

**“Times of Testing”**  
**March 6, 2022, SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson (Fugleberg)

**PSALM: 91:1-13** He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. 2 I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." 3 Surely, he will save you from the fowler's snare and from the deadly pestilence. 4 He will cover you with his feathers, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.

**HYMN #587 “Eternal Father, Strong to Save” (In honor of Ukrainian people.)**

**CONFESSION OF SIN:** Psalm 51:8-13 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity. Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you. Amen

**CHILDREN’S SERMON:** Testing. My broken spoon...

**READER:** Dave Fischer

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Deuteronomy 26:1-11* When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, 2 take some of the firstfruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name 3 and say to the priest in office at the time, "I declare today to the LORD your God that I have come to the land the LORD swore to our forefathers to give us." 4 The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. 5 Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. 6 But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, putting us to hard labor. 7 Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our fathers, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. 8 So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with miraculous signs and wonders. 9 He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; 10 and now I bring the firstfruits of the soil that you, O LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. 11 And you and the Levites and the aliens among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

**EPISTLE LESSON:** Romans 10:8-13 But what does it say? "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the word of faith we are proclaiming: 9 That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. 11 As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile-the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, 13 for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

**READER:** Here ends the reading of God’s Word.

**CONGREGATION SINGS:** God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

**CONFESSION OF FAITH:** *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible.*

*And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made;*

*Who for us, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, And was made man; And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And is seated on the right hand of the Father, And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end.*

*And I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come. 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 FOR OFFERING**

**PRAISE AND WORSHIP SONGS:** Chosen by Carol.

### **SERMON TITLE: “TIMES OF TESTING” (Life of Christ Series) Luke 4:1-13; Pastor Tom Olson; March 6, 2022**

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

**TEMPTATION:** What is happening in the world? There is only one explanation. Satan is tempting leaders to do evil things. How is Russian President Putin doing with temptation? How is Ukrainian President Zelensky doing with temptation? How is our President Biden doing with temptation? How are you doing? How am I doing?

**RESULTS:** I think most of us will agree that Putin has been falling into very bad temptation to destroy property and lives. It appears Zelensky has at least passed the temptation to run away with a plane load of money and has stayed at great peril to his life. I am sure he has failed many past tests, but someone noted that he is becoming like another Winston Churchill, who became a great man under the pressure of Hitler’s attack on England in WW II. Sadly, President Biden, who was once a pro-life Democrat, is now pushing for abortion right up to and possibly even after birth. This is a real curse on our nation and one explanation why we are losing God’s blessings.

**PERSONAL:** But we personally don’t want to become self-righteous. Our individual choices to succumb to the devil’s temptations make a real difference in our lives our family and ultimately our nation. *Psalm 33:12 “How blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord.”*

**SERIES:** We continue today looking at the “Life of Christ” with his testing in the wilderness. We find Him to be the great champion of fighting off Satan and doing things God’s way...even if it meant being faithful unto death on the cross. I pray it will be an inspiration to us all.

## **I. THE HOLY SPIRIT LED JESUS INTO A PLACE OF TEMPTATION**

***Luke 4:1-2a Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led by the Spirit in the desert, 2 where for forty days he was tempted by the devil.***

PRAYER: One of the phrases in the Lord's prayer that people don't understand is "***lead us not into temptation.***" This passage makes it perfectly clear that the Holy Spirit can lead a person into a place where they will be tempted. We pray that this won't be necessary in our lives. But the Holy Spirit would never tempt us to sin. One person put it this way, "***Good and evil travel on parallel tracks and both arrive about the same time.***" God wants us to be tested in order to help us grow stronger spiritually. But the devil wants to tempt us in order to destroy us.

WEAKNESS: Another reason for testing by temptation is to reveal to us if we have a weak spot sooner rather than later. It is like my spoon I was carving out of wood. The piece of wood looked perfectly fine but as I worked with it there turned out to be a fault and the spoon cracked and was ruined. Fortunately, it happened before I had spent too much time on the project. It is very important that we find out our weak spots before we get into a position where failing would cause great damage to ourself and others.

JESUS: Jesus demonstrates to us how to overcome temptation by using the Word of God. Secondly, He demonstrates that He did not fall into temptation, because he is the sinless sacrifice for our sins. And thirdly, Jesus demonstrates that He is the Lord over the devil. The devil must submit to Him.

A key verse is ***James 4:7 "Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you."***

## **II. SATAN TEMPTED JESUS WITH HIS APPETITES: THE LUST OF THE FLESH**

***Luke 4:2b-4 He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. 3 The devil said to him, "If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread." 4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone.'"***

FASTING: Our appetites are not sinful; they are created by God for our benefit. If food did not taste good, we might neglect eating. But appetites have the potential to take us places we don't want to go.

We need to keep our appetites from controlling us. Fasting is one way to fight temptation and build up spiritual strength. In Mark 9:24 Jesus told his disciples that demonic power comes out of people only by "fasting and prayer."

WORD: Jesus also noted that bread alone is not what we need. We also need to be fortified with the Word of God. ***Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"*** God's Word is key in overcoming the temptations of the devil.

### III. SATAN TEMPTED JESUS WITH AUTHORITY AND SPLENDOR: THE LUST OF THE EYES

*Luke 4:5-8 The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. 6 And he said to him, "I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. 7 So if you worship me, it will all be yours." 8 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.'"*

WEALTH: I have never been a part of the world of rich and powerful people. I don't know much about being tempted with power and wealth. I have generally felt that a good place to be is in a modest house, driving a modest car, serving a smaller church. I think it would be exceedingly hard to be wealthy and powerful. Sometimes I have thought that I should run for an important political office and try to promote good things for our country. But I don't think I have the strength to handle a powerful and important position. I am thankful for good people who serve in that world though.

ALLURE: Jesus demonstrates here that we should not let any promise of great wealth and power to lure us away from our relationship with Christ. He set the example by not owning anything except the cloths on his back. He didn't want the possessions of this world to gain a big place in His heart.

TREASURE: Johan Frank put it well some 400 years ago in his poem, "Jesus Priceless Treasure:" *"Hence (out) with earthy treasure! Thou (Jesus) art all my pleasure, Jesus, all my choice; Hence (out) thou empty glory! Naught to (don't tell) me thy story, Told with tempting voice; Pain or loss, or shame, or cross, Shall not from my Savior move me, Since He deigns (desires) to love me."*

PERSPECTIVE: When I married Sharon, her mom and dad just sold their 270 acre farm with a nice house and several barns. Then later we helped them have an auction and sell all his farm machinery and cattle. After that they lived with a fraction of their possessions in a mobile home with a small yard barn. Not too many years later that became too hard to manage so they got rid of more things and moved to a small one-bedroom apartment. A couple years ago they moved in with their daughter and got to keep only a bed, a couple dressers and a couple reclining chairs. Now this past month we once again whittled down Sharon's mom's possession to a few clothes, a lamp, an end table and a chair as she moved into a nursing home. Sometime in the not-so-distant future she will pass away and all she will keep then is one dress to wear in her coffin. That is the fate of all of us, and it comes sooner than you think. That is why on Ash Wednesday, the ashes remind us that even our body will soon turn to dust. In that day, all we will be able to keep is our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ...our key to heaven.

#### **IV. SATAN TEMPTED JESUS WITH POPULARITY: THE BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE**

*Luke 4:9-12 The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down from here. 10 For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; 11 they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone." 12 Jesus answered, "It says: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"*

**STUNT:** If Jesus jumped off of the temple steeple and came floating down on the wings of angels, he would really be popular. Satan wanted Jesus to pull a stunt that would really impress the crowds in a big way. But Jesus resisted and told him that the Bible says that you should not test God.

**POPULARITY:** It is fun to be popular and noticed. Some people get a lot of attention due to looks or talent or captivating personality. Children will even exhibit bad behavior at times, just to get noticed. It is not fun to be ignored. Most of us want to be well liked and popular. The best way to properly satisfy this desire is to serve others with a glad heart. I like the phrase, "To have a friend, be a friend." Just volunteer to go to a nursing home and read to people who have poor eye sight. Read them their mail, or the newspaper, or a good book or best of all, the Holy Bible. You will have a lot of friends in the right way.

**FRIENDS:** We can do dangerous and foolish things to get popular like borrowing money to buy fancy things we can't afford to impress people. But that doesn't lead to the right kind of friends anyway. The kind of friends you meet here in church are the kind of ones you want to have.

#### **V. SATAN DECIDED TO WAIT FOR ANOTHER OPPORTUNITY: THE NEED FOR VIGILANCE**

*Luke 4:13 When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time.*

This is why we go to communion and church and Bible study and prayer meeting. This is why we have personal devotions at home. This is why we have fellowship with other believers. We need to stay strong. Satan is watching and waiting for an opportunity to pounce on us and tempt us at a weak moment. You know how vulnerable you are if you are exhausted, or hungry, or proud. We need to stay humble. We need to stay vigilant. We need to stay strong. Jesus invites you to His table to be near to you and give you strength to resist the power of the devil. Jesus is the only one who did it perfectly. And Christ in us is the only way for us to overcome the devil's temptations and get the victory. Come to the table of the Lord, kneel in humility, receive his grace and forgiveness, have your faith strengthened with heaven's food.

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

**HYMN (Carol's communion song.)**

**HOLY COMMUNION (Dave Fischer prep and help)**

**HYMN Carol choose closing song.**

**POSTLUDE: Lisa Gabbert**

**Reader: Dave Fischer**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Isaiah 6:1-8 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord seated on a throne, high and exalted, and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphs, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphs flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *1 Corinthians 14:12b-20 Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. 13 For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also sing with my mind. 16 If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? 17 You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. 18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. 20 Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults.*

**READER:** Here ends the reading of God's Word.

**CONGREGATION SINGS:** God be praised, for His glad Tidings!