought it was more important to be a friend and help someone die than to travel the world and speak to large audiences.

SUMMARY: God is at work. Everything has a purpose. We must embrace the HARD TIMES and live by faith in God, and let the hard times do their intended work in our lives. *May the peace of God that passes understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

**HYMN #173** "What a Friend We Have in Jesus"  
**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