

**March 21, 2021; FIFTH SUNDAY OF LENT;  
SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON  
(50% seating capacity for COVID rules)  
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church  
Singers: "Praise Team"**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson Singers: Osthus Family

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** Psalm 119:9-16

**HYMN #185 "Praise, My Soul, The King of Heaven" 9 am: One Voice Hymnal #**

**OPENING PRAYER:** *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:**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Jeremiah 31:31-34*

*"The time is coming," declares the LORD,*

*"when I will make a new covenant*

*with the house of Israel*

*and with the house of Judah.*

*32 It will not be like the covenant*

*I made with their forefathers*

*when I took them by the hand*

*to lead them out of Egypt,*

*because they broke my covenant,*

*though I was a husband to them,"*

*declares the LORD.*

*33 "This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel*

*after that time," declares the LORD.*

*"I will put my law in their minds*

*and write it on their hearts.*

*I will be their God,*

*and they will be my people.*

*34 No longer will a man teach his neighbor,*

*or a man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,'*

*because they will all know me,*

*from the least of them to the greatest,"*

*declares the LORD.*

*"For I will forgive their wickedness*

*and will remember their sins no more."*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *Hebrews 5:1-10 Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. 2 He is able to deal gently with those who are ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. 3 This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. 4 No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. 5 So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." 6 And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." 7 During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered 9 and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him 10 and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.*

**PASTOR:** 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 AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING**

**PRAISE SONGS:** 2 chosen by Carol

**SERMON TITLE: "WHAT WAY DO WE GO?"**  
**Mark 10:32-45; Pastor Tom Olson; March 21, 2021**

*Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

**BOMBARDED:** Today our young people are bombarded with so many options of what they should believe. It was much simpler in my home town where everyone was Lutheran or Catholic. Add to this all the definitions of marriage and morality and immorality it makes your head spin. When I was young there was only one definition of marriage and morality. Back then you knew when you were being immoral! The catechism put it well, "We should fear and love God so that we lead a chaste and pure life and that husband-and-wife love and honor each other. Even within orthodox Christianity there are so many different ways to express our faith, gentle, confrontational, scholarly, social activism, evangelistic. What way do we go? That is a question that Jesus answered for his confused disciples. Let's talk about it from Mark 10:32-45.

## **I. THE WAY OF THE CROSS: THE UNTHINKABLE WAY**

*Mark 10:32-34 They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with Jesus leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again he took the Twelve aside and told them what was going to happen to him. 33 "We are going up to Jerusalem," he said, "and the Son of Man will be betrayed*

*to the chief priests and teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, 34 who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later he will rise."*

CROSS: Jesus is heading to Jerusalem to fulfill his mission he came to do. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world. To do that the perfect innocent lamb has to die. Jesus was telling his disciples that he must be arrested, declared innocent and still suffer, die and then rise from the dead. He is the SEED of the woman who has come to crush the Serpent's head. But they just didn't believe it. Peter even opposed it and said to Jesus in *Matthew 16 "...this shall never happen to you!"* and Jesus replied, *"Get behind me Satan..."* The disciples simply did not understand that the cross comes before the crown. They did not imagine the substitutionary death of Jesus. They wanted him to be their earthly King of Israel right then and there. But the King had more important work to do...like saving the world from sin. This atoning work of Christ was only clarified in their minds after the resurrection. To the disciples THE WAY OF THE CROSS WAS UNTHINKABLE. I am sure glad He did the "unthinkable" aren't you? WHAT WAY SHOULD WE GO? The disciples had what they thought was a better idea...

## II. THE WAY OF THE WORLD: THE NATURAL WAY

*Mark 10:35-37 Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. "Teacher," they said, "we want you to do for us whatever we ask." 36 "What do you want me to do for you?" he asked. 37 They replied, "Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory."*

HONOR: James and John wanted a special place of honor, wealth and power in the coming Kingdom of Christ. This is the way of the world. This is the goal of most every politician: honor, wealth and power. This is what we fight about in our families. This is the battle of our own hearts. We come to God continually for these things...always requesting stuff and blessings and recognition. But this is the world's way. This is the natural way. James puts it this way: *James 4:1-6 "What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. 4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. 5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely? 6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."*

## III. THE WAY TO CALVARY: THE NECESSARY WAY

*Mark 10:38-40 "You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said. "Can you drink the cup I drink or be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with?" 39 "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will drink the cup I drink and be baptized with the baptism I am baptized with, 40 but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared."*

LOVE: The cross was absolutely necessary for the sins of the world to be forgiven. On that cross, Jesus took the sins of the whole world and absolved them. The verse that opened up my mind to this was *2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* Or as one person I heard put it, *"On the cross, guilt and innocence traded places."* There is only one reason for this, LOVE. *John 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."*

KING: I think we would all agree that the seat of the King is where the King is sitting. He rules and reigns from any spot where his Word goes forth. He is currently ***“seated at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, from where He will come to judge the living and the dead.”*** But someone pointed out to me that when Christ was nailed to the cross that he was also ruling and reigning from there. His Word was going forth from the cross. When he said, ***“Father forgive them,”*** or ***“It is finished”*** those were the Words of God and just as effective as the Word of God that brought all things into being at creation.

CRIMINALS: In one sense, those seated at his right and left hands were the two criminals. The one became a believer as he called upon the Lord for salvation. The other apparently didn't. We see here a pre-enactment of the great Judgement day to come when the sheep are separated from the goats. Christ reigns, He reigned over creation, he reigned when Abraham came and offered a tithe to “Melchizedek”, he reigned at Calvary on the cross and He is reigning at the right hand of God today and one day He will come back and raise us from the dead and we will live and reign with Christ over the new heaven and earth forever and ever. In that day the devil, sickness, pain, sorrow and death will be abolished; our new nature won't sin and we will live in the joy and light of Christ for all eternity. But it is only because of the necessity of the cross where he gave his life for us.

GRACE: Jesus said that the seat at his right and left hand is prepared by God. Who knows but that the one who will be at His right hand is the thief who died on the cross with nothing to boast of except Christ alone? The song writer understood grace: ***“Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.”*** Our world could use a whole lot less vying for power and a whole lot more humility. What way are we going today? Are we trying to convince Christ to give us power, position and possessions or are we clinging to the cross? WHAT WAY DO WE GO?

#### IV. THE WAY OF CHRIST: THE FRUITFUL WAY

***Mark 10:41-45*** *When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. 42 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. 43 Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

FRUIT: Christ shows us the way to bear fruit and that is the heart of a servant. Jesus served the physical and spiritual needs of people everywhere he went. He served us to the ultimate extreme...He gave ***“his life as a ransom for many.”*** That is something only he could do. But we give our lives in other ways as we follow the way of Christ. We can do it by serving others with joy. We like to be served, but the happiest people are those who like to serve others. It is our demonstration to the world that we follow a different path than they do. ***“They will know we are Christians by our love for one another.”***

ABIDE: Since this is not natural or easy, how can we do it? Believe in Jesus and abide in Him. As we stay close to the Lord in His Word and prayer, His Spirit dwells in us in fullness and the humility of Christ becomes part of us. Then it works out into our daily life through love, service and kindness. Jesus said in ***John 15:5*** ***“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”*** That is THE WAY OF CHRIST, THE FRUITFUL WAY.

QUESTION: What way do we choose today? The WAY OF THE WORLD? Seeking honor, power and authority? Or do we choose the WAY OF CHRIST? Believing in the power of his cross to forgive? Choosing the path of humility? I am on a board of Alpha Women's Center and we recently had a difficult meeting with a

person who was upset. It went quite well and a big factor was the prayer our director prayed before we had the discussion.

**PRAYER:** Here is the ancient prayer and it demonstrates THE WAY OF CHRIST so well:

*Lord, make me an instrument of your peace:  
where there is hatred, let me sow love;  
where there is injury, pardon;  
where there is doubt, faith;  
where there is despair, hope;  
where there is darkness, light;  
where there is sadness, joy.*

*O divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek  
to be consoled as to console,  
to be understood as to understand,  
to be loved as to love.  
For it is in giving that we receive,  
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,  
and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.  
Amen.*

This is the fruitful way of Christ. Amen

***Now may the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen***

**HYMN #451 “Lead On, O King Eternal” (9 AM-)**

**PRAYER & 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:** The Lord bless you and keep you, the Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you, the Lord lift up His countenance upon you and grant you peace. Amen

**CLOSING SONG:** chosen by Carol 9 am Recorded “Doxology” #32

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson