

April 6, 2025, 5th Sunday in Lent

Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Jan Ellingson (Fuglebergs)

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 126

PASTOR: Those who sow in tears

ALL: Will reap with songs of joy.

PASTOR: He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow,

ALL: Will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him.

HYMN #226 “Love Divine, All Love Excelling”

Free Lutheran Bible College Women’s Ensemble

CHILDREN’S SERMON:

Reader: Rose Stenberg

EPISTLE LESSON: *2 Corinthians 5:21-6:10* God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. 6:1 As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. 2 For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I helped you." I tell you, now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation. 3 We put no stumbling block in anyone's path, so that our ministry will not be discredited. 4 Rather, as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships and distresses; 5 in beatings, imprisonments and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights and hunger; 6 in purity, understanding, patience and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love; 7 in truthful speech and in the power of God; with weapons of righteousness in the right hand and in the left; 8 through glory and dishonor, bad report and good report; genuine, yet regarded as impostors; 9 known, yet regarded as unknown; dying, and yet we live on; beaten, and yet not killed; 10 sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, and yet possessing everything.

READER: Here ends the reading of God’s Word.

CONGREGATION SINGS: God be praised, for His glad Tidings!

CONFESSION OF FAITH: *I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, And of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father, By whom all things were made; Who for us, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, And was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary, And was made man; And was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate, He suffered and was buried; And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures, And ascended into heaven, And is seated on the right hand of the Father, And He shall come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead; Whose kingdom shall have no end. And I believe in the Holy Spirit, The Lord and Giver of Life, Who proceeds from the Father and the Son, Who with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified, Who spoke by the Prophets. And I believe one holy Christian and apostolic Church, I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins. And I look for the Resurrection of the dead, And the Life of the world to come. Amen*

GLORIA PATRI: *Ambassador Hymnal p. 4 (please put on screen)* Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost; As it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen, Amen.

ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING
PRAISE SONGS PICKED BY JAN

SERMON TITLE: “STALKED” Luke 20:9-20; Pastor Tom Olson; April 6, 2025 *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

KOCH: I used to be the choir director at Golden Valley (Minnesota) Lutheran Church. We had a beloved, elderly pastor named Roland Koch. He was about as kind and gracious a human being as you could ever meet. At one point in his ministry, he was “stalked,” by a man who was trying to find a fault in him.

TAPE: This man would accuse him of false teaching and try to get people to turn against him. He basically misquoted something the pastor said in a sermon. Pastor Koch taught the Word of God accurately. He started recording his sermons with a little tape recorder in the pulpit and when he was accused, he offered to play the tape and have the man point out what he said that was false. After the sermons were taped the man left the church and quit stalking Pastor Koch.

QUESTION: Have you ever had someone in your life that “stalked” you in some way or another? It is a stressful and at times terrifying experience. Jesus was continually stalked by religious leaders who were trying to find some fault in what he said. They wanted to trip Him up so they could have an excuse to have Him put to death. Let’s look at Luke 20, beginning at verse 9 under the theme, “Stalked.” First of all, Jesus was...

I. STALKED: BECAUSE HE EXPOSED CORRUPTION

Luke 20:9-16 He went on to tell the people this parable: "A man planted a vineyard, rented it to some farmers and went away for a long time. 10 At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants so they would give him some of the fruit of the vineyard. But the tenants beat him and sent him away empty-handed. 11 He sent another servant, but that one also they beat and treated shamefully and sent away empty-handed. 12 He sent still a third, and they wounded him and threw him out. 13 "Then the owner of the vineyard said, 'What shall I do? I will send my son, whom I love; perhaps they will respect him.' 14 "But when the tenants saw him, they talked the matter over. 'This is the heir,' they said. 'Let's kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.' 15 So they threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. "What then

will the owner of the vineyard do to them? 16 He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others." When the people heard this, they said, "May this never be!"

PROCESS: One of the toughest assignments you can get is to root out corruption. The reason is that corruption is perpetrated by evil and dangerous people. They worm their way into an organization and find ways to use fraud to enrich themselves. The longer it is left unchecked, the more powerful their network of confederates becomes.

ABUSE: The owner of the vineyard rented it out to tenants and they would not give the owner his share. When he sent representatives to collect the rent, they were abused and returned empty-handed. Finally, the owner’s son, the heir, was sent to speak with authority. But he was killed.

USA: I recently heard Elon Musk interviewed and he said that he was afraid that if he dug any deeper into government corruption that he would be assassinated. Sadly, we have allowed our American government to become extremely corrupt. So many politicians are involved that it is very hard to even investigate it.

CONFRONTATION: I remember when an area church had to investigate their pastor’s corruption in a previous church he served. It was a painful time for all of them. Exposing sin is painful, but the consequences of sweeping it under the rug are worse. Dr. Jordan Peterson put it this way: *...it’s easier in the moment to stay silent and avoid conflict. But In the long term, that’s deadly. When you have something to say, silence is a lie—and tyranny feeds on lies.*

- JOHN: John the Baptist exposed the corruption of King Herod and John was thrown into prison and beheaded.
- JESUS: Jesus exposed the corruption of the religious leaders and had him crucified.
- STEPHEN: Stephen exposed the corruption of Jerusalem and they stoned him to death.
- LUTHER: Martin Luther exposed the corruption church leaders and they tried to murder him.
- TRUMP: Our own President Trump threatened to expose corruption and he came two inches from having his head blown open by a bullet.
- LIFERS: On Holy Week the Minnesota Right to Life supporters will march and expose the evil being done at the St. Paul Planned Parenthood and there always is the fear of someone driving their car into the crowd.

FEAR: My job is to be honest with you all about sin so that you can repent of it and get set free. There is always the fear the you will leave the church if I expose your sins.

Ezekiel 33:7-9 weighs heavily upon my soul as a preacher:

"Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; so hear the word I speak and give them warning from me. 8 When I say to the wicked, 'O wicked man, you will surely die,' and you do not speak out to dissuade him from his ways, that wicked man will die for his sin, and I will hold you accountable for his blood. 9 But if you do warn the wicked man to turn from his ways and he does not do so, he will die for his sin, but you will have saved yourself.

Jesus was stalked because He exposed corruption. Secondly, Jesus was...

II: STALKED: BECAUSE HE IS THE TRUE KING

Luke 20:17-18 Jesus looked directly at them and asked, "Then what is the meaning of that which is written: "'The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone'? 18 Everyone who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed."

IDENTITY: The reason that Jesus was stalked is because He is the Cornerstone, Son of God, the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. Satan, demons and all their partners in the human race are bent on stopping Jesus from His mission to save lost souls and redeem the world. Sometimes it seems that the forces trying to stop Jesus are growing in the world in numbers and zeal.

EU SOCCER: At a recent European Union soccer game the packed stadium fans formed a giant pentagram and lifted up a large image of Lucifer, the devil, and chanted a loud chant calling on Lucifer to *"rise up, take their souls and rule the world."* It is bone chilling to watch if you look it up on line.

WHY: I am shocked at how many people want to follow the devil instead of the Jesus. There is a bible passage that explains this. *John 3:19&20 This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. 20 Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed.*

Jesus was stalked because HE IS THE TRUE KING. Finally He was...

III. STALKED: BECAUSE OF HIS INTENDED MISSION

Luke 20:19-20 The teachers of the law and the chief priests looked for a way to arrest him immediately, because they knew he had spoken this parable against them. But they were afraid of the people. 20 Keeping a close watch on him, they sent spies, who pretended to be honest. They hoped to catch Jesus in something he said so that they might hand him over to the power and authority of the governor.

MISSION: Jesus was ultimately stalked BECAUSE OF HIS INTENDED mission to give His life as a ransom for our sins. But notice that it could not happen until the right time when He would be handed over to the ***“power and authority of the governor.”*** They tried to stone him but never succeeded. He had to die according to the Old Testament prophecies. It had to be on the cross, at Calvary with the spear piercing his side and his blood spilling upon the sin cursed world at 3 PM on Passover Day. Every prophecy of the 300 Old Testament prophecies about Him were perfectly fulfilled.

JEW: I recently heard the testimony of a Jew who read some of the PROPHECIES about CHRIST from the book of Isaiah. He said that no rabbi ever had read them in the synagogue. When He read them and compared them with the gospel accounts, He knew that Jesus was the Messiah and he put his trust in Christ to save his soul. He became a new man!

LENT: Next Sunday we begin Holy Week with Palm Sunday. Our Lenten services, ending this Wednesday, have been a rich journey into the saving mission of Jesus. As we come to the Lord's Table today, it is a good way to search our souls and prepare our hearts for the completion of the path that leads us

to the cross on Good Friday and the empty tomb on Easter Sunday. Ultimately this path leads us home to heaven where Jesus is awaiting our arrival. I invite you to the table of the Lord to strengthen your faith in Him.

APPLICATION: Wicked people stalk the Lord but we want to follow Him. *May the peace of God that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Messiah Jesus. Amen*

HYMN #506 vss 1,2&4 “Living 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 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*

HOLY COMMUNION (Dave Fischer prep and help)

CHORAL BENEDICTION: *May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever-- Grant you peace, Perfect peace, Strength in every endeavor. Lift up your eyes and see His face, Feel His grace forever. May the Lord, Mighty Lord, Bless and keep you forever.*

POSTLUDE: Jan Ellingson