

SERVICE INFORMATION: June 4, 2023

The Second Sunday of Lent

Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRAISE AND WORSHIP SONGS: Ruth Antal-send them to Marretta for PowerPoint

ACCOMPANY HYMNS: Ruth Antal (Osthus Sing)

READER: Glenn Gustafson-at two different points in the service.

THEME: The Trinity and the importance of sound teaching about God.

PRELUDE: Ruth Antal

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 8*

*ALL: O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory above the heavens.*

*WOMEN: From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise
because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.*

*MEN: When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon
and the stars, which you have set in place,*

*WOMEN: what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that
you care for him?*

*MEN: You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and
crowned him with glory and honor.*

*WOMEN: You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put
everything under his feet:*

*MEN: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the
air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.*

ALL: O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

HYMN #134 “Holy, Holy, Holy”

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: Water, steam and ice.

Reader: Dave Osthus

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Deuteronomy 6:4-9 Hear, O Israel:
The LORD our God, the LORD is one. 5 Love the LORD your God with
all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. 6 These
commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. 7
Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home
and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get
up. 8 Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your
foreheads. 9 Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your
gates.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE ATHANASIAN CREED, PART I:

Jacob O’Flanagan

(Part I read by Jacob O’Flanagan), Ambassador Hymnal p. 105

HYMN #140 “Praise to the Father, the Glorious King

GOSPEL LESSON: (Read by Dave Osthus) *John 1:1-14 In the
beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was
God. 2 He was with God in the beginning. 3 Through him all things were
made; without him nothing was made that has been made. 4 In him was
life, and that life was the light of men. 5 The light shines in the darkness,
but the darkness has not understood it. 6 There came a man who was
sent from God; his name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify
concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe. 8 He
himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light. 9 The
true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. 10 He
was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world
did not recognize him. 11 He came to that which was his own, but his
own did not receive him. 12 Yet to all who received him, to those who
believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God- 13
children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a
husband's will, but born of God. 14 The Word became flesh and made his
dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and
Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

INTRODUCTION TO THE ATHANASIAN CREED, PART II:

Jacob O'Flanagan

Part II read by congregation, Ambassador Hymnal p.106

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONGS: songs chosen by Ruth Antal

SERMON TITLE: "WHO IS GOD?"

John 1:1-4; Pastor Tom Olson; June 7, 2023

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

FUNDAMENTAL: I am convinced that one of the biggest reasons that Christians lack deep and comforting peace in their hearts is that we are not very well trained in one important subject. That subject is: GOD! Who is God? If we really knew and believed the Bible truths about who God is, we would be much more joyful, calm, peaceful, encouraged and happy and that we would have much more power in prayer and service.

OVERCOMER: It is important to both KNOW ABOUT GOD and also to BELIEVE IT IN YOUR HEART. If you KNOW and BELIEVE you become an INVINCIBLE OVERCOMER. Too often we are more acquainted with the devil and his shenanigans than we are of God and His mighty works. That is why we are downhearted. The word THEOLOGY means the study of God and on this Trinity Sunday, we have the perfect opportunity to study the greatest topic of all times: "WHO IS GOD?" from an amazing passage of John 1:1-4.

I. THE ETERNAL ONE

John 1:1&2 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was with God in the beginning.

BEGINNING: The Triune God was in existence before anything we can see or touch was created. The Father was there speaking into being all things. The Word of God, the Son, was there as the creative means that made all things come into existence. The Holy Spirit was there, brooding over the waters.

Genesis 1:1-4a In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. 2 Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. 3 And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. 4 God saw that the light was good

YHWH: God is ETERNAL. His Name is eternal YHWH, or Jehovah. God revealed his name to Moses in the burning bush. *Exodus 3:13&14 Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?" 14 God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I AM has sent me to you.'"*

FOREVER: In laymen's terms we can paraphrase and say that God's name is this: THE ONE WHO IS, WHO WAS AND WHO EVER MORE WILL BE. Just like our opening hymn, "Holy, Holy, Holy" taught: "WHO WAS, AND IS, AND EVERMORE SHALL BE." God has existed from eternity past and will exist to eternity future. And the good news is also that when we become believers in Christ, we become eternal beings and will live forever, as well, with God.

PEACE: So how does that knowledge of the eternal nature of God bring us peace in our lives? It means that GOD HAS EVERYTHING UNDER CONTROL. Troubles are only for a season and for a purpose, but God's happy plans will not fail. We

can rest in that. His eternal nature implies that he is ALL POWERFUL and ALL KNOWING. We can trust the Bible because it is his INSPIRED WORD. God's way is the good and right way, even if the whole world says otherwise. GOD CANNOT LIE.

DEVIL: The devil was created and will one day be eliminated. His work of stealing, killing and destroying is only temporary. His work of lying and deceiving is only temporary.

REVERENCE: We need to learn to have a healthy fear or reverence of God, because all things belong to Him and He is the reason all things exist. To resist God is a very foolish. To resist God is a destructive path.

BAKER: TV evangelist, Jim Bakker, foolishly broke the laws of our land and also got involved in adultery. His famous PTL Club show was ruined, his empire crumbled, his wife divorced him and he ended up in prison. I recently heard an interview with Jim Baker and the interviewer asked him if he felt his time in prison was the judgment of God. Baker replied, "No, not at all, it was the mercy of God. I was heading down a wrong path and prison turned me back to God." The interviewer then asked, "When did you fall away and quit loving God?" Baker replied, "I never quit loving God. But what happened in prison is that I started to fear God. I had never developed a healthy fear of God and I got it in prison and it is good. Now I both love and fear God and it is good."

BOTH: GOD IS THE ETERNAL ONE...we need to fear and love Him. Our future in heaven or hell is dependent upon Him. Our lives on earth are observed by him every moment of the day and He will do what it necessary to bring us to faith and maturity...even if it needs to be painful. Trials are not so much a judgment from God but a gift to bring us to the point of being willing to walk on the right paths. That is because GOD IS ETERNAL.

II. THE CREATOR

John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.

AMINO: When I was very little, perhaps even a number of years before I was born, scientists wanted to prove the theory of evolution...that all life began with a chemical soup that was hit by a lightning bolt. They took a bunch of chemicals and minerals and made what they thought might be the stuff that was here billions of years ago. Then they zapped it with a bolt of lightning and they were thrilled to find out that they created an amino acid. From that they hoped to simulate how that amino acid could develop into a more complex chemical chain and then develop into DNA and then develop into a single celled organism and so on. From that point they would conclude that eventually all the plants and animals in the world would evolve over then millions, but now they say billions, of years. But no matter how much they try, they can't get that acid to move an inch in the direction of life...and they have had some 70 years to do simulate it.

IMPOSSIBLE: The more we discover about just one cell, the more we realize that the possibility of evolution is not there. The only explanation, even embraced by the late Stephen Hawking, is that a higher life form put us here in some form or another. Hawking says it was aliens, we say it was God. To me, the Bible explanation is the best one out there. *John 1:3 Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.*

WORD: God created all things by means of His Word. *Genesis 1:26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground."*

ATHEISM: When I was young, atheism (there is no God) was flourishing. It lived off of the theory of evolution. But modern scientific discovery about the complexity of just one cell has really made atheism impossible. There has to be an all-knowing Creator. Eric Metaxas recently said, "There are still atheists, but atheism is dead." I personally have never met an atheist. I have only met people who claim to be, but really are just angry at God about something.

COMPLEXITIES: I have books full of descriptions of various plant and animal complexities that would be impossible to come to us through evolution. To me, it takes much more "faith" to believe that we are here by accident and chance than to believe we are created by God.

CREATION: I urge you to enjoy the beautiful month of June by getting out in Creation among the plants and animals and lakes and forests and let the creation itself testify to you of the glory and majesty of her Creator. Take time to observe the nighttime sky and let the billions of stars and galaxies sing to you God's praise as well.

Psalm 19:1-4

*The heavens declare the glory of God;
the skies proclaim the work of his hands.
2 Day after day they pour forth speech;
night after night they display knowledge.
3 There is no speech or language
where their voice is not heard.
4 Their voice goes out into all the earth,
their words to the ends of the world.*

OWNER: Since God is the Creator, that means He owns all things, including you and me. *Psalm 24:1 The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it...*

DESTINY: Once we get this perspective that God owns everything and that it all works out for good when we submit to God, then we can willingly yield our lives to Him and start to walk in our higher destiny. God's plans for our life and for the world are much better than anything we come up with on our own.

POEM: I like the way the song "Make Me a Captive, Lord," puts it. It was written by George Matheson, born in 1842. He was a blind man who got his Doctor of Divinity degree and became a lecturer and author and poet, in spite of his blindness. He did it through a deep and personal relationship with God. He wrote the famous hymn, "O Love that Wilt not Let Me Go" as well. Here is a part of the poem he wrote:

*Make me a captive, Lord,
And then I shall be free.
Force me to render up my sword
And I shall conqueror be...
...My will is not my own
Till thou hast made it thine;
If it would reach a monarch's throne,
It must its crown resign.*

SURRENDER: George Matheson, surrendered to God, and even as a blind man became a great scholar, speaker and writer. That is what happens when we acknowledge that GOD IS OUR CREATOR. Moses led the Children of Israel out of Egypt when he yielded to God. Mary became the mother of the Messiah when she yielded to God. Peter became the leader of the church when he yielded to God. Countless men and women have found their greater destiny by acknowledging that they belong to God and yielding to Him AS THE ETERNAL-CREATOR.

III. THE REDEEMER

John 1:4 In him was life, and that life was the light of men.

COST: Life comes from God. Spiritual life and eternal life can only be found in the author of life. But it came to us at a cost. God had to find a way for His life to be transferred back to sinful human beings. That is where Jesus comes in. God did it through *Jesus Christ, His only begotten son, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, crucified, dead, buried and on the third day a rose from the dead, ascended into heaven and is seated on the right hand of God the Father Almighty.*

DEAD: Thousands of people around us have physical life but inside they are spiritually dead. Some are worse than dead, they are demon-possessed. That is why so much perversion and violence and crime is rampant among us. We have lost the light and the life of God in our culture. We are in a new “dark ages.” Our only hope is to get Jesus back because “**IN HIM IS LIFE AND THE LIGHT OF MEN.**”

ROOT: The terrible thing about our culture is not all the sin and wickedness around us. That is only a result of the big crime we have done. The big crime of our culture is that we have rejected our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ and His Word, the Bible. Jesus can save and transform our world without breaking a sweat, but we have to invite Him back. At the present time our people don't want to.

PROBLEM: Our leaders are not the problem, we are. We, as a nation, voted for them. They reject God and His ways because the people also do.

DOOR: Christ is at the door of our hearts, homes and land, knocking, wanting to come in and have fellowship with us. 2 *Chronicles 7:13&14 puts it so plainly, “When I shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or command locusts to devour the land or send a plague among my people, 14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from*

*heaven and will forgive their sin and **WILL HEAL THEIR LAND.**”*

GRACE: One day, Jesus will come back as judge, but we are still in the time of grace and His arms are wide open, ready to save anyone who will come to him and receive his forgiveness, purchased with His holy and precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.”

NOW: Now is the time to come to Christ, now is the time to invite our friends and neighbors to Christ. **GOD IS ETERNAL, GOD IS OUR CREATOR AND GOD IS OUR REDEEMER.** Nothing will give you peace like knowing the Lord. Come to the altar and receive him today!

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

HYMN #393 “Be Present at ‘YOUR’ Table Lord” Use the pronoun “YOUR” (in capital letters) rather than “our” in the first line on the PowerPoint this time to use it as a communion hymn.

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*

HOLY COMMUNION

CHORAL BENEDICTION: Tune “Edelweiss” *May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever-- Grant you peace, Perfect peace, Strength in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and see His face, Feel His grace forever. May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever.*

POSTLUDE: Ruth Antal