

June 1, 2025, Seventh Sunday of Easter
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRELUDE: Jan Ellingson (Fugleberg)

CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 133

PASTOR: How good and pleasant it is

ALL: When brothers live together in unity!

PASTOR: It is as if the dew of Hermon
were falling on Mount Zion.

ALL: For there the LORD bestows his blessing,
even life forevermore.

HYMN #98 “Thine is the Glory”

PASTOR ONLY: *Most merciful God,*

PASTOR & CONGREGATION: *We confess that we are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves. We have sinned against you in thought, word, and deed, by what we have done and by what we have left undone. We have not loved you with our whole heart; we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves. For the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy on us. Forgive us, renew us, and lead us, so that we may delight in your will and walk in your ways, to the glory of your holy name. Amen*

HYMN # 107 “He Is Arisen! Glorious Word”

CHILDREN’S SERMON:

Reader: Dave Fischer

EPISTLE LESSON: *Revelation 22:1-6 Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb 2 down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. 3 No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. 4 They will see his face, and his name will be on their*

foreheads. 5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. 6 The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

GOSPEL LESSON: *John 17:20-26 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me. 22 I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one: 23 I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me. 24 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world. 25 "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. 26 I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."*

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.

**REBEKAH OLSON ALASKA PRESENTATION
ANNOUNCEMENTS AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING
PRAISE SONGS PICKED BY JAN**

SERMON TITLE: “TESTIFYING TO THE RESURRECTION”
Acts 1:12-26; Pastor Tom Olson; June 1, 2025 *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

ANNIVERSARY: In one month we celebrate our tenth anniversary of coming to Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church. God has blessed us, so far, with ten very happy years. You have had to sit through over five hundred of my sermons. But don’t feel sorry for yourselves, Sharon has had to sit through over 1,500 of them since we were married!

SHIFT: I have had a couple of messages about Christus Victor compared to Christus Redemptor, Christ the Victor compared to Christ the Redeemer. The point that church historians make is that in the western church, in about 1,000 AD, changed the emphasis about a risen and victorious Savior and shifted to an emphasis on a crucified and forgiving Savior.

BALANCE: The more I read the book of Acts, the more I realize that I lose that balance myself that the Apostles had. I need to keep shifting more of my messages on to the Resurrected and Reigning Jesus. The Apostles had an important role in “TESTIFYING TO THE RESURRECTION” because they were eye witnesses of the Risen Savior. But we see here in Acts 1 that they had a problem. One Apostle was missing from the number TWELVE that Jesus had chosen. Acts 1:12-20...

I. THE MISSING WITNESS

Acts 1:12-20 *Then they returned to Jerusalem from the hill called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day's walk from the city. 13 When they arrived, they went upstairs to the room where they were staying. Those present were Peter, John, James and Andrew; Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew; James son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot, and Judas son of James. 14 They all joined together constantly in prayer, along with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brothers. 15 In those days Peter stood up among the believers (a group numbering about a hundred and twenty) 16 and said, "Brothers, the Scripture had to be fulfilled which the Holy Spirit spoke long ago through the mouth of David concerning Judas, who served as guide for those who arrested Jesus- 17 he was one of our number and shared in this ministry." 18(With the reward he got for his wickedness, Judas bought a field; there he fell headlong, his body burst open and all his intestines spilled out. 19 Everyone in Jerusalem heard about this, so they called that field in their language Akeldama, that is, Field of Blood.) 20 "For," said Peter, "it is written in the book of Psalms, "'May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it,' and, "'May another take his place of leadership.'"*

A. THE NEED: ELEVEN PRESENT, TWELVE NEEDED

TWELVE: Four Bible verses mention that there will be 12 thrones for the 12 Apostles to sit on to judge the children of Israel in Christ’s kingdom, Matthew 19:28, Luke 22:30, James 1:1 and Revelation 21:12. But there were now only eleven Apostles since Judas was no longer with them. God uses certain numbers for his purposes. His number for the leaders to establish His church on earth was twelve. They were called to be His witnesses to the ends of the earth.

BIBLE: When we have the Bible, we carry with us the Apostolic witness. We are called to go into our closets for serious private prayer, but we are not to be closet witnesses. Jesus said, “Go” or the Greek might imply, “As you are GOING.” That is a nice way of saying, spread the gospel everywhere at all times. The parable of the seeds and soil says the same message: Spread the Word of God everywhere in all circumstances to all people.

SHINE: When we sing “This Little Light of Mine” in Sunday school, one verse says, “Hide it under a bushel, NO, I’m gonna let it shine!”
Matthew 5:14-16 *"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill*

cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

MISSING: We see then that one Apostle was missing. God wanted twelve and something needed to be done about it before Pentecost. Secondly...

B. THE METHOD: GO TO THE WORD OF GOD FOR DIRECTION

WAITING: The believers were in Jerusalem waiting for the power of the Holy Spirit to come upon them. Jesus told them to stay there until it happened. They were gathering together in earnest prayer. They were seeking the Lord as they waited.

TODAY: This is our pattern too. We gather in serious prayer as we seek the Lord for guidance. We know we need guidance. We know we need far more power than we have to do the job. How is our little church going to make an impact on the hundreds of new houses built in our area and the hundreds of new families that have moved into houses build around our church in the 1980s.

MIRACLE MILE: I remember coming here in about 1985 when this was the corner of Highview and 46. I remember walking across 160th street, probably only two lanes, and going door to door with the "Miracle Mile" and talking to each family about spiritual matters and leaving them literature. Now most of those homes have new families that we have not connected with. We need power from on high to do the job, like the believers in Jerusalem. There were about 120 of them and their assignment was to reach the whole world. We need wisdom about how to best do it now forty years later. That is why we pray.

SCRIPTURE: But notice here that Peter went to the Word of God for direction. He quoted Psalm 69:25 and Psalm 109:8 *"May his place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in it," and, "May another take his place of leadership."*

CARYLL: The Scripture that I feel led to preach on for Caryll Newland's funeral service is *Psalm 119:105 "Thy Word is a lamp unto*

my feet and a light unto my path." God's Word was Caryll's power house. I am confident that if we ask God how to reach this area for Christ and then prayerfully go the Word, His answer will jump off the page at us. Then we will do what the Lord wants and see souls saved.

II. THE MAIN MESSAGE

Acts 1:21-22 Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection."

WITNESS: Something else that jumped off of the page at me in this text was that the twelfth apostle had to be with Jesus His entire ministry and ***"MUST BECOME A WITNESS...OF HIS RESURRECTION."***

FOCUS: I find that when I witness for Jesus, I tend to focus on His death on the cross. We know that the cross and the blood atonement was an important part of the Apostolic message, but here we see that an emphasis is on ***HIS RESURRECTION***. I know that I don't speak about the resurrection enough.

LENT: Did you realize that the forty days of Lent do not include Sundays? That is because we are always to keep Sunday, the first day of the week, as a Resurrection Day. This is what the Apostles did.

One source puts it this way so well: ***"The book of Acts highlights the resurrection of Jesus as a central and foundational element of Christian faith. It emphasizes Jesus's resurrection as a key turning point in the history of redemption and a confirmation of his righteousness. The apostles' preaching and the spread of the gospel in Acts are all rooted in the belief of Jesus's resurrection."***

- *Acts 2:32 God has RAISED this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.*
- *Acts 7:56 Stephen, the martyr, saw the RESURRECTED Jesus as he was being stoned.*
- *Acts 17:30-31 God commands all people everywhere to repent. 31 For he has set a day when he will judge the world with*

justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by RAISING HIM FROM THE DEAD."

SONG: This is what makes the song "He Lives" so powerful. It is right on this theme: *"I serve a risen Savior, He's in the world today...He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way...you ask me how I know He lives, "He lives within my heart!"*

III. THE NEW APOSTLE

Acts 1:23-26 So they proposed two men: Joseph called Barsabbas (also known as Justus) and Matthias. 24 Then they prayed, "Lord, you know everyone's heart. Show us which of these two you have chosen 25 to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs." 26 Then they cast lots, and the lot fell to Matthias; so, he was added to the eleven apostles.

CORRECT: There was a time in my life that I thought that Peter was being hasty and that Paul should be considered the twelfth apostle, but I have been shown that Matthias, the one they chose, is indeed listed as an Apostle. Paul had an apostolic role, ancient writings call him a "missionary apostle," even if he was not one of the twelve.

DETAILS: According to ancient Orthodox Church writings, Matthias was born in Bethlehem and of the tribe of Judah, just like Jesus and King David. What I didn't know is that church oral history says that Matthias is another name for the tax collector Zacchaeus, who climbed the Sycamore tree to see Jesus. The oral history also tells us that he became a great missionary to Macedonia and Ethiopia and suffered greatly at the hands of cannibals. Andrew came to Ethiopia and miraculously rescued him from the city of cannibals, but Matthias was eventually put to death by the Roman government.

METHOD: Matthias was chosen by the Word of God, by prayer and by "casting lots." We need to go to the Word of God for direction. In our personal lives, we sometimes just go to the chapter of Proverbs that corresponds with the date and ask God to show us what we are to do, and He does!

APPLICATION: God provided an amazing replacement for Judas. God provides for our needs. Some of that provisions are amazing when we

take the time to be guided by His Word and look to Him in earnest prayer. When we built our Gospel Aviation Hangar in Alaska we were in way over our heads and relied on God's help. Pastor Mike Crowell and I quit counting the amazing answers to prayer, we called them miracles, at sixty-two! It was obvious that God was helping us from heaven.

WE ARE WITNESSES: God desires to use you and me to be witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. We do that by living exemplary lives, by believing His promises and by telling people the good news of salvation. I am so thankful for those who witnessed to me.

COMMUNION IS A WITNESS. The "other Apostle" Paul tells us that Holy Communion is a witness too. ***1 Corinthians 11:26 "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."*** Welcome to the Lord's table today. Come and give a public witness by receiving the body and blood of Christ. *May the peace of God that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Messiah Jesus. Amen*

HYMN #100 "Alleluia! Jesus Lives!"

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