

MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH

November 13, 2022

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Singers: praise team

Praise music: Krista

Hymns and liturgy: Rebekah

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson

HYMN #366 "Father, We Thank Thee for the Night"

CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 98

MEN: Sing to the LORD a new song, for he has done marvelous things;

WOMEN: his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.

ALL: The LORD has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.

MEN: He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to the house of Israel;

WOMEN: all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.

ALL: Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;

MEN: make music to the LORD with the harp,

WOMEN: with the harp and the sound of singing,

ALL: with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn--shout for joy before the LORD, the King.

MEN: Let the sea resound, and everything in it,

WOMEN: the world, and all who live in it.

MEN: Let the rivers clap their hands,

WOMEN: let the mountains sing together for joy;

MEN: let them sing before the LORD,

WOMEN: for he comes to judge the earth.

ALL: He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

HYMN #148 "Sing to the Lord of Harvest"

PASTOR ONLY: *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. Amen*

PASTOR & CONGREGATION: *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:

READER: Luke Johnson

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Malachi 4:1-6*
"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire," says the LORD Almighty. "Not a root or a branch will be left to them. 2 But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall. 3 Then you will trample down the wicked; they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day when I do these things," says the LORD Almighty. 4 "Remember the law of my servant Moses, the decrees and laws I gave him at Horeb for all Israel. 5 "See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the LORD comes. 6 He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

EPISTLE LESSON: 2 Thessalonians 3:6-13

6 In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command you, brothers, to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us. 7 For you yourselves know how you ought to follow our example. We were not idle when we were with you, 8 nor did we eat anyone's food without paying for it. On the contrary, we worked night and day, laboring and toiling so that we would not be a burden to any of you. 9 We did this, not because we do not have the right to such help, but in order to make ourselves a model for you to follow. 10 For even when we were with you, we gave you this rule: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." 11 We hear that some among you are idle. They are not busy; they are busybodies. 12 Such people we command and urge in the Lord Jesus Christ to settle down and earn the bread they eat. 13 And as for you, brothers, never tire of doing what is right.

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

PRAISE SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by KRISTA

SERMON: "KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN!" Luke 21:5-36 Pastor Tom Olson, November 13, 2022

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

PROOF: Our faith has many beliefs that can't be "proven," for example:

- We believe God created all things. But we can't prove it in the sense of having a video recording of him doing it.
- We believe God became a man, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, crucified, risen and ascended into heaven. But we can't "prove" it.
- However, there is one belief we have that we will be able to "prove" someday by experience. That is the "resurrection of the dead and the bodily return of Jesus Christ, in the clouds." When that happens, we will have proof that everyone will one day see with their own eyes when Jesus comes back.

FUTURE: In today's Gospel text, Jesus tells his disciples about his return. This the great day that God's people are longing for. "The King is coming, praise God, He's coming for me." Let's talk about it.

I. A SHOCKING REVELATION

Luke 21:5-6 Some of his disciples were remarking about how the temple was adorned with beautiful stones and with gifts dedicated to God. But Jesus said, 6 "As for what you see here, the time will come when not one stone will be left on another; every one of them will be thrown down."

IMPRESSIVE: The disciples were in awe of the great temple in Jerusalem. This is the one that was rebuilt by Ezra and Nehemiah after the Babylonian Captivity. It was not nearly as spectacular as Solomon's original temple, but after King Herod remodeled it, it is said that it was very impressive.

DESTROYED: Jesus tells the disciples that the day is coming when that temple would be completely

destroyed. That is exactly what happened 37 years later, in 70 AD when the Romans utterly destroyed Jerusalem and the temple. The Jews were scattered all over the earth and miraculously brought back to the land in 1948 to form the nation of Israel that had not been in existence for 1878 years.

SHOCKING: The destruction of Israel was A SHOCKING REVELATION and the re-establishment of Israel is also A SHOCKING REVELATION. If you read David McCullough's epic biography of President Harry Truman, he documents, with no theological agenda, the miraculous events and circumstances that motivated President Truman to champion the re-establishment of Israel. I personally believe it is a sign worth noting.

II. TWO QUESTIONS:

Luke 21:7 "Teacher," they asked, "when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are about to take place?"

This chapter is a little bit complicated because Jesus is answering these two questions that the disciples asked. Here is how the questions are phrased in the book of ***Matthew 24:3...***

As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately. "Tell us," they said, "when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?"

1. When will this happen?
2. What will be the sign of your coming at the end of the age?

Jesus is dealing with the destruction of the temple in 70 AD and with his return at the end of the age. Here is how the angels put it in ***Acts 1:10&11:***

They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them. 11 "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

When will this take place? Are there any signs that alert us to the time of Christ's return?

III. IMPOSTERS AND WARS

Luke 21:8-10 He replied: "Watch out that you are not deceived. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and, 'The time is near.' Do not follow them. 9 When you hear of wars and revolutions, do not be frightened. These things must happen first, but the end will not come right away." 10 Then he said to them: "Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom.

FALSE: There are a number of people today who claim to be a re-incarnation of Jesus Christ. Some believe the establishment of the United Nations is fulfillment of the return of Christ. Others are claiming that a great world ruler will arise who will be a re-incarnation of Christ. But they all are false because Jesus said He is ***coming back in the clouds*** and that ***all eyes will see him.***

WARS: This will be at a time of wars. It is through these wars that the people of the world will long for a ruler who can bring world peace. That is where the imposter, the anti-Christ will arise and promise to bring world peace. And he will for a season and people will adore him.

IV. NATURAL DISASTERS

Luke 21:11 There will be great earthquakes, famines and pestilences in various places, and fearful events and great signs from heaven.

EARTHQUAKES: Watch for great earthquakes.

FAMINES: Watch for famines, which are very likely this year without the grains from the Ukraine.

PESTILENCES: Watch for more pestilences. We lived through the COVID pestilence these past two years but there are likely far worse one's coming. Many people believe that one of the main reasons Russia invaded the Ukraine is that the United States was breaking international law and sponsoring biological weapons laboratories along the Russian border that could wipe out great amounts of the world population. We recently read

that a major university in the United States invented a new COVID virus that will kill ten percent of those who get it. The last one killed only 3 tenths of one percent of those who got it...and still millions died. If they release this new virus, it could be that a billion people will die. Some say that is their intent to lower world population and also to control and enslave the rest of us through fear.

SIGNS: Some say that the signs in heaven refer to the lunar eclipses called “blood moons” that we have been having and are hinted at in Joel 2:31:

*The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful day
of the LORD.*

V. PERSECUTION

Luke 21:12-19 "But before all this, they will lay hands on you and persecute you. They will deliver you to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors, and all on account of my name. 13 This will result in your being witnesses to them. 14 But make up your mind not to worry beforehand how you will defend yourselves. 15 For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict. 16 You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death. 17 All men will hate you because of me. 18 But not a hair of your head will perish. 19 By standing firm you will gain life.

PRESSURE: On Thursday evening some of us had the honor of being at the “Friends of the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary” banquet. The guest speaker was Dr. Donald Sweeting, Chancellor of “Colorado Christian University.” Dr. Sweeting outlined the spiritual and moral decay of America that now has developed into a hatred of our history, our form of government and Christianity. He said that every day, Christian Colleges and Universities are under increasing pressure to submit to the progressive communist agenda that has taken over the hearts and minds of so many people. They want to force us to reject traditional and Biblical belief about marriage,

gender, the family, morality and so many other things. Every year, persecution against Bible-believing Christians grows in America and Europe. Persecution is already at a fevered pitch in Muslim and Communist countries. Surely this is a sign of the imminent return of Christ.

VI. JERUSALEM TRAMPLED

Luke 21:20-24 "When you see Jerusalem being surrounded by armies, you will know that its desolation is near. 21 Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city. 22 For this is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written. 23 How dreadful it will be in those days for pregnant women and nursing mothers! There will be great distress in the land and wrath against this people. 24 They will fall by the sword and will be taken as prisoners to all the nations. Jerusalem will be trampled on by the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.

I kind of think that this may be referring to 70 AD when Rome utterly demolished Jerusalem and Gentiles took over the land until 1948. But it appears in other passages that this same scenario will be repeated right before Jesus comes back again as predicted in **Zechariah 14:3-5**:

Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations, as he fights in the day of battle. 4 On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south. 5 You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Azel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

VII. TERRIFYING EVENTS

Luke 21:25-26 "There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. 26 Men will faint from terror,

apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken.

TERRIFYING: Things will get to a fevered pitch worldwide with signs in the heavens, ferocious seas, people fainting in fear of the terror coming on the world. It will seem as if the universe is falling apart as well.

SAYING: I have a favorite saying that a number of people like to repeat as well when things look terrifying for the future. My comforting saying is this: *“Things are not falling apart, they are falling into place!”*

Hang on to Jesus words such as “Fear not.” Standing on Psalm 27, 46 and 91 is going to be key in those days.

VIII. CHRIST APPROACHING

Luke 21:27-31 At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. 28 When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.” 29 He told them this parable: “Look at the fig tree and all the trees. 30 When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. 31 Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the kingdom of God is near.

OBSERVABLE: I don’t know what it means that *“they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud.”* I personally believe that the “rapture of the church” according to 1 Thessalonians 4 will be sudden and surprising but that the second coming at the end of the great tribulation may be a slow approach to the earth that will be visible in telescopes and that the human race of demon possessed rebels will actually be able to see Christ coming in the clouds and mourn with terror and fear that their doom is near.

IX. AN APPOINTED HOUR

Luke 21:32-33 “I tell you the truth, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. 33 Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away.

CLIMAX: One day, these signs will hit a fevered pitch and it will be the last generation when Jesus comes back *“to judge the living and the dead.”* Oh, what a sobering time that will be. God’s eternal Word will be the standard by which men will be judged.

X. HOW TO PREPARE

Luke 21:34-36 “Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. 35 For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. 36 Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man.”

HOW: How do we prepare? Stay heavenly minded. Don’t get all caught up in eating and drinking and materialism.

NURSES: On Thursday I had the ultrasound done on my heart. Before they put me under sedation, I overheard the nurses talking among themselves. They were expressing how exhausted they were running to their children’s sports. They were gone every weekend flying all over the country to tournaments. Those children will get trophies but most of these kids from professional families don’t have a clue that Jesus is coming back to judge the living and the dead and that their eternal destiny is in peril.

TODAY: We live in a land of exhausting activity (dissipation), extreme drug addiction (drunkenness) and high stress (the anxiety of life). This is just what Jesus warned us to avoid.

DEVOTIONS: On Thursday Dr. Sweeting reminded us of the value of taking quality time every day in the Word of God and prayer. He told of his visit with the President of Christian College that was questioning his own Christian beliefs. Dr. Sweeting urged him to slow down his administrative work and take time to immerse himself, once again, in God’s faith-building and life-changing Word. That college president had allowed himself to get caught up in dissipation and

the anxieties of life. An evangelical pastor in Eagan was recently destroyed because he allowed himself to be caught up in alcoholism (drunkenness).

CHURCH: When I meeting with pastors of large and demanding churches who, some of them, are even in counseling, I am so thankful I am a pastor of a small church, with a reasonable schedule and good opportunities to stay close to God and not be ruined by having to please the great crowds of people who will quit coming if they are not entertained. This little church is a blessing to me. This little church helps me to stay prepared for the return of Christ. I am so glad to be a part of a church that not only allows, but actually wants, me to periodically speak about the return of Christ.

PERSONAL: My recent strokes and health problems have reminded me of the importance of preparing for my death. And I am starting to do that and to get my affairs in order. How much more important is it for all of us to heed Jesus' message and prepare for His second coming.

TESTIMONY: When Pastor Evenson came to Coon Valley Lutheran Church in the early 1970's, he preached like this. At first, I was frightened, then I got saved and after that the message of our Lord's return became precious to me and something I look forward to with all my heart. **KEEP YOUR EYES OPEN!** The hippie Jesus People chorus of those days puts it so well. ***"Tell me, how its gonna be. Read it from the Bible again. I can't wait to see Jesus, cuz Jesus is coming again...Oh yah...Jesus is coming again."***

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

HYMN #144 "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come"

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 & THREE-FOLD AMEN

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson