

**MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; April 21, 2024**  
**Fourth Sunday of Easter; Singers: Fuglebergs**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson

**CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 23**

**PASTOR: You prepare a table before me**

**ALL: In the presence of my enemies.**

**PASTOR: You anoint my head with oil;**

**ALL: My cup overflows.**

**PASTOR: Surely goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,**

**ALL: And I will dwell in the house of the LORD  
forever.**

**HYMN #566 (Irish Tune) "The King of Love My Shepherd Is"**

**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 MESSAGE:**

**READER: Justo Pillman**

**FIRST LESSON: *Acts 4:1-12*** The priests and the captain of the temple guard and the Sadducees came up to Peter and John while they were speaking to the people. 2 They were greatly disturbed because the apostles were teaching the people and proclaiming in Jesus the resurrection of the dead. 3 They seized Peter and John,

*and because it was evening, they put them in jail until the next day. 4 But many who heard the message believed, and the number of men grew to about five thousand.*

*5 The next day the rulers, elders and teachers of the law met in Jerusalem. 6 Annas the high priest was there, and so were Caiaphas, John, Alexander and the other men of the high priest's family. 7 They had Peter and John brought before them and began to question them: "By what power or what name did you do this?" 8 Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! 9 If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, 10 then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. 11 He is "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." 12 Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved."*

**EPISTLE LESSON: 1 John 3:16-24** This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. 17 If anyone has material possessions and sees his brother in need but has no pity on him, how can the love of God be in him? 18 Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth. 19 This then is how we know that we belong to the truth, and how we set our hearts at rest in his presence 20 whenever our hearts condemn us. For God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God 22 and receive from him anything we ask, because we obey his commands and do what pleases him. 23 And this is his command: to believe in the name of his Son, Jesus Christ, and to love one another as he commanded us. 24 Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. And this is how we know that he lives in us: We know it by the Spirit he gave us.

**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 & PRAYER**

**PRAISE AND WORSHIP SONGS:** Chosen by Carol.

**SERMON: MUHAMMAD OR JESUS, John 10:11-18** *Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

**INTERACTION:** For the first time in my life, I am interacting with Muslims. The millions of aliens crossing our borders illegally are a high percentage of Muslims from Africa and the Middle East. Many Muslim women are being employed at nursing homes and for home health care in our area. Some of them react negatively to the jewelry that bears the cross of Christ. Others are less reactionary and are asking questions about our faith. Some have never met a Christian before.

**CONTENTION:** The main point of difference comes down to this simple question, "Who is Jesus?" To the Muslim, He is a prophet who is a mere a man who never died on the cross or rose from the dead. To us, He is God in human flesh, who willingly laid down His life and shed His innocent blood for the full payment of all our sins. Muslims in America have been given the rare opportunity to hear the good news of the Gospel in a way they could never hear it in the land of their origins. In Muslim lands it is illegal to share the gospel with a Muslim.

**QUESTION:** Who do you want to follow and believe in Muhammad or Jesus? In today's gospel, Jesus himself tells us who he is.

**I. JESUS, THE GOOD SHEPHERD, WILLINGLY DIED FOR THE SHEEP** *John 10:11 "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.*

**DIFFERENCE:** Jesus sets a clear distinction on how he is different from Muhammad. Jesus was a man of peace who died for the sins of the whole world. Muhammad was a man of war who spread his religion by the sword and forced the people of Arabia and surrounding nations to either accept his religion or be put to death by the thousands.

**PETER:** Peter wanted to fight for the kingdom of God. He brought his sword with him to the garden of Gethsemane. He cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. Jesus healed the ear of the priest who sent guards to arrest Jesus. Jesus spoke to Peter, *Matthew 26:52-54 "Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. 53 Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels? 54 But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?"*

RANSOM: Jesus came expressly to give His life on the cross. He is God's Lamb, the perfect atoning sacrifice for our sins. In ***John 1:29, John the Baptist sees Jesus and exclaims, "Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."*** Jesus said of himself in ***Matthew 20:26-28 "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first must be your slave- 28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to GIVE HIS LIFE AS A RANSOM FOR MANY."***

BLOODBATH: Six hundred years after Jesus, Muhammad came on the scene and turned Arabia and surrounding nations into a bloodbath. He tortured and killed men and took their beautiful wives, even little girls, to be one of his many wives. He taught that women are created for men's pleasure and that husbands have the right to beat their wives. He forced thousands of people to join Islam or be put to death. And the list goes on and on to this very day with his followers who are killing, kidnapping and raping all over the world.

CONTRAST: When you compare Jesus to Muhammad...who do you want to believe in and imitate? Jesus was kind, even to his enemies. He said, "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." Even while the Roman soldiers were done torturing him, mocking him and then nailing him to the cross, Jesus said, "***Father, forgive them, they don't know what they are doing?***" He gave his life for the sins of the whole world. That is someone worth believing in.

## II. FALSE SHEPHERDS DON'T CARE FOR THE SHEEP

***John 10:12-13 The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. 13 The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep.***

HARMFUL: Not everybody who comes in the Name of God is a caring shepherd. Not even everybody who comes in the Name of Christ is a trustworthy overseer. The famous International House of Prayer in Missouri just folded and closed its doors because of the sexual misconduct of its founder and leader. Pastors, priests, teachers of Christianity as well as all sorts of religions have hurt and abused people and caused pain, heartache, and deep wounds.

***In Matthew 7:15 Jesus said, "Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves"***

FALSE: Peter gives us a warning about how the devil would try to destroy the church with bad leaders, ***1 Peter 2:1-3 But there were also false prophets among the people, just as there will be false teachers among you. They will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the sovereign Lord who bought them-bringing swift destruction on themselves. 2 Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute. 3 In their greed these teachers will exploit you with stories they have made up. Their condemnation has long been hanging over them, and their destruction has not been sleeping.***

GOOD EXAMPLE: A good shepherd will be like Jesus and love the people. I remember how much Pastor Galland loved our congregation. He would drive all the way from Shakopee to be here as often as he could. He repeatedly told me how much he loved you all. And I know that is how he felt about every church he served. He was such a good example for me to emulate in so many ways.

## FALSE SHEPHERDS DON'T CARE FOR THE SHEEP.

Muhammad did not love people. He was an angry, bitter and violent man. Jesus taught us to love our brethren and even love our enemies. On Maundy Thursday we celebrate Christ's great MANDATE: ***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."**

WARS: In the Middle East, Israelis and Muslims are fighting, "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." There is a better way. That is why we pray for "the peace of Jerusalem." This means none other than the return of Jesus Christ to usher in His kingdom of peace. ***Isaiah 2:4 He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.***

FALSE SHEPHERDS DON'T CARE FOR THE SHEEP.

**III. JESUS WANTS ALL PEOPLE TO BECOME PART OF HIS FLOCK** ***John 10:14-18 "I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me- 15 just as the Father knows me and I know the Father-and I lay down my life for the sheep. 16 I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also. They too will listen to my voice, and there shall be one flock and one shepherd. 17 The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life-only to take it up again. 18 No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I received from my Father."***

PASSAGE: I find great comfort from this passage for many reasons:

- 14: Jesus knows His sheep and they know Him
- 15: Jesus lays down His life for His sheep
- 16: Jesus wants the Gentiles to be a part of His kingdom too...these are the other sheep, the non-Jews.
- 17: Jesus will also come back to life after He dies
- 18: Jesus went to the cross willingly

WORLD: Both Jew and Gentile are invited to be a part of the eternal family of God. We are given the mandate to bring the good news of salvation to the entire world, which has pretty much been done. Those who believe in Him are given everlasting life. We get to enjoy our Savior's hospitality in heaven forever. No one is threatened to turn to Jesus or be put to death. It is a choice we have.

RELATIONSHIP: This is such a contrast to Muhammad. Islam is a religion of anger. Jewish legalism is a religion of exclusion and self-preservation. Following Jesus is a RELATIONSHIP with the one who heals, forgives and loves even the vilest sinner. That is why John Newton, the wicked slave trader Jesus saved, penned those words, "*Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a WRETCH like me.*" That is why one of the last words that a believer sings on their death bed, I have seen it so many times, is this: "*Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me, the Bible tells me so.*" The last words that so many Christians whisper before they slip into eternity are these, "***For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son. That whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.***"

EXECUTIONER: Why choose Jesus over Muhammad? The Muslim executioner who beheaded Christians put it this way. "I saw the peace of these Christians as I cut their heads off and decided that I wanted to be able to die in peace too."

POEM: This reading really puts well the reason I am a follower of Christ: It is called, "***The Greatest Man in History... Jesus;***" ***Had no servants, yet they called Him Master. Had no degree, yet they called Him Teacher. Had no medicines, yet they called Him Healer. He had no army, yet kings feared Him. He won no military battles, yet He conquered the world. He did not live in a castle, yet they called Him Lord, He ruled no nations, yet they called Him King, He committed no crime, yet they crucified Him. He was buried in a tomb, yet He lives today.*** (Lyle C Rollings III, 2008).

*Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

**HYMN #531 “Jesus Loves Even Me”**

**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**

**CLOSING SONG: Chosen by Carol.**

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson