

**July 6, 2025, 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

**PRELUDE:** Jan Ellingson (Osthus/Reynolds)

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** From Psalm 66

**PASTOR:** Shout with joy to God, all the earth!

**ALL:** Sing the glory of his name;  
make his praise glorious!

**PASTOR:** He rules forever by his power,  
his eyes watch the nations--

**ALL:** Let not the rebellious rise up against him.

**HYMN #632 "Battle Hymn of the Republic"**

**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*

**CHILDREN'S SERMON:**

**Reader:** Becky Kruse

**EPISTLE LESSON:** *Isaiah 66:10-14 "Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice greatly with her, all you who mourn over her. 11 For you will nurse and be satisfied at her comforting breasts; you will drink deeply and delight in her overflowing abundance." 12 For this is what the LORD says: "I will extend peace to her like a river, and the wealth of nations like a flooding stream; you will nurse and be carried on her arm and dandled on her knees. 13 As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you;*

*and you will be comforted over Jerusalem." 14 When you see this, your heart will rejoice and you will flourish like grass; the hand of the LORD will be made known to his servants, but his fury will be shown to his foes.*

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *Luke 10:1-3; 16-20*

*10:1 After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. 3 Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. 4 Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road. 16 "He who listens to you listens to me; he who rejects you rejects me; but he who rejects me rejects him who sent me." 17 The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name." 18 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. 19 I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. 20 However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*

**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: “TOP PRIORITIES” Galatians 6:1-10,14;**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; July 6, 2025** *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen*

DECISIONS: Our lives are filled with decisions:

- What should be my career?
- Who should I marry?
- How should I use my free time?

PRIORITIES: I recently heard a great quote about decisions: “Every time you say ‘yes’ to something, you say ‘no’ to something.” This sets the stage for today’s topic of “Top Priorities.” At the end of the book of Galatians the Apostle Paul outlines three “top priorities” that guide his life and ministry. I think these are good TOP PRIORITIES for our church and even for our lives.

## I. CARE OF SOULS

*Galatians 6:1-6 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. 2 Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. 3 If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 Each one should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself, without comparing himself to somebody else, 5 for each one should carry his own load. 6 Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor.*

MARRIAGE: On June 28 we had a beautiful wedding in our church. I read the little reading from my ministerial acts book about what the Bible says about marriage. The last thing, the TOP PRIORITY, that is mentioned that husbands and wives should do is this, I quote: “...**ABOVE ALL endeavor to help one another in the way of life eternal.**” Above all care for your wife’s soul, above all care for your husband’s soul...make sure they get to heaven when they die. My great-aunt looked at her husband’s body in the casket at his funeral and said in Norwegian to my mom, “I hope he has peace with God.” She didn’t know for certain. Nothing else matters in comparison to that. CARE FOR THEIR SOULS.

Here we see some practical soul care in Galatians 6:

VERSE 1. RESTORE the person caught up in sin. We have loved ones who are caught up in sin and need to be rescued. That sin is destroying their soul and their lives. It could be anger, sexual perversion, love of money, stealing, envy or pride.

GENTLY: Paul says, restore them gently. I am restoring an antique steam tractor. Those iron and brass parts are over 100 years old. You have to be gentle or they will break. You have to soak them with penetrating oil, heat them, wiggle them and they will come off for repair without breaking.

HARSH: I have an acquaintance in the same hobby and he is impatient and he hammers on these old parts and often breaks them. How much more should we be gently, prayerfully, wisely be helping our loved ones get set free from the sin that is destroying them? Our penetrating oil is serious prayer.

VERSE 2. CARRY one another’s burdens. There are times that life gets so hard that we can’t make it on our own. We need someone to help carry our burden. When I had larynx, cancer a man in our church offered to do my preaching for me, free of

charge, so that I could get the cancer burned off my vocal chords with radiation. GARY KELM carried my burden for me.

RIDES: Some people need help getting a ride to medical appointments. I took someone to an appointment on Thursday and sat with that person afterward and we talked and cried and prayed. He needed someone to help him carry a load that was too heavy to carry alone. The Lord helps us carry our burdens.

***DAILY BURDENS: Psalm 68:19 Praise be to the Lord, to God our Savior, who daily bears our burdens.***

***SIN BURDEN: 1 Peter 2:24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree...***

VERSE 3: Be humble as you care for souls.

VERSE 4: Be authentic as you care for souls.

VERSE 5: Be a giver, as you care for souls.

VERSE 6: Support those who give their lives to faithfully care for souls.

CHURCH: In our seminary they urge us to be pastors who care for souls. A church is to be a place where we care for the souls of those who come. A TOP PRIORITY is the CARE OF SOULS. A second TOP PRIORITY is...

## II. DEAL WITH SIN

***Galatians 6:7-10 Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. 8 The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. 9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. 10 Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers.***

SIN: The second TOP PRIORITY we see here is to deal with sin before it deals with us. We have to come to terms with the results of our actions. If we choose to sin, it brings destruction into our lives. It is called THE LAW OF THE HARVEST: "We reap what we sow." Or in modern words we would say, "We harvest what we plant."

HARVEST: Sharon and I are at the harvesting stage of our lives. The good things we have planted are now coming back in a harvest of blessings.

TREELESS: When we bought our property in Wisconsin it was basically an empty cattle lot with an old barn. Everything had been bulldozed away to make room for raising young stock. Everything was buried, the house, the buildings, the apple orchard, the machinery, the shade trees were all bulldozed away to make this cattle lot. I had almost no money in those days, so a friend and I went into the woods and found maple tree saplings, and a basswood and a couple spruce, a birch and pine trees. Someone gave us in a five-gallon pail a blue spruce and a Maple. Another person dug up a little fir tree from his roadside ditch and gave it to us. We planted and watered all these trees. Now, thirty years later they are big beautiful trees that give lots of shade and even are able to hold up swings. We have reaped shade and beauty from that decision to plant trees.

PLANTING: If we plant love we harvest love, if we plant friendship, we harvest friendship, if we plant the gospel we harvest saved souls. Sadly, if we plant anger, or jealousy, or sexual immorality or pride, we also harvest a load of pain. The seeds you plant yield the fruit you harvest later in life.

DEATHBED: I have told you many times that I have never heard someone at the end of life say they wished they had sinned more. They have never said I wish I had been more immoral, I wish I had been lazier, I wish I had been angrier, I wish I had neglected the

Word of God and prayer more. But you hear many people say, I wish I had sinned less.

CLASS: Someone recently told me that they wished they had made the effort on Sunday and come to Dave Osthus's Bible class now for the past ten years. He could have studied the entire Bible in depth. Now he feels it is too late. We are starting over in Genesis right now. Dave will be over 80 years old when we get through it again! Those who come out are reaping the good harvest of the Word of God.

MONSON: Beloved, deal seriously with sin. Some of the pain in our life is a result of sin into our hearts. God allows pain to wake us up and get us back on track. I love this quote that I got from our former pastor, Al Monson, when he preached here a while back. I keep it taped to my desk at home. It says this, "Pain plants the flag of reality in the fortress of a rebellious heart."

BEST: The best way to avoid needless pain is to make it a TOP PRIORITY to deal with sin. And finally...

### III. EMBRACE THE CROSS

*Galatians 6:14 May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world.*

PAUL: If we are going to bear fruit and have the power of the Holy Spirit, we must keep the cross of Jesus front and center, like the Apostle Paul. He says here that he doesn't want to boast about anything except the cross where Jesus Christ shed his holy and precious blood for the sins of the world.

ROALKVAM: This verse is so precious to me because I read it every week on the grave stone of Pastor Roalkvam in the Coon Valley Lutheran Cemetery I mowed when I was a teen-ager. It was King James Version: "**God forbid that I should glory, save in**

***the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.***" I wish I could have known that old pastor. I wish I could have seen him climb into that high pulpit in that historic old church and plead with those proud, religious Norwegians to come to the cross for forgiveness and real salvation.

HEGGE: If you asked people in Coon Valley if they are saved, many would say, "I hope so, I try to be good." My elderly steam engine mentor, went to church in horse and buggy days as a child. The famous Pastor Halvorson preached a fiery sermon about eternity in hell one Sunday. When my friend and his mother were driving the horse and buggy home, the consciences-stricken boy asked his mother, "***How can I avoid going to that terrible hell.***" He told me his mother said to him, "***Be a good little boy and you won't go there.***" So, his whole life he tried to make up for his sin with good deeds, he seldom went to church and he swore a lot but when he got old, he gave his church \$100,000 and got a story about it written in the local newspaper. The cross of Jesus meant nothing to him in comparison to his good deeds. I pleaded with him in the Norwegian language to "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved." Pastor Einar Unseth pleaded with him to come to the cross. But his heart was hardened, his mother should have brought him to the cross when his heart was tender, rather than to salvation by good deeds.

BAPTISM: A young couple came to me to have their baby baptized. I only do baptism of babies if it is a believing household.

QUESTION ONE: I asked them, "*If you died tonight would you go to heaven?*" The mother said, "Absolutely" and the husband said, "I don't have a clue if I would."

QUESTION TWO: Then I asked the second question: "*If God were to ask you, 'Why should I let you into heaven, what would you say?'*" The man once again said, "I have no idea what I would say?" The young mother gave a smile of certainty and said, "I

would tell God that I should go to heaven because I am a good person.”

**SHOCKED:** I then told them that I could not baptize their child because neither of them were Christians. I explained they would be hypocrites if they confessed that they were true believers. The man agreed with me. I don't think he wanted to be a part of it in the first place. The young mother was angry and said that she was a good Christian. I explained to them that neither of them gave credit to Jesus dying on the cross for their sins as a reason to go to heaven. Grandma was also upset about it and insisted that her granddaughter was saved. But the deacons stood with me and I would not perform the baptism just for show and tradition.

**CONVERTED:** Years later the grandma came to me and said, “Pastor, you were right. My granddaughter came and told me that she was not saved back then, but she recently invited Jesus Christ into her life to be her Savior and Lord.” Grandma was happy now that I had been pointed her granddaughter to the cross. It was hard to embrace the cross and get several people angry, but I am glad I did.

**PAUL:** Paul's final TOP PRIORITY was to keep the cross of Jesus at the center of his preaching and teaching.

**SUMMARY:** Dear Friends, I encourage you to adopt these top priorities for your life:

1. CARE FOR SOULS
2. DEAL WITH SIN
3. EMBRACE THE CROSS

**CONGREGATION:** I believe that if our congregation enthusiastically practices these TOP PRIORITIES of the Apostle Paul, that God will use us in a mighty way to lead many souls to Christ and victory over sin and the power of the devil in their lives. “We need to keep the main things the main thing!” These are TOP

**PRIORITIES.** Amen. *May the peace of God that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Messiah Jesus. Amen*

**HYMN #412 (vss 1&2) “There is a Fountain Filled with Blood”**

**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**