

**SERVICE INFORMATION: DECEMBER 15, 2024  
THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT  
SUNDAY SERVICE & SERMON  
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson (Fuglebergs sing)

**CALL TO WORSHIP: Psalm 85**

**PASTOR:** I will listen to what God the LORD will say; he promises peace to his people, his saints—

**ALL:** But let them not return to folly.

**PASTOR:** Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,

**ALL:** That his glory may dwell in our land.

**PASTOR:** Love and faithfulness meet together;

**ALL:** Righteousness and peace kiss each other.

**PASTOR:** Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,

**ALL:** And righteousness looks down from heaven.

**PASTOR:** The LORD will indeed give what is good,

**ALL:** And our land will yield its harvest.

**PASTOR:** Righteousness goes before him

**ALL:** And prepares the way for his steps.

**HYMN #24 “It Came upon the Midnight Clear”**

**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: THE 3<sup>RD</sup> ADVENT CANDLE  
READING**

**READER: Joel Carrizales**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON:** *Zephaniah 3:14-20 Sing, O Daughter of Zion; shout aloud, O Israel! Be glad and rejoice with all your heart, O Daughter of Jerusalem! 15 The LORD has taken away your punishment, he has turned back your enemy. The LORD, the King of Israel, is with you; never again will you fear any harm. 16 On that day they will say to Jerusalem, "Do not fear, O Zion; do not let your hands hang limp. 17 The LORD your God is with you, he is mighty to save. He will take great delight in you, he will quiet you with his love, he will rejoice over you with singing." 18 "The sorrows for the appointed feasts I will remove from you; they are a burden and a reproach to you. 19 At that time I will deal with all who oppressed you; I will rescue the lame and gather those who have been scattered. I will give them praise and honor in every land where they were put to shame. 20 At that time I will gather you; at that time I will bring you home. I will give you honor and praise among all the peoples of the earth when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes," says the LORD.*

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *Philippians 4:4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

**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 AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING**

**PRAISE SONGS:** songs chosen by Carol

**SERMON TITLE: “THE PROPHESED KING”**

**Luke 7:18-28; Pastor Tom Olson; December 15, 2024**

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

**FAVORITE:** One of my favorite subjects in the Bible is prophecy. God reveals the future to prophets and they write it down. All legitimate prophets have everything they write down come to pass perfectly.

- The prophets warned Israel that if they continued in sin and unbelief that God would send the Babylonians to take them into exile for 70 years. That is exactly what happened.
- When Esau and Jacob were born as twins, the prophecy was given that the older would serve the younger.
- God gave Joseph the vision that his family would one day bow down to him and it happened.

**CLIMAX:** The climax of prophecy is the prophecies about the Messiah. We can see now that there are two sets of prophecies.

- One is about his first coming, born in Bethlehem, the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world. Dozens of such prophecies came to pass perfectly in the life of Jesus.
- The others about his second coming at the end of the age. They will also come to pass perfectly.

**JOHN:** John the Baptist was confused toward the end of his life. It was the prophecies that brought him and his disciples comfort as the very difficult plan of redemption unfolded in all its horror and beauty.

**ASSURANCE:** There are times we also have doubts. The prophecies assure us that Jesus is the Messiah and that we can trust Him, even when life doesn't seem to make sense and things are going poorly for us.

## **I. JOHN LOST SIGHT OF THE PROPHECIES**

*Luke 7:18-20 John's disciples told him about all these things. Calling two of them, 19 he sent them to the Lord to ask, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" 20 When the men came to Jesus, they said, "John the Baptist sent us to you to ask, 'Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?'"*

**QUESTION:** As John the Baptist suffered in King Herod's prison, his disciples brought reports to him about what Jesus was doing. He was questioning whether or not Jesus was really the Messiah. I would too. If I was a prophet of God, suffering in prison, I would reason that God's Messiah would come and rescue me.

**ASSAD:** Now that the Syrian dictator, Assad, has been overthrown, many prisoners, including a few Americans, were released. It is estimated that Assad tortured and killed thousands

of his political or business rivals and enriched himself through extreme corruption. Syria is labeled by some scholars as the most corrupt nation on earth. I am sure that Americans and others, languishing, like John the Baptist, in Assad's prisons also wondered if their nation who did not save them really cared.

WONDERING: Many people who are suffering wonder if anyone cares. They also are tempted to forget the fulfilled prophecies and just focus on the pain in their life and lose faith in God and others. This is not uncommon. We, after all, are very human.

UNDERSTANDS: Jesus was not upset with John or his disciples when they came to him with their doubts. Jesus understands our humanness and limited perspective.

*Ps 103:13-14 "As a father has compassion on his children, so the LORD has compassion on those who fear him; 14 for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust."*

Another Scripture also describes this well.

*Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are-yet was without sin.*

LOSING SIGHT OF THE PROPHECIES is very real and common in our human condition. Jesus called John, "**The greatest man born of women,**" and still he had his doubts when life got tough. As you wrestle with doubts, remember you are in good company.

## II. JESUS FULFILLED THE PROPHECIES

*Luke 7:21-23 At that very time Jesus cured many who had diseases, sicknesses and evil spirits, and gave sight to many who were blind. 22 So he replied to the messengers, "Go back and report to John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf*

*hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. 23 Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me."*

FULFILLMENT: Everything Jesus told them to tell John was a fulfillment of what the Old Testament prophets said the Messiah would do. John knew those prophecies well.

We need to review the prophecies time and again that Jesus fulfilled above and beyond anything that could be humanly organized. We went over OLD TESTAMENT PROPHECIES in OK Bible study on December 5...

- Born of a virgin.
- Born in Bethlehem.
- Visited by the Magi from the East with their gifts
- The slaughter of the other babies.
- Fled to Egypt.
- A Nazarene, raised in Nazareth.
- And the list goes on and on...

POSTSCRIPT: Jesus adds on very important word of explanation in verse 23: "**Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me.**" I think He is saying this, "*I know I don't meet your expectations of what the Messiah should be like but I do fulfill the prophecies. You will be blessed if you trust me and the prophecies, not your expectations.*"

TUNNEL: Or as someone else put it: "*When a train enters a dark tunnel you don't throw away your ticket and get off the train. You simply trust the engineer, stay in your seat and believe there will be light at the end of the dark tunnel.*"

BACKSLIDE: We backslide in our faith if we lose sight of these prophecies and focus on our problems, as real as they are.

REMEMBER: I like the line from C.S. Lewis's Book, "The Silver Chair" where the lion tells the girl to "**remember the signs.**" He

tells her to repeat them and review them over and over so that when they are needed, they will be remembered. That is why we celebrate Christmas and Easter...to remember. That is why we have communion every month... "do this in remembrance of me" Jesus said. We don't want to forget.

**JESUS FULFILLS THE PROPHECIES.** That is the simple message that was sent back to John on death row. Much of my ministry is helping people hang on through the painful experiences of life and the sorrow of growing old and weak. I have said thousands of times, "The best is yet to come." And the reason for that is because **JESUS FULFILLS THE PROPHECIES**, He reigns in heaven and is coming back soon to set things right on earth for all eternity. **JESUS IS THE PROPHECIED KING.** Finally...

### **III. DOUBT DOESN'T DETERMINE DESTINY**

*Luke 7:24-28 After John's messengers left, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 25 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear expensive clothes and indulge in luxury are in palaces. 26 But what did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 27 This is the one about whom it is written: "'I will send my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.' 28 I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he."*

**PRISON:** John is in prison, ready to be executed and he is having doubts about Jesus. Does Jesus rebuke John? No. Does Jesus talk down about John for his doubts? Absolutely not. Instead, He calls John two different things:

1. MORE THAN A PROPHET
2. THE GREATEST MAN EVER BORN

**HONEST:** This is where we need to see that **DOUBTS DON'T DETERMINE DESTINY.** John's honest revelation of his doubts even demonstrated his transparent and honest soul. He didn't pretend to have a faith that was not there. With John, what you see is who he was. I personally think his expression of doubt came from a heart of faith that needed assurance. He is like the man who told me, "I don't believe but I am trying." My response, "Your mind is saying 'I don't believe' but your spirit is saying 'I do believe.'"

**DEFEATED:** Many people think that their life doesn't count and their future is hopeless because of sins in their lives and in their past. I like being with sinners who know they are sinners. I would personally much rather hang around with rough neck construction workers that cuss and tell off color stories than squeaky clean-living hypocrites that would stab you in the back and throw you under the bus if it got them ahead. I have found in life that some very coarse characters can be trusted totally. On the other hand, I have had church leaders and seminary educated pastors do hurtful things to me that my foul mouthed friends would never dream of doing to anyone.

**CUSSING:** I have a good friend who does YouTube videos about machine shop work. When he gets frustrated, he sometimes swears at his machine or project. He did it on one of his videos once and religious people just pounced on him and told him he was going to hell. He probably would agree with their verdict because he is pretty critical of himself. But those people gave him the impression that he was not "good enough" for heaven.

**DISCUSSION:** He actually called me up to talk to me about it. Instead of condemning him for his rough language, I told him this, "If you could know some of my thoughts, it would make his cussing seem pretty tame." I told him, "My only hope of heaven is not in my behavior, but in that little baby born in a Bethlehem stable, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the whole world."

INTERESTING: Beloved, John the Baptist's value was not based on a time of doubt about Jesus. His preaching and baptizing was not negated because He had doubts. Jesus made that clear. Jesus said something very interesting, after calling John the greatest man ever born. Listen again to the end of verse 28, "***yet the one who is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.***"

INTERPRETATION: I will give you my interpretation of what Jesus was saying. I think He is saying that even though John was OUTWARDLY the greatest man ever born, anyone who trusts in God's grace for the forgiveness of sins, who believes in Jesus as Savior and Lord, is infinitely greater than John, no matter who they have been or what they have done. To be adopted as a child of God and made a joint heir with Christ is true greatness. Like one poet said, "***I'm a child of the King, a child of the King, With Jesus my Savior, I'm a child of the King.***"

PAUL: The Apostle Paul puts it this way, ***2 Corinthians 5:16-17***  
***16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view... 17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*** Next Sunday our Sunday School children will tell it to you much more eloquently than I can.

APPEAL: Dear friends, God loves you so much that He died for you. He knows intimately how sinful you may have been. He offers you full forgiveness and adoption into His family as a gift of grace. The proof is the same proof He gave the Shepherds about THE PROPHECIED KING. Here is the proof, "***...you will find a baby, wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.***"

*May the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

**HYMN #26 "What Child is This?"**

**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*

**HYMN #31 (vss 1&5) "Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne"**

**POSTLUDE:** Carol Gustafson