

**April 10, 2022; PALM SUNDAY
SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church
Singers: Praise Team**

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

CALL TO WORSHIP: Zechariah 9:9&10 “Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. 10 I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.”

HYMN #95 “All Glory, Laud and Honor”

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 OR BELLS:

READER: Nate Kalstad

EPISTLE LESSON: *Philippians 2:5-11*

*5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus:
6 Who, being in very nature God,
did not consider equality with God something to be grasped,
7 but made himself nothing,
taking the very nature of a servant,
being made in human likeness.
8 And being found in appearance as a man,
he humbled himself
and became obedient to death-
even death on a cross!
9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
and gave him the name that is above every name,
10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.*

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: song chosen by Hannah

SERMON TITLE: “THE MANDATE”

John 13:31-38; Pastor Tom Olson; April 10, 2022

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

UKRAINE: My heart is broken over the division I see manifested by the Ukraine War. I can hardly watch the news; it prevents me from sleeping. Both Russia and Ukraine have almost two thousand years of Christian heritage and yet there is this horrible hatred and bloodshed. I see it in politics too. People can't even have a civil discussion without quickly getting angry with each other. So many people have so much anger and so little love. Matthew 24:12 tells us that in the last days *“the love of many will grow cold.”*

MAUNDY: Since we don't have Maundy Thursday services here, I have not preached on “The Great Mandate” in many years. Palm Sunday is a time to go over the main events of the upcoming Holy Week that Jesus experienced. On Thursday they celebrated the Passover together in the upper room and then went off to the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. At one point Jesus gave a new Mandate to them. The old one was to love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself. But the new one is this, “Love one another AS I HAVE LOVED YOU.” Since this is in a larger discourse let's look at John 13:31-38 and since this is Palm Sunday let's look at it through the lens of the Kingship of Christ.

I. THE KING'S PLAN: AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE

John 13:31-33 When he was gone, Jesus said, "Now is the Son of Man glorified and God is glorified in him. 32 If God is glorified in him, God will glorify the Son in himself, and will glorify him at once. 33 "My children, I will be with you only a little longer. You will look for me, and just as I told the Jews, so I tell you now: Where I am going, you cannot come.

DISILLUSIONED: Imagine for a moment that you were a disciple and Jesus was saying this to you: *“I will be with you only a little while longer. You won't be able to find me. You can't come where I am going.”* Here you are, a handful of people, the whole world is against you...the religious leaders, King Herod and the Roman government all want to see you and what you believe in is stamped out. You are hanging on to Jesus who can heal the sick, raise the dead, feed the multitudes and he says... “I am leaving and you can't follow me.” How would you feel? Terrified, betrayed, certainly disillusioned... You would feel like this Utopian dream you had has turned into a nightmare.

HOPE: Fortunately, Jesus goes on to give them some details that will help comfort them a little. *John 14:25-27 "All this I have spoken while still with you. 26 But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send*

in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. 27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.”

Jesus gives some promises:

1. I will send the Holy Spirit. (In about 50 days!)
2. I will come back again. (In at least 2,000 years!)

FUTURE: One thing I have learned about life is that the future is always uncertain and often more difficult than we ever anticipated. But another thing I have learned is that we have the presence of God with us in the form of the Holy Spirit. Even in the midst of the storm we are surrounded by the presence of God. The Ukrainian Christians may die any day at the hands of the Russian army. You and I may die any day with a heart attack, car accident, brain aneurism or even the attack of a murderer. But that won't remove us from the presence of the Holy Spirit. There is always grace to walk through our allotted path in life.

Romans 8:38-39 “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

PRESENCE: Something I tell people about my experience with cancer is this. I personally felt the presence of God go before me into every room and every procedure. I felt the presence of God as I was literally bolted to a table being burned with the radiation gun. I never felt abandoned by God. In fact, I felt closer to God during that ordeal than I usually do. The future may be uncertain but the promises of God are true. We need to stand on them by faith. They are sure footing.

II. THE KING'S PROVISION: STRENGTH FOR THE JOURNEY

John 13:34-35 "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

FUNDAMENTAL: Jesus raises the bar and tells us that a primary focus of His followers is to love one another, AS HE LOVED US. This is called the GREAT MANDATE given to us on MANDATE (MAUNDY) THURSDAY. If we miss out on this point, our obedience to the rest of Christ's commands is shallow, at best.

CHRIST: How did Christ love us? I think the Apostle's Creed outlines that answer as best as anything I know:

- He became a man: “conceived by the Holy Spirit”
- He came to live with us: “born of the Virgin Mary”
- He experienced pain and injustice: “suffered under Pontius Pilate”
- He died on the cross for our sins: “was crucified, dead and buried”

PLACE: Jesus also loved us by returning to heaven and prepare a place for us. ***John 14:2 “In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you.”***

RETURN: Jesus loved us by promising to come back for us. ***John 14:3 “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.”***

AGAPE: To have that same kind of love for our fellow believers is so important. This is not a warm fuzzy feeling of friendship. It does not even mean we have to like them. There are Christians we don't like or desire to be with, but we still love them as a brother or sister. We are committed to their well-being. I have recently been praying blessings down on a Christian that is stressing me out. I don't like him but I love him.

STRENGTH: This love is our strength. Notice it is the proof to a skeptical world that the gospel is real. Any lack of love among children of God hurts the testimony of the gospel seriously. The love of believers is so attractive to a "love-starved" world. I personally believe that the ministry to the ten million Ukrainian refugees in Poland and other countries is a great testimony of the gospel. One person was once criticizing the church and I replied, "Who started the hospitals, the nursing homes, the drug rehabilitation centers, the soup kitchens and charities to the poor and homeless and the outreach to those in disaster zones?" They had to admit that it was the Christians that did most of that work and do it to this day. It made him stop criticizing the church. Our love is an important testimony of the presence of Jesus in our hearts. People are not impressed with words but they are impressed with deeds.

NOTHING: Love is the strength of our soul and church and nation. 1 Corinthians 13 reminds us that if we don't have love, we are nothing. LOVE IS THE KING'S PROVISION OF STRENGTH.

III. THE KING'S PROMISE: LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

John 13:36-38 Simon Peter asked him, "Lord, where are you going?" Jesus replied, "Where I am going, you cannot follow now, but you will follow later." 37 Peter asked, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for you." 38 Then Jesus answered, "Will you really lay down your life for me? I tell you the truth, before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times!"

ABLE: Jesus was going to the cross. These words of Peter are captured in a rather unusual hymn which goes this way: *"Are ye able," said the Master, "To be crucified with me?" "Yea," the sturdy dreamers answered, "To the death we follow Thee." Lord, we are able. Our spirits are Thine. Remold them, make us, Like Thee, divine. Thy guiding radiance Above us shall be A beacon to God, To love, and loyalty.*

FAILED: Peter thought he could go to the cross with Christ but ended up denying him before the night was over. He failed miserably. There are times when we also feel that we could follow the Lord and be mighty heroes of the faith. And then some little temptation comes our way and we fall for it.

DARKNESS: Jesus warns Peter about dark times to come and how weak he really is. He reminds Peter that he doesn't have the strength to stand against the power of darkness and evil in his own might. This is a good lesson for us. Difficult days are ahead. A Christian was recently lamenting about some things in his life and I reminded him, "You could be in Ukraine right now and a Russian Communist could be at the door to kill you and take away from you everything you have." He had to admit that in light of that he had it pretty good!

FUTURE: Don't be shocked if dark days are ahead for us. Dark days come to men time and again in history. My grandparents faced the darkness of World War 1 and the great depression, my father faced the darkness of fighting in World War 2. People I know are facing the darkness of serious illness, others of broken marriages, others of job loss and great uncertainty. Hang on to the words of Jesus in verse 36 **"you will follow later."** When our assignment on earth is completed, the Lord will come for us and we then get to follow him to our real home that he has prepared for us in heaven. We will get a new body and a renewed mind. We will feel better and be happier than we ever have in our entire life. I reminded a suffering couple recently, *"You are not home yet. This world isn't home. We are pilgrims passing through. Heaven is our home. We are created for heaven, not for this earth. Be patient. The best is yet to come."*

Ten million Ukrainian refugees have once again been reminded that this world is not home. What we think we own can be taken from us in a moment but a thief, a storm, a war, illness or death. The King is Coming back. That is our blessed hope. Until then, let us focus on sharing the gospel and loving one another as Christ has loved us. One day Putin, like Stalin, will die. People will rejoice that he is gone. But the power of the Gospel of Christ and the Love of Christ will remain, changing lives, one soul at a time. Amen

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

HYMN #96 “Ride On, Ride On, O Savior-King”

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

Doxology and Three-Fold Amen

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson

READER: Nate Kalstad

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9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place
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11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
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PASTOR: Here ends the reading of God's Word.

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