

Minnesota Valley Church

Date: Sunday, April 23, 2023

Church Year Date: 3rd Sunday of Easter

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 23:6*

PASTOR: Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me

All the days of my life;

CONG: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD

Forever.

Hymn #197 “Joyful, Joyful We Adore Thee”

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.*

Children’s Sermon:

Reader: Diane Plait?

EPISTLE LESSON: *Acts 5:29-42 Peter and the other apostles replied: "We must obey God rather than men! 30 The God of our fathers raised Jesus from the dead-whom you had killed by hanging him on a tree. 31 God exalted him to his own right hand as Prince and Savior that he might give repentance and forgiveness of sins to Israel. 32 We are witnesses of these things, and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey him."*

33 When they heard this, they were furious and wanted to put them to death. 34 But a Pharisee named Gamaliel, a teacher of the law, who was honored by all the people, stood up in the Sanhedrin and ordered that the men be put outside for a little while. 35 Then he addressed them: "Men of Israel, consider carefully what you intend to do to these men. 36 Some

time ago Theudas appeared, claiming to be somebody, and about four hundred men rallied to him. He was killed, all his followers were dispersed, and it all came to nothing. 37 After him, Judas the Galilean appeared in the days of the census and led a band of people in revolt. He too was killed, and all his followers were scattered. 38 Therefore, in the present case I advise you: Leave these men alone! Let them go! For if their purpose or activity is of human origin, it will fail. 39 But if it is from God, you will not be able to stop these men; you will only find yourselves fighting against God." 40 His speech persuaded them. They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 24:31-35 When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?" 33 They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together 34 and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread.*

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

SING: “God be praised, for His glad tidings.”

CONFESSION OF FAITH: **PSALM 23** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. 2 He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. 3 He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness For His name's sake. 4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; For You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me. 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; My cup runs over. 6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me All the days of my life; And I will dwell in the house of the LORD Forever. Amen

Gloria Patri: Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 *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 Concerns

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: CHOSEN BY CAROL

SERMON: ON OUR WAY REJOICING, 4/23/23 Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

BEER BOYCOTT: Have you joined the boycott of Bud Light beer? I am afraid that I can't do it with any impact because I think I have had only one or two of them in my life. If you want to boycott a company where some executives made a social statement you disagree with, do so by all means. But I am not sure it gets at the root of the issue.

ROOT: What is the issue? It is the issue is a man who dresses like a woman and thinks he is one. It is nothing new. It goes back to ancient Rome and Greece and pagan religions. The Apostle Paul and Luke, who wrote Luke and Acts, were well acquainted with the moral chaos that produced similar results in their day. But they had a different strategy to fight it. They went to the root of the problem which is **THE BROKEN AND EMPTY HUMAN HEART**. They brought the good news of Jesus Christ to lost souls in the power of the Holy Spirit. Lives were transformed. **SIN WENT AWAY...POOF!**

ATTRACTIVE: I have been praying for trans-activist Dylan Mulvayne to come to know Jesus and be healed of his confusion. I personally don't think that people with gender confusion will be changed by angry conservatives refusing to drink Bud Light and switching to another brand. But they may be drawn to Jesus when they feel our love for them and see us going about our daily lives with great joy in the Lord. Our title is "ON OUR WAY REJOICING," from selected passages.

I. JOYFULLY PERSECUTED

Acts 5:40-42 ...They called the apostles in and had them flogged. Then they ordered them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 The apostles left the Sanhedrin, REJOICING because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. 42 Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ.

AFRAID: Many preachers refuse to address the issues of our day because they are afraid of persecution. They are afraid people won't give money. They are afraid people will quit the church. So, they say nothing about sin or the atoning blood of Jesus.

HONOR: The early church considered it an honor to be beaten for the Name of Jesus and the Word of God. All of the disciples, except John, were put to death for their faith. John was tortured and imprisoned. Nothing the officials said to them could stop them from sharing the good news of Jesus from Spain to India in just 30 years. They knew the Lord, and refused to deny His Word.

PREACH: The Apostle Paul puts it this way in **2 Timothy 4:2&5** *Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage-with great patience and careful instruction...5 But you, keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry."*

CHARGE: This was the solemn charge I was given when I was ordained at the AFLC Annual Conference in 1988. I have tried to stay true to the Word of God and not tried to avoid issues that might cost me something.

TODAY: I think some of the younger pastors today may have to pay a higher price than I have had to pay for standing on the Word

of God when it comes to teaching about morality. People don't want to hear about sin. It used to be that they expected pastors to preach about what is right and wrong, even though they may not want to listen. But now they increasingly want to force us to be quiet and not address moral issues anymore. People simply don't want to have sin pointed out. I saw a woman in England handcuffed and taken to jail for merely praying silently near an abortion facility.

HONOR: The first century Christians considered it an honor to suffer for the Name of Jesus and the Word of God. Do we? Thousands of Christians around the world will be put to death this year for believing in Jesus as their Savior. God will give them a place of honor in heaven. The disciples were JOYFULLY PERSECUTED.

II. BURNING HEARTS

Luke 24:31-32 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. 32 They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

BURNING: This event happened right after the resurrection of Jesus when he met two disciples on the road between Jerusalem heading west toward Emmaus. As Jesus showed them, from the Old Testament scriptures, how the Messiah must be put to death and rise on the third day, they realized that ***"their hearts were burning."*** Unbelief kept them from recognizing it was Jesus at first. But as he explained these things to them, their hearts were ablaze.

EVANGELIST: The old evangelist, Leonard Masted, wrote his autobiography and the title he gave it was, "Hearts Ablaze" from this passage. Pastor and Mrs. Masted were some of the most fired up Christians I have ever met. He traveled from church to church well into his 80's preaching the gospel and having altar calls where

he had people coming to receive a touch from the Lord. He had a deep prayer life and walk with God. The Bible was alive to him and God gave him something fresh to share for every message each day. Even though I was only about 14 years old, I was very impressed by the burning hearts of this elderly pastor and his wife. Every church he served in his long ministry had spiritual revival.

CONFIRMATION: I don't remember anything we discussed in confirmation as I grew up. But I remember the pastor's smile, and joy and love for the Word of God. I like the quote from our Lutheran Ambassador Magazine, "Education is not so much filling a bucket as it is lighting a fire." I pray that my heart might be so ablaze that I light fires of spiritual revival everywhere I go. BURNING HEARTS.

III. TRANSFORMING SCRIPTURES

Acts 8:35-39 Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. 36 As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" 38 And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. 39 When they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away, and the eunuch did not see him again, but went on his way rejoicing.

EXCITING: This is a really exciting account from the book of Acts. It demonstrates the supernatural guidance of God in bringing the gospel to the entire area of east Africa through one court official who had been to Israel...the Ethiopian Eunuch...an advisor or ambassador for the Queen of Ethiopia.

BELIEVER: This man was a believer, a Jew of some type, who perhaps had been to Jerusalem on religious or government business. He was on his way back to Ethiopia and reading from

the book of Isaiah as his chariot drove on for days on lonely desert roads.

SPIRIT-LED: Philip, known as “the evangelist,” who also had daughters who were evangelists, was led by the Holy Spirit to go up to that chariot and ask the man what he was reading.

OPPORTUNITIES: I believe that every day God will give us such divine opportunities if we are open to the leading of the Holy Spirit. My faith is not a merely academic faith in the doctrines of the Bible, as important as that is. My faith is a living faith in the active work of the Holy Spirit who is alive and well on the face of the earth. I am not interested in the devil being alive and well on the earth...that is a fact. What I am interested in is testimonies of what the Holy Spirit is doing in your life every day as you walk in a living conversation with God.

OBEY: When Philip obeyed the Holy Spirit and went and talked to the Ethiopian, he found out the man was reading a prophecy of the Messiah from the book of Isaiah. It was a perfect set up. Philip explained carefully how Jesus fulfilled that prophecy as the lamb of God that was led to slaughter to atone for the sins of the world. That man was so excited that when he saw some water he wanted to be baptized right then and there. He didn't have to go through months of instruction for baptism. He was baptized into Christ and born again as a believer in the Lord.

SNATCHED: At that moment the Spirit of the Lord suddenly took Philip away and the eunuch did not see him again. I have no idea what that looked like, I can only speculate if he disappeared or an angel came and got him or if God called him and he suddenly departed. But none the less, God was moving in Philip's life to get the gospel out to those who were ready and waiting to hear it.

PREPARED: That is why we need to be ready. *1 Peter 3:15*
“...ALWAYS BE PREPARED to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do

this with gentleness and respect” The Eunuch was prepared by the Word of God to receive the gospel. Philip was prepared by the Word of God to be Spirit-led and talk to the ones God wanted him to talk to. The end result was a glorious salvation that ended up transforming the entire area of east Africa.

RESPONSE: And what was the emotional response of the Ethiopian? *Verse 39, ...but He went on His way REJOICING.* This should be the result of our lives, we should be leaving a **PATH OF JOY**. This is how Psalm 23 puts it, **“surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life...”** Goodness and mercy and joy follow the Spirit-led life. And the message is not what is wrong with the government. The message is Jesus Christ, crucified, risen and coming again.

HUGS: I heard a story this week that touched my heart and gets to the heart of the issue. An elementary teacher had a boy in her class that was troubled and unruly. One day she had an idea. She asked the boy if she could give him a hug for 30 seconds. He said, “Why so long?” She said, “So my heart has time to talk to your heart.” After 30 seconds the troubled little boy actually hung on tighter, after a minute he put his head on her shoulder for ten more seconds. Those seventy seconds transformed that boy and the whole classroom situation.

SOLUTION: I really doubt that the transgender movement is going to stop or even slow down if we boycott Bud Light. In fact, it might make them more defiant. The world is watching us. I believe the world will change if God's people show the love and peace of knowing Jesus as we go **“ON OUR WAY REJOICING.”** Amen. *Now may the peace of God that surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

Hymn # 248 “On Our Way Rejoicing”

Lord's Prayer & Benediction

Closing Song: Chosen by Carol

Postlude: Carol Gustafson