

MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; March 16, 2025
Sixth Sunday after Epiphany; Singers: Fuglebergs

PRELUDE: Carol Gustafson

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 4

PASTOR: Offer right sacrifices

ALL: And trust in the LORD.

PASTOR: Many are asking, "Who can show us any good?"

ALL: Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.

PASTOR: You have filled my heart with greater joy

ALL: Than when their grain and new wine abound.

PASTOR: I will lie down and sleep in peace,

ALL: For you alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.

HYMN #183 (vss 1,2&5) "All Creatures of Our God and King"

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: Dave Osthus

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Jeremiah 26:8-15 But as soon as Jeremiah finished telling all the people everything the LORD had commanded him to say, the priests, the prophets and all the people seized him and said, "You must die! 9 Why do you prophesy in the LORD's name that this house will be like Shiloh and this city will*

be desolate and deserted?" And all the people crowded around Jeremiah in the house of the LORD. 10 When the officials of Judah heard about these things, they went up from the royal palace to the house of the LORD and took their places at the entrance of the New Gate of the LORD's house. 11 Then the priests and the prophets said to the officials and all the people, "This man should be sentenced to death because he has prophesied against this city. You have heard it with your own ears!" 12 Then Jeremiah said to all the officials and all the people: "The LORD sent me to prophesy against this house and this city all the things you have heard. 13 Now reform your ways and your actions and obey the LORD your God. Then the LORD will relent and not bring the disaster he has pronounced against you. 14 As for me, I am in your hands; do with me whatever you think is good and right. 15 Be assured, however, that if you put me to death, you will bring the guilt of innocent blood on yourselves and on this city and on those who live in it, for in truth the LORD has sent me to you to speak all these words in your hearing."

EPISTLE LESSON: *Philippians 3:17-4:1 Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. 18 For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. 4:1 Therefore, my brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends!*

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

Worship Songs: Chosen by Carol

SERMON: “LIVING UNDER WICKED LEADERS” Luke 13:31-35, Pastor Tom Olson, 3/16/25 *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen*

HISTORY: There are times in history that people have to live under wicked leaders, cruel mass murderers. I sat in Perkins in Apple Valley one day listening to a pastor from Siberia talk about what Stalin did to his grandparent’s generation in Russia. It was horrible. I can’t even say it from this pulpit.

JESUS: Jesus lived at a time of wicked leaders. Roman Caesars and King Herod were so wicked one can’t describe it in public.

Our sermon today is LIVING UNDER WICKED LEADERS. For you, it might be a cruel boss or someone in your life with a toxic tongue. Jesus teaches us how to best respond to wicked leaders in Luke 13...

I. KNOW GOD’S MISSION: BE BOLD AND FEARLESS

Luke 13:31-33 At that time some Pharisees came to Jesus and said to him, "Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you." 32 He replied, "Go tell that fox, 'I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.' 33 In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day-for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!"

WEAK: Wicked leaders are weak people in positions of power. As long as no one stands up to them, they continue to do harm. It takes brave people to stand up to tyrants. To be brave you have to know what your mission is.

MISSION: Jesus knew who he was and what his mission was. He knew He was the Son of God. He knew that He had to go to Jerusalem and died for the sins of the world. *Luke 9:22 And he said, "The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life."*

CONTEXT: If you read this in context, you will see that the Pharisees had tried every trick in their books to threaten and trip up Jesus. In a desperate attempt to get rid of Jesus they come and try to frighten him by saying, “King Herod wants to kill you.”

UNFAZED: Jesus was so sure of His mission that he was not deterred. He knew that he had to complete his work of preaching, healing, deliverance and the cross. If we know our mission, we can be strong. I love Jesus’ fearless answer: *“Go tell that fox I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow...”*

JORDAN: Jordan Peterson has become one of the most famous speakers in the world today. He was a psychology professor at Harvard and later in Toronto. When at the University of Toronto, he refused to call biological males “she” and biological females

“he.” The Canadian officials were irate. They tried to take away his license to practice as a clinician. They threatened to make him to undergo mental reprogramming. Friends told him to just go along with it and save his career.

RESPONSES: I love some of his responses. Here is one: *“When you have something to say, silence is a lie.”*

TRUDEAU: Prime Minister Trudeau’s government tried to destroy Peterson. He stood firm. Today, Trudeau has resigned in disgrace and Peterson is one of the most sought-after lecturers in the world.

CIA: Here is another example of knowing your mission and being bold. Several years ago, CIA workers were told they could no longer say “Merry Christmas.” Operative, Kevin Shipp, knew that his oath was to protect and defend our constitution which insured freedom of speech. When he left for his holiday break he said to his fellow CIA workers, “Merry Christmas.” The CIA leaders went berserk but had to back down because they were going against the American Constitution and freedom of speech. Kevin Shipp KNEW HIS MISSION, was fearless and prevailed. He single-handedly restored freedom of speech to that CIA office.

PROPHETS: Old Testament Prophets knew their mission and were bold. Nathan the prophet stood up to adulterous King David and pointed the finger at his sin and said, “Thou art the man.” (2 Samuel 12:7) King David repented. Jeremiah the prophet did the same and was thrown into a cistern, despised by wicked rulers but highly esteemed by God to this day.

BABIES: My whole ministry I have stood up for the lives of the unborn babies. I led the dedication of the Alpha Women’s Center new home base last Friday. When the doctor told us to consider aborting our firstborn son, Josiah, I didn’t know what to say. God gave me the courage to look the doctor in the eye and say, “We don’t believe in killing babies.” The doctor was silent. I hope he was convicted in his soul.

APPLICATION: When you know God’s mission for your life, and when you live for truth, no number of threats from weak men in positions of power can control you. Jesus knew his mission and the most powerful people in the world did not stop Him with their threats. We also need to be bold and speak the truth. IS THERE A WICKED PERSON YOU NEED TO STAND UP TO? KNOW GOD’S MISSION: BE BOLD AND FEARLESS.

The second thing we learn about LIVING UNDER WICKED LEADERS is...

II. KNOW JESUS’ HEART: HAVE COMPASSION UPON THE PEOPLE

Luke 13:34 "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

COMPASSION: King Herod and the religious leaders wanted to kill Jesus. It would be very easy for Jesus to be angry and vengeful. Jesus is good, Jesus is God, He is bigger than that. Jesus heads into Jerusalem and looks at the city that will condemn him and kill him. How does he respond? He speaks with compassion. Jesus has compassion on the people. Listen to his voice: ***O Jerusalem, O Jerusalem...***

JONAH: It reminds me of the book of Jonah. Jonah the prophet was so angry at the evil city of Nineveh for their heinous crimes that he didn’t want them to repent. He wanted them to perish. But God had compassion on the children of that city. In Jonah 4:11 God says he is concerned about those little ones who don’t know their right hand from their left hand.

JERUSALEM: Jesus says here in Luke 13 that he wants to gather the children of Jerusalem under his arms like a hen protects her chicks with her wings.

EAGLE: I saw an amazing live video of an eagle's nest in Montana where a mother eagle protected her babies through 90 MPH winds in a blizzard. She covered them with her wings and hung on through the blizzard with all her might and kept them safe. When Jesus was nailed to the cross, he had compassion on the soldiers who put him there. He said, "*Father, forgive them for they know not what they are doing.*"

AMERICA: We need to feel compassion for the children. We need to get leaders who care about the future of the little ones, rather than selfishly stealing it from them through waste, fraud and corruption. That may mean we all need to live with less ourselves. Are we willing to live more simply now for the sake of the children?

PEOPLE: There may be bad leaders in many nations but that doesn't mean the people are bad. Most people want the same thing you and I want: peace, safety, food and hope for the future. Most people don't want wars. Most people in China, Russia, Ukraine and the middle east are nice people. They are victims of wicked leaders.

WE MUST RETAIN OUR COMPASSION FOR PEOPLE, especially the next generations, as we cope with WICKED LEADERS.

III. KNOW BIBLICAL PROPHECY: THE GLORIOUS CONSUMATION FOLLOWS THE INITIAL DESTRUCTION

Luke 13:35 Look, your house is left to you desolate. I tell you, you will not see me again until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

DESOLATE: This verse has a powerful contrast. He notes that the "HOUSE IS LEFT DESOLATE." Jerusalem would soon be destroyed by the Romans.

HEARTBREAKING: The facts about the DESOLATIONS of our modern age break my heart. My grandfathers saw horrors in WW 1, my wounded grandfather limped all his life. My dad saw horrors in WW 2 and never fully recovered. We worked with Jack Graham called "Trapper Jack" in Alaska. His mental state was severely ruined in Viet Nam. The war in Ukraine is devastating. 120,000 Russian soldiers are dead and 1.2 million Ukrainian soldiers are dead. Seventy African Christians were recently attacked while in church and had their heads cut off by Islamic terrorists. Jesus uses the word DESOLATE to describe it here.

MARTYRS: In Revelation 6:9, the martyred souls are under heaven's altar and they cry out "How long Lord will you wait?" We join them and cry, "How long Jesus until you come back and make it right?"

ABOLISHED: If we dwell on the state of this fallen world, our hearts are devastated. Jesus reminds us here that there will one day be A GLORIOUS CONSUMATION. The dark era of Satan's reign over the earth will end and the King of Kings will return to set things right. The reign of tyrants will end. Revelation 21 describes it: Wars will cease. Pain will be gone. Death will be abolished.

MARANATHA: We will see Jesus in that day. We will be so happy and shout BLESSED IS HE WHO COMES IN THE NAME OF THE LORD. Wicked King Herod's day ended. A new day is coming for the whole earth. Isaiah 35 prophesies it:

Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; 4 say to those with fearful hearts, "Be strong, do not fear; your God will come.....Water will gush forth in the wilderness and

streams in the desert. 7 The burning sand will become a pool, the thirsty ground bubbling springs....8 And a highway will be there; it will be called the Way of Holiness...9 No lion will be there, nor will any ferocious beast get up on it; they will not be found there. But only the redeemed will walk there, 10 and the ransomed of the LORD will return. They will enter Zion with singing; EVERLASTING joy will crown their heads. Gladness and joy will overtake them, and sorrow and sighing will flee away.

PROPHECY: End-time prophecy is one of my favorite Bible topics because it reminds me that our Savior is returning to bring everlasting joy. To live VICTORIOUSLY in this fallen world of faulty leaders we need to KNOW CHRIST'S MISSION, KNOW GOD'S COMPASSION AND KNOW BIBLICAL PROPHECY. If God has spoken to you today, the altar is open for prayer. *Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

HYMN #554 "In Times like These"

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 WHO 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