

**SERVICE INFORMATION: February 13, 2022**  
**SIXTH SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

**PRAISE AND WORSHIP:** Carol Gustafson and Praise Team  
**HYMNS AND LITURGY:** Carol Gustafson and Praise Team  
**READER:** Glenn Gustafson  
**THEME:** The Paradox of Power, Pain and Pleasure

**PRELUDE:** Rebekah Olson

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** *Psalm 1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers. 4 Not so the wicked! They are like chaff that the wind blows away. 5 Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous. 6 For the LORD watches over the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked will perish.*

**HYMN #184 “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”**

**CONFESSION OF SIN:** *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.*

**PRAYER**

**CHILDREN’S MESSAGE: PINOCCHIO ON PLEASURE ISLAND: A dangerous place. Luke 6:25**  
**“...woe to you who laugh now”**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Jeremiah 17:5-8 5 This is what the LORD says: "Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the LORD. 6 He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no one lives. 7 "But blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence is in him. 8 He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit."*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *1 Corinthians 15:12-20 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. 20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.*

**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:** songs chosen by pianist...sung by “Praise team...Luke, Krista, Jacob, Hannah, Marretta, etc.)

**SERMON TITLE: “THE PARADOX OF POWER, PAIN AND PLEASURE”**  
**Luke 6:17-26; Pastor Tom Olson; February 13, 2022**

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

**PHILOSOPHY:** One of the great philosophical topics of the ages is the tension between a good and all-powerful God and the presence of evil in the world. Many of us wonder why God allows some to suffer and while other people seem to have so little pain in their lives. I know of people who have had 20 or 30 surgeries in their lives and others, none. Some people work so hard and have so little to show for it while others inherit fortunes. Some people have many talents and learn easily and others have few talents and are slow learners, no matter how hard they try. Many come to the conclusion that “life is not fair.” That is correct. Others go farther and sadly conclude that “God is not good.” And that is not correct.

**PARADOX:** Jesus demonstrates his power by healing the sick and taking away their pain. When people are with Jesus, they are well fed, loved, healed and free from pain. Yet amazingly he goes on to preach about the blessings of suffering and the danger of an easy life. Let’s talk about the PARADOX OF POWER, PAIN AND PLEASURE.

### **I. JESUS DEMONSTRATED GOD’S POWER**

“The Source of Life for the Soul”

*Luke 6:17-19 He went down with them and stood on a level place. A large crowd of his disciples was there and a great number of people from all over Judea, from Jerusalem, and from the coast of Tyre and Sidon, 18 who had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. Those troubled by evil spirits were cured, 19 and the people all tried to touch him, because power was coming from him and healing them all.*

**DEMONSTRATION:** Time and again, Jesus demonstrated his divine power by casting out demons, healing the sick, resurrecting the dead and miraculously feeding thousands (Matthew 14). It is clear that he wants us to know that ALL POWER AND AUTHORITY HAS BEEN GIVEN TO HIM (Matthew 28:18). He is able to heal, provide, raise up and take down any person on earth. He has promised to take care of us. *Philippians 4:19*

**“...my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.”** God loves to care for us. Most of us have abundant food, warm clothing, comfortable homes, good neighbors, decent health and strength and blessings too numerous to count. When people are upset, I often encourage them to count their blessings and be reminded how they greatly outnumber the difficulties for most of us. And we are never to forget that God is all powerful and will give us remarkable answers to prayer, according to His will. Jesus wants us to know that He is God in human flesh and has all power and authority to do anything that he wills to do.

COMFORT: I don't know about you but the omnipotence of God is a fact that brings me great comfort. I am so glad to realize that the God I serve has the power to do anything he wants. Ephesians 1:21 reminds us that Christ is seated **“far above”** all other powers and authorities in the universe in this age and in the age to come. This fact is the foundation of my joy that is greater than the circumstances I see with my eyes or experience in life. Jesus is Lord...and that makes life good because He does what is best for us. **JESUS DEMONSTRATES GOD'S POWER.**

## **II. JESUS BLESSED THOSE WHO SUFFER**

**“The Good Life for the Soul”**

***Luke 6:20-23 Looking at his disciples, he said: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. 22 Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. 23 "Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.***

CROWDS: The crowds were following after Jesus because they wanted to be set free from demons and get their illnesses healed and there is nothing wrong with that. When they were hungry, Jesus miraculously fed them and the crowds grew even larger. In this context Jesus was providing for their need of healing and deliverance. Yet in the midst of making them feel loved and blessed, Jesus gives **A TEACHING FOR THOSE WHO ARE GOING THROUGH HARD TIMES** in this life. He points them to a heavenly reward in the life to come that will more than compensate for the sufferings we endure in this life. He knew that his followers through the ages would be poor, hungry, rejected and persecuted, often times without miraculous provision.

Here is what He said:

- The poor are to remember that they get the kingdom of God
- The hungry will one day be satisfied.
- Those who weep will eventually laugh.
- Those who are hated, excluded, insulted and rejected will one day have a great reward in heaven.
- The prophets of old received the same treatment from the leaders of their generation.

HARSHIP: In OK Bible study this week we studied the New Testament word for **HARDSHIP** and **TRIBULATIONS**. 1) We were reminded that these **TRIALS PRODUCE** perseverance, proven character and hope. 2) The second thing we learned is that the root word for trials is **PRESSURE**, the kind of pressure used to make diamonds or to **POLISH** a gem until it shines brightly. 3) The third thing we learned about trials is that they not only help us get refined but they also **ENCOURAGE OTHERS** as they see us bearing up under tribulations with great patience and trust in God.

PURPOSE: Jesus makes it clear that his children who go through times of suffering and testing are actually blessed. In many ways it is better to have a difficult life than one of comfort, material abundance, popularity

and power. I like the line of the poem that says *“when God wants to drill a man to play the noblest part, watch His methods, watch His ways, how He ruthlessly perfects whom He royally elects.”* Or as another Bible teacher noted of Joseph of old *“for many long years Joseph wore the heavy iron chains of imprisonment and slavery to prepare him to wear the gold chains of leadership and power.”* God is more interested in preparing us for future service both on earth and in His eternal heavenly kingdom, than giving us an easy life at the moment. JESUS BLESSED THOSE WHO SUFFER.

### III. JESUS WARNED THOSE WHO ARE COMFORTABLE

“The Dangerous Life for the Soul”

*Luke 6:24 "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. 25 Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. 26 Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets.*

WARNING: Jesus met the needs of those who came to him for deliverance from demons and for physical healing. When they got hungry, he fed them. But Jesus often warned them not to seek him merely for earthly comforts. In fact, Jesus warned them about the dangers of loving the things of this world too much. There is no question that earthly wealth and prosperity is dangerous for the soul. *Matthew 19:23&24 ..."I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."*

REALITY: The Apostle Paul also commented on this. He did not say that “not any” popular people could be saved but he did say “**not many**” would be. *1 Corinthians 1:26 Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.*

LURED: But in all reality who are these people that are being drawn away from God by the wealth of this world?

- Who has more money than most people in the world? We do! (Most Americans top 10%-world average is \$2,100/year)
- Who are well fed now? We are! (Overfed!)
- Who of us laugh and have many friends? We do. (We are entertainment obsessed.)

AMERICA: American Christians are falling away from the faith in record numbers because we are becoming worldly minded. A person I know quit going to church and I told someone that he discovered “the weekend.” Or as I recently read, *“The more you miss church the less you miss church.”* That goes for personal devotional time with God as well. **Materialism is one of the greatest threats to our relationship with God.** So don’t be upset with God if He doesn’t make you wealthy. Jesus warns us here to be careful not to be lured away from God by “the deceitfulness of riches.” 1 John 2 warns us not to *“love this world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life.”* John goes on to say in verse 17 *“The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.”*

WEALTH: At times I notice how much money some people my age have accumulated and it is tempting to envy them. But in all honesty, I would not trade my life for theirs. I don’t regret following the Lord’s path of mostly rural ministry in smaller churches. I also know that in a few short years my life on earth will be ending and that gives me perspective.

ROME: This week in “Our Daily Bread” we read about how victorious Roman Generals would be honored: *They would parade through streets of Rome all day and be praised by the people. But all day his servant would stand behind him saying, “Remember you are going to die.”* This would keep the man humble.

ADVICE: One business consultant likes to remind people how to make decisions. He said, “Envision yourself in your coffin on your funeral day. Imagine what your co-workers, friends and family will say about you when they stand by your coffin. Then make your decision in light of that perspective. He calls it “*Beginning with the end in view.*”

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PERSPECTIVE: This is the “Paradox of Power, Pain and Pleasure.” As we try to come to grips with meager finances or poor health or persecution for our faith, rather than seeing God as unfair to us, maybe now we can see that God is working to keep us in the faith and headed for heaven when we die. We can even learn to thank God for our troubles when we realize what good He is doing for us through them. I hope you find this helpful. Amen

*“And now may the peace of God, that surpasses all human comprehension, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen”*

**HYMN #448 “O Master, Let Me Walk with Thee”**

**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**

**CLOSING SONG: Chosen by Carol**

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson

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