

**March 24, 2024; PALM SUNDAY
SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON**

**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church
Singers: Praise Team**

PRELUDE: Rebekah Olson/Others

CALL TO WORSHIP:

PASTOR: *Hosanna!*

ALL: *Hosanna to the Son of David!*

PASTOR: *Hosanna!*

ALL: *Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!*

PASTOR: *Hosanna*

ALL: *Hosanna in the highest!*

HYMN #95 “All Glory, Laud and Honor”

CHILDREN’S SONG: Jumping Up and Down

READER: Carol Hoikkala

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *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.”*

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.*

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

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

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *Christ died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, he was buried, he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, he appeared to Peter, to the Twelve, to more than five hundred brothers at the same time, to James, then to all the apostles and last of all to me. Amen (from 1 Corinthians 15)*

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.*

DEDICATION OF KEYBOARD

IN MEMORY OF ARLENE JACOBSON

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

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

**SERMON TITLE: “EXTREME POLITICAL TENSION”
John 12 selected verses; Pastor Tom Olson; March 24, 2024**

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

ELECTIONS: Election years bring out crowds of people who promote candidates that support their concerns. It has been interesting to watch the past few months as Robert Kennedy, Jr. has taken great strides in becoming a third-party candidate in the fall elections. He will need over one million signatures to be considered viable and get him on the ballot in every state. This is causing extreme POLITICAL TENSION in his famous family.

ARMED: It may be a wild summer with frightening consequences as mobs of illegal aliens are already clashing with the national guard. I know that many people are getting armed in case mobs start to roam our streets and loot our homes, as they are already

doing in California. In light of these things, we will be looking today at our Palm Sunday gospel, John 12, under the theme of “EXTREME POLITICAL TENSION.”

SCENE 1: A POPULUS POLITICAL MOVEMENT ERUPTED

John 12:12&13 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. They took palm branches and went to him, shouting, “Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the Name of the Lord! Blessed is the King of Israel!”

EXPECTATION: The people of Israel had lost their freedoms, they were overtaxed, they were treated like nobodies by the Roman government and the rich Jewish oligarchs. The political system was rigged against them. They were looking for a leader who would overthrow the government and set them free. The air was filled with expectation that Jesus would be the one to channel His well-known miraculous power into a movement to lead a revolution.

STUNNED: The corrupt politicians and religious leaders were momentarily stunned and frightened by the power of the people inspired by this itinerant teacher, Jesus of Nazareth. They commanded Jesus to make the people stop honoring Him. But He said, if they didn’t cry out the rocks would. It was the resurrection of Lazarus from the dead that fueled the fervor to the point that the religious leaders sought to assassinate Lazarus. Momentarily, it looked like the established rulers were losing control.

HISTORY: This happens time and again when the government gets corrupt and caters to the rich, neglecting the poor working class. Politics gets corrupt, religion gets corrupt, and business gets corrupt. The rich get richer, the poor get poorer and the rich oppress the poor. It stays that way until the majority of the people

get so tired of being abused that they would rather be dead than be oppressed. This is often the point where the corrupt leaders are forced to step down.

LEADER: The people want to rally around a person to lead them. Here they want Jesus to set them free from the corrupt and abusive leaders. They cry, “HOSANNA.” This means “SAVE US.” But Jesus came here the first time to set people free FROM SIN. He will come back again another day, perhaps soon, to set us free from the evil people who rule the nations.

SCENE 2: CITIZENS OF OTHER COUNTRIES WANTED TO MEET JESUS

John 12:20-23 Now there were some Greeks among those who went up to worship at the Feast. They came to Philip who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, with a request. “Sir” they said, “we would like to see Jesus...” 23 Jesus replied, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified.”

GREEKS: The fame of Jesus was spreading even to Greeks who came to observe the Passover feast. Jesus knew that this was the time he had come for. His purpose was not merely to save Israel, but to bring people from every nation, tribe and tongue into His eternal kingdom.

John 12:31&32 “Now is the time for judgement on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out. But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw men to myself.”

LIFTED: To be “lifted up” means crucified. Jesus reveals His plan. His time was now. CITIZENS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES WANTED TO MEET JESUS.

SCENE 3: JESUS GOES INTO HIDING AND HIS FOLLOWERS STARTED GETTING FRIGHTENED

John 12:35-36 Then Jesus told them, “You are going have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light.” When he had finished speaking, Jesus left and hid himself from them.

FEAR: Jesus knew what was coming. The whole religious and political establishment was meeting in secret to unleash their full fury against him. They had ridiculous court cases with sleazy witnesses before corrupt judges. Those persons of power and influence who believed in Jesus didn't speak up for fear of what the government would do to punish them. Everyone was afraid of those in power.

John 12:42-43 “Yet at the same time many even among the leaders believed in him. But because of the Pharisees they would not confess their faith for fear they would be put out of the synagogue; for they loved the praise from men more than the praise from God.”

ALC: In the 1960's the leadership of the American Lutheran Church started to turn away from the Bible and embrace false teachings, many pastors started to speak up and take a stand. Some wanted to leave the ALC and join the Free Lutheran Church, but the synod threatened to take away their pension money. They were goaded into submission. The secular courts eventually ruled that the church could not take away the pension of pastors who wanted to leave, but for many it was too late.

POWER: People in power in all generations will go to extreme measures to stay in power. They rule through fear. It is like the old joke from Communist countries, ***“You give us the name and we will find the crime.”*** I am afraid that this happens in America too.

COMMUNISM: One scholar recently said that American youth don't know about Communism any more. They don't realize that the Russian and Chinese Communists killed over 100 million of their own people. Hundreds of thousands of farmers were starved to death to free up food for the people in the cities who worked in the Communist weapons factories.

ALONE: The outcome for Jesus was that he was alone. He had to face the world and the devil by Himself. Even all his disciples abandoned him. Once bold Peter who said, “I will die for you,” even cursed and swore that he didn't know Jesus. Jesus “could have called ten thousand angels to destroy the world and set Him free...but He died alone, for you and me.”

AMERICA: This year in our land, we will also witness extreme political tension as we vote for a president. The same dynamics will play out before our eyes. But rest assured. No matter what happens. Jesus is ruling from heaven and has everything under control.

LINCOLN: I like the story of people who came to Abraham Lincoln before the civil war and said that they should pray that God would be on their side. Lincoln wisely replied, “No, it would instead be better to pray that we would be on God's side.” God's side eventually wins.

TIMING: Verse 36 of our text said that ***“Jesus left and hid himself from them.”*** Isn't it amazing that at one moment the crowd is waving palm branches and praising Jesus and perhaps only an hour later, Jesus went into hiding. He didn't hide because he was afraid. He hid because he needed to die on the Passover, several days later. The prophecies would be perfectly fulfilled. As the Lamb in the temple was being sacrificed at 3 PM on the Passover, the sword would be entering Jesus side so His innocent blood could pour out to atone for the sins of the whole world.

OVER: At that moment the political tension would be over. The corrupt political and religious leaders would be happily back in control, so they thought. *Psalm 24:7, Jesus would be breaking down the gates of Hades, setting the captives free. 1 Peter 3:19, Jesus would be preaching to those who died in the flood of Noah. Ephesians 4:8: He would be giving spiritual gifts to men. Genesis 3:15: He had crushed Satan's head and was now gathering His booty, the souls of dead believers, to bring them to paradise.* In three days, He would rise from the dead and inaugurate a spiritual movement that is bringing fear into the hearts of corrupt political and religious leaders to this day. When people are saved and bound for heaven, they can't be easily controlled by fear.

Perhaps soon, Jesus will return, not on a donkey, but on a white horse. *Revelation 19:11-16 I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. 12 His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. 13 He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God. 14 The armies of heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. 15 Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. "He will rule them with an iron scepter." He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. 16 On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.*

FOREVER: Jesus will reign in righteousness forever. He will purge the world from all sin, death, sorrow, pain and the power of the devil. Psalm 16:11: He will usher in an eternal kingdom where there is *"fullness of joy and pleasures forever more."* If you are not a part of His family and future, won't you trust in Him and receive Him today? Then you can be a part of the greatest popular political movement of all time as an Ambassador for King Jesus.

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

HYMN #157 "Rejoice, the Lord is King!"

LORD'S PRAYER
BENEDICTION

DOXOLOGY: *Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him all creatures here below, Praise Him above, ye heavenly host, Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost. A-men. A-men. A---men.*

POSTLUDE: Rebekah Olson