

**April 18, 2021; THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER;
SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson; Singers: Osthus

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 4:6-8

HYMN #226 “Love Divine, All Love Excelling” 9 am: *One Voice Hymnal #235* “Love Divine...”

OPENING PRAYER: *Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hid: Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you and worthily magnify your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen*

CHILDREN’S MESSAGE: **Pounding a Nail without a Hammer** Luke 24:49 (wait for the Holy Spirit)

FIRST LESSON: *Acts 3:11-21 While the beggar held on to Peter and John, all the people were astonished and came running to them in the place called Solomon's Colonnade. 12 When Peter saw this, he said to them: "Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus. You handed him over to be killed, and you disowned him before Pilate, though he had decided to let him go. 14 You disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. 15 You killed the author of life, but God raised him from the dead. We are witnesses of this. 16 By faith in the name of Jesus, this man whom you see and know was made strong. It is Jesus' name and the faith that comes through him that has given this complete healing to him, as you can all see. 17 "Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. 18 But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. 19 Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, 20 and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. 21 He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets.*

SECOND LESSON: *1 John 3:1-7 How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. 3 Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure. 4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness. 5 But you know that he appeared so that he might take away our sins. And in him is no sin. 6 No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. 7 Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. He who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.*

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 AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by CAROL

SERMON TITLE: "PLANTING THE CHURCH"

Luke 24:36-49; Pastor Tom Olson; April 18, 2021

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

PLANTING: One of the fun things to do this time of year is go to a greenhouse and see all the plants. We have stopped at greenhouses several times already. They are so warm and filled with oxygen and wonderful colors. We may buy a pack of seeds or a plant but the main reason is to just go and be in this pleasant place. Then as the weather gets nice we can start planting our flowers and vegetables again. Small plants and small seeds can become amazing colors and delicious-nutritious vegetables.

CHURCH: When we start a new church, we use the same imagery and call it "planting" a church. The Apostle Paul puts it this way in *1 Corinthians 3:6-9 I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. 7 So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. 9 For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.* Let's talk about PLANTING THE CHURCH today from Luke 24:36-49.

I. THE SOIL: BUILT ON THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

BASIC: The church of Jesus Christ is a church of the resurrection. The atonement on the cross and the resurrection from the dead, three days later, are the good soil in which a healthy church can grow. The Apostle Paul went to the Gentiles with one message from God: the FORGIVENESS OF SINS through the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. For a world that doesn't have a sure hope of life after death, this is a key message. I think the terrible fear in our society over this COVID is rooted in the fear that people have of dying. Notice first of all that the RESURRECTION OF CHRIST is:

- **A PHYSICAL RESURRECTION: Recognizable**

Luke 24:36-41 While they were still talking about this, Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." 37 They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. 38 He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? 39 Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

DOUBTER: A liberal pastor once came up to me and said that he doesn't believe Jesus rose from the dead and didn't believe that we would either. I don't know what Bible he was reading but it is clear as a bell here. Even though Jesus could "walk through walls" and thus give the impression that he was a ghost, once he was in the

room, he had a solid, TOUCHABLE, physical body. Not only could you touch it but you also could recognize who he is. People ask if we will recognize one another in heaven and to me everything in the Bible points to the fact that we will not only recognize each other but that we will know each other in a deeper and more meaningful way than we ever did on this earth. *1 Corinthians 13:12—For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.*” I told Nelly to find my mom and dad in heaven and tell them that I am OK and that they have a fifth great grandchild on the way. And I am confident that she will be able to do that. The RESURRECTION OF CHRIST also reveals...

- **AN AMAZING BODY: Improved**

Luke 12:40-42 When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet. 41 And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" 42 They gave him a piece of broiled fish, 43 and he took it and ate it in their presence.

FASCINATING: I think this little tidbit of information is fascinating and informative. Jesus asked for something to eat, they gave him some broiled fish and he ate it. Part of the good news of the gospel is that we eat in heaven. And even better yet, the common ordinary fish became glorified and incorruptible once in Jesus' body. When he disappeared, the fish disappeared with him. This tells me that the digestive process is now completely different and there will be no need of elimination. I imagine that the nutrition will be perfect too and we will maintain ideal weight, probably whether we eat or not. We will likely eat just for pleasure. Psalm 16:11 tells us that when we are in the presence of God that we will have *“fulness of joy and pleasures forevermore.”* God invented the pleasure of eating and it will even get better in our resurrection body. The SOIL of church planting is the message of the RESURRECTION OF THE BODY AND THE LIFE EVERLASTING. That is the punch line of the Apostles' Creed as well. Secondly, the SUBSOIL of church planting is...

II. THE SUBSOIL: ROOTED IN OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECY

TESTIMONY: We had a very intelligent man in our church in Ohio. He worked for Bell Labs in Columbus and was on the team that developed key components of the cell phone. He was a firm believer in Jesus Christ and the thing that so impressed him of the truth of the Bible is the aspect of prophecy. He was astounded at how perfectly Jesus Christ fulfilled dozens of prophecies of the Old Testament given over a period of hundreds of years, even thousands of years, to various inspired writers from Moses to Malachi.

- **THE IGNORED PROPHECIES**

Luke 12:44 He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

FULFILLED: Just like the modern Jew, the disciples of Jesus simply ignored the many Old Testament prophecies of his coming to earth as the suffering servant, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. But Jesus made it perfectly clear that those prophecies must take place first before He could fulfill the Messianic prophecies of the ruling Messiah who will bring “peace on earth” and usher in an everlasting Kingdom that will not ever pass away. Prophecy study is one of the most encouraging studies of Scripture because it not only helps us see Jesus as our Savior but also gives us the comfort and assurance of knowing He is coming back to fully restore all things to peace and perfection.

COMFORT: When I visited Nellie on Friday I read to her Revelation 21 and 22...the description of the new Jerusalem with foundations made of precious stones, streets of God, no more death, pain, sorrow or tears and all

freely given to “whosever will drink freely of the water of life.” She just lay on her bed, thrashing around in pain and discomfort saying, “It is going to be so beautiful...I am waiting to go there.”

- **THE ILLUMINATED PROPHECIES**

Luke 12:45 Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.

VEILS: Here is the key...the disciples needed to have Jesus open up their minds to understand the Scripture. When we first come to know Christ we notice that the Bible starts to make sense in a way it didn't before. But as we grow in our faith we need to have many layers of veils taken away from our spiritually dull minds and hearts in order to understand more and more. We need to pray that the Holy Spirit would help us see the glorious truths of the Word of God. One of the songs we sometimes sing before a sermon is Clara Scott's prayer from the time of the Civil War: “Open my eyes that I may see, glimpses of truth Thou hast for me. Place in my hands the wonderful key, that shall unclasp and set me free. Silently now I wait for Thee, Ready, my God, Thy will to see; Open my eyes—illumine me, Spirit Divine.”

ILLUMINATION: The church is rooted in prophecy and it comes alive when we not only intellectually understand the Word of God but when the Holy Spirit opens up the Word with life-changing power. That is our prayer for our church...the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Now to plant the church we need GOOD SEED...

III. THE SEED: ENABLED BY A FRESH TOUCH FROM HEAVEN

SEED: I am so disappointed when I plant seeds in the garden and they don't come up. Not all seed is good seed. We have radishes popping up in our garden already and early this spring I scratched up a number of bare spots in our lawn and cultivated in grass seed which grows so well in the springtime. And sure enough, we are getting some nice grass coming up already on those bare spots. It was obviously good seed. The church of Jesus Christ is also planted with good seed...

- **BY THE PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL**

Luke 12:46&47 He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, 47 and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

EMPHASIS: Not every sermon is going to be an evangelistic gospel message but when I listen to a preacher over a period of time I look for an emphasis on certain things outlined by these verses: the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross, the resurrection from the dead, the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins and the concern to get the gospel out to all nations. This is the focus of the New Testament preaching. This is the message that spread like good news from Spain to India in about 30 years. This is the good news of the gospel that transforms lives and takes people from despair to hope, from darkness to light and from sadness to joy.

B.C: Before I came to know Jesus, I was in despair, darkness and sadness. And we got a preacher that loved to tell the whole gospel of Jesus Christ and it broke into my heart and I got the joy of the Lord and lost the fear of death. How thankful I am for that faithful, gospel preaching pastor. He is another one I want Nellie to talk to when she gets to heaven.

- **BY THE VOICES OF HIS FOLLOWERS**

Luke 12:48 You are witnesses of these things.

WITNESS: Notice how this transformation of the world takes place. Notice how the church is planted. It is by OUR voices! Right before Jesus went into heaven He said, “*Ye shall be my witnesses.*” Acts 1 It is through

“the foolishness of preaching” that people get saved. I recently heard of a grandma and grandpa that plan on having their grandchildren over one by one to their house and after a special time together sitting down and telling them their testimony of salvation. Those grandchildren will never forget this and some who may not be saved might come to know Christ then and there. Don't underestimate the church planting power of witnessing for the Lord.

- **BY THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT**

Luke 12:49 I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

TARRY: The real “super charged” way to plant churches is in the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus didn't want the disciples to just go off and do it in their own power. That would be exhausting. He tells them to wait...in the King James Version he tells them to “tarry” until the Holy Spirit empowers them. I am impressed with the Quakers and the old time Methodists who both believed in waiting upon the Lord to be endued with power from on high. I am convinced that a few days of waiting followed by a few minutes of Spirit empowered preaching can accomplish more church planting than a few years of hard and exhausting work in our own strength. Acts 1:6-8 puts it so beautifully: *So when they met together, they asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

THOUSANDS: Notice how the church got powerfully planted after impulsive Peter slowed down and waited to be filled with the Holy Spirit: *Acts 2:38-41 Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." 40 With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation." 41 Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about THREE THOUSAND were added to their number that day.*

CONCLUSION: Preach the real Gospel in the Power of the Holy Spirit and share in the joy of the salvation of lost souls. That is New Testament church planting!

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

HYMN #523 “Wounded for Me”

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