

**April 13, 2025; 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”

Prayer

Children’s Message: *Hosanna! Lord save us...from bad leaders.
Jesus saved us from our sins.*

READER: Pastor Tom

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Deuteronomy 32:36-40 The LORD will judge his people and have compassion on his servants when he sees their strength is gone and no one is left, slave or free. 37 He will say: "Now where are their gods, the rock they took refuge in, 38 the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up to help you! Let them give you shelter! 39 "See now that I myself am He! There is no god besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of my hand. 40 I lift my hand to heaven and declare: As surely as I live forever,*

GOSPEL LESSON: *John 12:12-19 The next day the great crowd that had come for the Feast heard that Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem. 13 They took palm branches and went out to meet him, shouting,*

"Hosanna!"

"Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!"

"Blessed is the King of Israel!"

14 Jesus found a young donkey and sat upon it, as it is written,

*15 "Do not be afraid, O Daughter of Zion;
see, your king is coming,
seated on a donkey's colt."*

*16 At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that they had done these things to him. 17 Now the crowd that was with him when he called Lazarus from the tomb and raised him from the dead continued to spread the word. 18 Many people, because they had heard that he had given this miraculous sign, went out to meet him. 19 So the Pharisees said to one another, "See, this is getting us nowhere. Look how the whole world has gone after him!"
NIV*

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.*

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

Praise and Worship: *Hannah & Praise Team*

SERMON TITLE: “PEACE IN DISTRESS” Psalm 31:9-16;
Pastor Tom Olson; April 13, 2025 *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
Amen*

KINGDOM: King Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey. Where there is a King, there is a kingdom. We pray THY KINGDOM COME. “What does this mean?” You know the words from the catechism: *“The kingdom of God comes indeed of itself, without our prayer; but we pray in this petition that it may also come to us.”* “How is this done?” *“When our heavenly Father gives us His Holy Spirit, so that by His grace we believe His holy Word, and live a godly life here on earth, and in heaven forever.”*

FUTURE: God’s kingdom comes to us personally when we believe His Word and live a godly life. One day King Jesus will return: wars will cease, nations will live in peace, the animal kingdom will be in harmony and joy will fill the earth.

LONGING: It is a time that I am longing for. War-torn lands long for it. Persecuted Christians pray for it. Terminally ill people anticipate Christ’s return with gladness.

WITHIN: If Jesus lives in your heart, the KINGDOM OF GOD is within you and is manifested by PEACE IN DISTRESS. This is beautifully described in Psalm 31. Psalm 31 is a testimony of the life of King David, it is a prophecy of the passion of Christ and it is a description of the life of believers in this world. PEACE IN DISTRESS...number 1:

I. DISTRESS COMES IN THE FORM OF PHYSICAL PAIN AND WEAKNESS

PSALM 31:9-10 Be merciful to me, O LORD, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and my body with grief. 10 My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction, and my bones grow weak.

PAIN: We all need to find the peace of God to help us through times of physical pain and weakness. Few people get through life

without physical pain. Most everyone I know struggles with physical pain or emotional trials.

DESCRIPTION: Here the Psalmist talks about his weakness from sorrow and grief. He says his struggles cause him to groan. He is weak from the affliction. His bones ache with pain.

US: I look out over our church and see arthritis, cancer, muscular dystrophy, depression, anxiety, difficulty walking, forgetfulness, serious digestion problems, crushing loneliness and so much more. I can’t imagine being the pastor of a larger church because of the overwhelming concerns we have in our small church. At Cloquet we had five and sometimes six lay and ordained pastors to handle all the hospital, nursing home and house visitation needs in a church of about 400 members.

PURPOSE: For some people, pain takes them, as Dave Fischer puts it, “down the wrong fork in the road” to dark places. Pain is meant to take us to the mercy seat of God in prayer. Pain forges in us a faith that clings to hope for a better tomorrow here on earth or in heaven.

GOOD: Most of us can look back at times of physical pain and say with sincerity with the Psalmist ***“it was good that I was afflicted”*** (Psalm 119:71). I can honestly say, “It was good that I had cancer” but I can also say, “I hope I never get it again.”

DICTIONARY: I find it interesting that the dictionary gives a second definition of “distress” that adds some meaning to our suffering. That meaning number two is this: ***give (furniture, leather, or clothing) simulated marks of age and wear.*** Some very high quality and expensive leather jackets are what you call “industrially distressed.” They get “beat up” by machines. It makes them softer, more pliable, more comfortable and at present even stylish in a trendy way.

APPLICATION: Our sickness and pain and sorrow does that for us too. It can make us softer, more comfortable, humble, empathetic and as we shed pride and arrogance from our face, we even start to look more appealing after being distressed. We lose what would be called a brazen face and get a look of compassion and empathy and kindness when we go through the “school of pain.”

Secondly...

II. DISTRESS COMES IN THE FORM OF DIFFICULT PEOPLE

PSALM 31:11-13 Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors; I am a dread to my friends-- those who see me on the street flee from me. 12 I am forgotten by them as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery. 13 For I hear the slander of many; there is terror on every side; they conspire against me and plot to take my life.

HARDER: To me, distress from people who hurt us deeply is much harder than even physical pain and terminal illness. Some of you have experienced people who turn against you. It could be because of your faith, or because of your political convictions, or because your hate sin and they love it. Sometimes it is because of a serious mistake you made in life that they can't let go of no matter how much you plead for their forgiveness. People can be very hurtful.

DAVID: The Psalmist says that people avoid him in the street, they treat him as though he was dead, they slander him and tell lies to make him look worse, they even plot to hurt him and even kill him. RESTRAINING: Anyone who has had to put a restraining order on someone knows what it is like to live with the daily verbal attacks in the community and the fear of physical violence. I have seen this when a woman breaks up with a difficult boyfriend and he viciously retaliates. I have seen this when someone spread lies about you and try to get your friends to turn against you. The pain

people can afflict on one another is terrible. The horrors of war and persecution all over the world cannot be described. I can imagine Jesus praying this very Psalm in the garden of Gethsemane.

How can we cope with such attacks? Where can we find peace and rest? The Psalmist goes on to point out that the pain of this world can be eased with this simple, yet challenging step. Number 3...

III. PEACE COMES FROM PUTTING YOUR TRUST IN THE LORD

PSALM 31:14-16 But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, "You are my God." 15 My times are in your hands; deliver me from my enemies and from those who pursue me. 16 Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

SOLUTION: These verses take us right back to our original statement we are considering today: THY KINGDOM COME. Remember what Luther tells the children in the Catechism... “*the kingdom comes when we believe God's Word and live godly lives...*” The best way to deal with the very real and painful distress in our lives is to believe God's Word and live a godly life. When we do that there is peace in the storms of life.

WITNESSED: I have seen this demonstrated in many lives. I have seen people with serious pain, loss, abusive people attacking them, deep distress...I have seen them live lives of deep peace and even joy. They believe the promises of God. They are heavenly minded, they expect God's perfect will to ultimately prevail, they are filled with the Holy Spirit, their eyes are fixed on Christ...they have the Kingdom of God within them, their hope is in the Lord, they walk by faith and not by sight.

BONHOEFFER: There recently was a movie produced about Dietrich Bonhoeffer, the German pastor who was killed for his

opposition to Hitler in WW 2. Bonhoeffer was a very brave and outspoken pastor but he didn't have inner peace. During the last days in prison before his execution he found a deep peace in his soul when he lost everything except his faith in Christ Jesus.

QUESTIONS: Are you under distress today? Is the devil's kingdom waging war against your body and soul and life? Do you need to find peace in the storms of life? Go to the Word of God, find the promises of God and stand on them by faith.

WORD: Dave Fischer gave an excellent testimony last Wednesday night about how he was being drawn down a dark path in his trials with his back pain this past year. He shared how immersing himself in the Word of God was a key in fighting off the anger, bitterness and despair that was overcoming him.

BATTLE: The enemy is out to destroy the good work of God in and through us. We need the King of Kings, Jesus to help us. We need to learn how to walk by faith and trust the Lord.

ELLIOT: Elizabeth Elliot talks about riding in the car with her two-year-old grandson. His dad decided to go through the car wash. That is scary for an adult the first time, much less the two-year-old. When they entered the dark tunnel, the little boy was frightened. He looked over at his dad and calmed down. The washer shot water at them and he was startled but again he looked over at his dad and settled down. The big brushed came banging against the car and the little boy was startled but he looked over at his dad and didn't cry. Then it was over and they drove out into the sunlight and the little boy smiled. When they were in the frightening car wash, he was OK as long as he kept His eyes on his father.

TRUST: One day, in heaven, we will be free from "this present darkness." We will be walking in the light of God. We will be surrounded by love and joy and peace. But right now, we are in the scary car wash of life. The distress on us is high at times. The

need to trust the Lord and not be distracted by the battle is absolutely key.

SONG: One old song I learned as a child puts it this way: "*Come every soul by sin oppressed, there's mercy with the Lord. And He will surely give you rest, by trusting in His Word. Only trust Him, only trust Him, only trust Him now. He will save you, He will save you, He will save you now.*"

You might be so exhausted by distress today that all you can say is to quote Peter, drowning in the angry waves: "Lord Jesus save me." And He will. "All who call upon the Name of the Lord will be saved. When Jesus comes, His Kingdom comes, wars cease and peace reigns.

Please pray with me: *Jesus, life can be frightening in this dark world. Please help me to keep my eyes on you and have the peace of God that surpasses all human comprehension that guards our hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

HYMN #84 "Hallelujah, What a Savior!"

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