

MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; November 17, 2024
25th Sunday after Pentecost; Singers: Fugleberg

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 16

PASTOR: LORD, you have assigned me my portion and my cup;

ALL: You have made my lot secure.

PASTOR: The boundary lines have fallen for me in pleasant places;

ALL: Surely I have a delightful inheritance.

PASTOR: I will praise the LORD, who counsels me;

ALL: Even at night my heart instructs me.

PASTOR: I have set the LORD always before me.

ALL: Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken.

HYMN #292 “The Church’s One Foundation”

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: Steve Karban

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Daniel 12:1-3 "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people-everyone whose name is found written in the book-will be delivered. 2 Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. 3 Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.*

EPISTLE LESSON: *Hebrews 10:11-25 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. 12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God. 13 Since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool, 14 because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. 15 The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 16 "This is the covenant I will make with them after that time, says the Lord. I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds." 17 Then he adds: "Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more." 18 And where these have been forgiven, there is no longer any sacrifice for sin. 19 Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, 22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. 23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching.*

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 SONGS: 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by CAROL

SERMON: "PAINFUL AND GAINFUL TRANSITIONS"

Mark 13:1-13 *Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

CONSTANT: One of the constant states of life is that we are always in a state of transition. Transitions can be painful or gainful and sometimes both painful and gainful.

- The news reminds us of the major transition going on in Washington D.C. right now.
- I am one of the youngest of the baby boomers and my generation has almost completely transitioned from work to retirement over the past ten years.
- Some people are in the process of transitioning out of this temporary life into eternity.
- Perhaps you are in a transition...maybe toddlers becoming school age...maybe kids leaving the nest, maybe single to married or married to single.

PERSPECTIVE: Let's look at this text from Mark 13, not so much as a text about the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the return of Christ at the end of the age, but let's look at it from the perspective of "PAINFUL AND GAINFUL TRANSITIONS" starting in Mark 13, verse 1.

I. THE ANNOUNCEMENT: SHOCKING NEWS

Mark 13:1-4 *As he was leaving the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher! What massive stones! What magnificent buildings!" 2 "Do you see all these great buildings?" replied Jesus. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down." 3 As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked him privately, 4 "Tell*

us, when will these things happen? And what will be the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled?"

BEGIN: Transitions often begin with shocking news like "You're fired" or "You're hired." Or "We are going to have a baby" or "It looks like we can't have a baby." The news of transitions are shocking.

DEMOLISHED: The disciples had this idea that the temple in Jerusalem was so big and strong that it would last forever. They pointed out to Jesus that the construction was like a fortress. Jesus gives them the shocking news that it was going to be destroyed and that not one stone they pointed to would remain standing. In less than 30 years it would be demolished along with the entire city of Jerusalem.

FULFILLMENT: This announcement appears to be addressing both the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and the events leading up to the return of Christ at the end of the age. Both of those events are major transitions. Seventy AD was a transition for the Jews from having a country to being scattered all over the earth. The end of the age will be a transition for all of us from this life as we know it into the eternal reign of Christ and the elimination of all evil, forever.

ASCENSION: It is interesting that Mark points out the location of these discussion as starting in Jerusalem by the temple and then concluding at the Mount of Olives from which the entire temple complex could be easily be seen in all its majesty. The Mount of Olives is the location where Jesus ascended into heaven.

Luke 24:50-52 *When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany (the Mount of Olives), he lifted up his hands and blessed them. 51 While he was blessing them, he left them and was taken up into heaven.*

RETURN: The Mount of Olives is where Jesus will "touch down" when he returns in the clouds one day.

Zechariah 14:4-5 *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.

PLAN: This reminds me that no matter how shocking the news of the transitions that are ahead, God has a plan and will bring His good purposes to pass. I like to quote the poem, *“His purposes will ripen fast, unfolding with each hour, The bud may have a bitter taste, but sweet will be the flower.”*

QUESTIONS: The disciples have two very important questions about this shocking news. 1) When will this happen; 2) What is the sign that it will be fulfilled. This brings us to the second point of PAINFUL AND GAINFUL TRANSITIONS:

II. THE TIMING: AT ANY MOMENT

Mark 13:5-8 Jesus said to them: "Watch out that no one deceives you. 6 Many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am he,' and will deceive many. 7 When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. 8 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various places, and famines. These are the beginning of birth pains.

VAGUE: Jesus leaves the coming of His return in a sort of vague mystery. He seems to intermingle the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD and his return at the end of the age. He also keeps the signs vague enough that the only conclusion the disciples of all ages can come to is this: “It could be at any time.” People have tried for 2,000 years to merge the Bible with the newspaper headlines and come up with predictions of when Christ would return and they have often been incorrect. Jesus does this on purpose.

TREE: Jesus wants us to be anticipating His imminent return, in other words, it could be at any moment. But He wants us to do it in such a way that we keep things moving forward as if it won't be for a long time. That is where the famous Martin Luther quote comes from about someone asking Luther what He would do if he knew Jesus was coming back tomorrow and He replied, “I would plant a tree today.” Luther never wanted our expectation of the return of Christ to get in the way of living for the future.

CARPE: We had an interesting speaker at the Free Lutheran Bible College and Seminary Gala last Thursday evening. He quoted the pre-Christian writer named Homer who said “Carpe Diem...” or “Seize the day because you CAN'T trust tomorrow.” But the speaker changed the quote from a pagan to a Christian perspective about God's sovereign grasp of the future and he told us to “Seize the day because you CAN trust tomorrow.”

OPINIONATED: I have many friends who love the Word of God and come to different conclusions about prophetic passages. Some of them are so strongly opinionated that they say that those who disagree with them are false teachers. I like to quote songs because they summarize how I feel about things. This song tells how I feel about the signs and timing and content of the return of Christ: *“Many things about tomorrow, I don't seem to understand. But I know who holds tomorrow, And I know who holds my hand.”*

READY: To me, these words of Jesus are not so much clues as to WHEN He will return as they are signs to BE READY. That is exactly how Jesus himself makes the conclusion about these things in ***Matthew 24:42-44 "Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. 43 But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. 44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.***

I clearly remember the day I got my “smoker's cancer” diagnosis in September of 2007. It was SHOCKING AND UNEXPECTED. Jesus is talking about PAINFUL AND GAINFUL TRANSITIONS. The announcement is SHOCKING. The timing is at ANY MOMENT. And finally...

III. THE PROCESS: PAINFUL AND GLORIOUS

Mark 13:9-13 "You must be on your guard. You will be handed over to the local councils and flogged in the synagogues. On account of me you will stand before governors and kings as witnesses to them. 10 And the gospel must first be preached to all nations. 11 Whenever you are arrested and brought to trial, do not worry beforehand about what to

say. Just say whatever is given you at the time, for it is not you speaking, but the Holy Spirit. 12 "Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 13 All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved.

PAINFUL: The end result of a transition can be GAINFUL, but the process can be PAINFUL. It was terrible to move from Wisconsin to Ohio. I had to move due to my cancer reacting to mold in the majestic old church building we had. Our church was growing, music was excellent, we had a brass choir, youth ministry and in-depth Bible classes. Mineral Point is a scenic tourist town that looks like it is right out of Wales with lovely bike trails and summer rodeos. Our home was a historic two-story home with wood burning fireplaces. Our children loved the school and participated in academics, music and sports. The congregation had almost doubled in size in two years. But the doctor ordered us to leave. It was very hard to leave our dear friends there. TRANSITIONS ARE OFTEN PAINFUL.

GAINFUL: We had eight wonderful years serving St. John's in Newark, Ohio. All three of our children graduated from the highly respected Lakewood High School of Hebron, Ohio. Our son met his wife and now lives and works in Ohio. We lived in an amazing home with a swimming pool. The church was historic, the congregation was extremely friendly, we had a youth ministry and gymnasium. I have lifetime friends from Ohio. TRANSITIONS ARE ALSO GAINFUL.

RETURN: The return of Jesus to earth one day will be very GAINFUL. The Bible tells us that it will be something akin to the restoration of the garden of Eden and even much better than that when the full consummation comes and the new heaven and the new earth appear.

TERRIFYING: But Jesus warns us here that the transition to His return will be marked by a bitter opposition by those who do not love God or love righteousness

TEXT: Notice what happens before Christ comes with judgement:

- **VERSE 9:** True believers will be dragged into court and accused before judges. Can you believe we are now in a

generation that arrests people who are thinking prayers in their heads and throws them into jail? It is true.

- **VERSE 10:** This end time will be marked by the gospel being preached to every nation. I think we can quite certainly say that EVERY NATION ON EARTH has had the opportunity to hear the gospel. Nothing stands in the way of the return of Christ from that point of view in my opinion.
- **VERSE 11:** The Holy Spirit will also be working strongly in the lives of arrested believers, giving the words to say to witness before the judges. Remember what the judge, King Agrippa said when Paul was pleading his case before Him and presented the gospel to the judge: *Acts 26:28 Then Agrippa said to Paul, "Do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian?"*
- **VERSE 12:** Family members will turn you over to the government authorities if you don't follow their ungodly demands. This happened in Nazi Germany and it happens in Communist countries and it happened in the US and Canada during COVID. It is not unusual for a significant part of the population to become government spies and informants.
- **VERSE 13:** When a culture gives themselves over to sin, one thing that results is they hate people who are righteous. Jesus reminds His followers that if you stand firm to the end, you will be saved. The persecution is only for a short time in comparison to the blessing that God will give to those who suffer for righteousness. God will more than make it up to those who suffer for Him.

THE PROCESS IS PAINFUL BUT THE OUTCOME IS GAINFUL. Another song says, *"It will be worth it all, when we see Jesus. Life's trials will seem so small, when we see Christ. One glimpse of His dear face, all darkness will erase. So bravely run the race, 'til we see Christ."*

PERSECUTION: Persecution of Christians all over the earth is skyrocketing. More people have died for Christ in the past 100 years than in the previous 1,900 years. The persecutors die and go to fiery punishment and the martyrs die and go to their reward. We need to do two things:

- 1) Pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ all over the world.

- 2) Prepare ourselves for a time when we might be persecuted for righteousness sake. It is already happening.

FOCUS: KEEP YOUR EYES ON JESUS. They can only take away temporary wealth and they can only kill believers. But they can't take away our treasures in heaven and our eternal life with God forever.

CALL: A big transition is coming from this age to the return of Jesus and His Kingdom of Heaven. Jesus is returning for a spotless bride, His believing church. If you are not a part of the family of God, won't you invite Christ to forgive your sins and live in your heart? The Romans 10:13 says, "*Whoever calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved.*"

JESUS: It was PAINFUL for Jesus to take our sins upon Himself when He was nailed to the cross but he did it for the GAIN of having us become God's children. No matter what painful transition you are currently facing, the Word of God reminds us here that it will be good in the long run and well worth it if we keep the faith and don't give in to evil. *Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

HYMN #456 "Stand Up, Stand Up for Jesus"

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: Picked by Carol

POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson