

**MINNESOTA VALLEY CHURCH; November 9, 2025**  
**22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; Singers: “youth” praise team**

**PRELUDE:** Carol Gustafson/Praise Team Singers

**CALL TO WORSHIP: From Psalm 148**

**PASTOR: Praise the LORD from the heavens,**

**ALL: Praise him in the heights above.**

**PASTOR: Praise the LORD from the earth,**

**ALL: Kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth,**

**PASTOR: Young men and maidens,**

**ALL: Old men and children.**

**PASTOR: Let them praise the name of the LORD,**

**ALL: For his name alone is exalted; his splendor is above the earth and the heavens.**

**PASTOR: He has raised up for his people a horn,**

**ALL: The praise of all his saints...Praise the LORD.**

**HYMN #194 “One There Is above All Others”**

**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 MESSAGE: Howard the bully with the mean dad.  
“Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.”**

**READER: Bob Hawksford**

**OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Exodus 3:1-15 Now Moses was tending the flock of Jethro his father-in-law, the priest of Midian, and he led the flock to the far side of the desert and came to Horeb, the***

*mountain of God. 2 There the angel of the LORD appeared to him in flames of fire from within a bush. Moses saw that though the bush was on fire it did not burn up. 3 So Moses thought, "I will go over and see this strange sight--why the bush does not burn up." 4 When the LORD saw that he had gone over to look, God called to him from within the bush, "Moses! Moses!" And Moses said, "Here I am." 5 "Do not come any closer," God said. "Take off your sandals, for the place where you are standing is holy ground." 6 Then he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob." At this, Moses hid his face, because he was afraid to look at God.*

**GOSPEL LESSON: *Luke 20:27-40 Some of the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question. 28 "Teacher," they said, "Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies and leaves a wife but no children, the man must marry the widow and have children for his brother. 29 Now there were seven brothers. The first one married a woman and died childless. 30 The second 31 and then the third married her, and in the same way the seven died, leaving no children. 32 Finally, the woman died too. 33 Now then, at the resurrection whose wife will she be, since the seven were married to her?" 34 Jesus replied, "The people of this age marry and are given in marriage. 35 But those who are considered worthy of taking part in that age and in the resurrection from the dead will neither marry nor be given in marriage, 36 and they can no longer die; for they are like the angels. They are God's children, since they are children of the resurrection. 37 But in the account of the bush, even Moses showed that the dead rise, for he calls the Lord 'the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.' 38 He is not the God of the dead, but of the living, for to him all are alive." 39 Some of the teachers of the law responded, "Well said, teacher!" 40 And no one dared to ask him any more questions.***

**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

**PRAISE SONGS:** 1 or 2 praise songs chosen by CAROL

**SERMON: “THE PERSECUTED CHURCH” 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; Pastor Tom Olson *Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen***

REMEMBRANCE: Today is one of two Sundays in November that are designated for us to remember the persecuted church. It is hard to believe that in the modern world religious persecution even exists. It is worse now than ever in history. Don't you think it is the least that we can do to take one Sunday a year to remember them? President Trump appears to be the only world ruler who cares about them enough to take action.

NIGERIA: In Nigeria alone, it is conservatively estimated that at least 4,000 Christians are killed every year by the Islamic majority population. Communist countries still make life for Christians very hard as well. And now in the West, the secular governments are targeting Christians, especially conservative Christians. We now know that the FBI was spying on conservative Roman Catholics and terrifying pro-life leaders under the past administration.

THESSALONICA: The Thessalonian church also went through persecution and the Apostle Paul is encouraging them in his second letter. Let's look together today at “THE PERSECUTED CHURCH” from 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12 where verse five points out candidly, “***you are suffering.***” THE PERSECUTED CHURCH is first of all...

## I. A CHURCH THAT LOVES

***2 Thessalonians 1:1-3 Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: 2 Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 We ought always to thank God for you, brothers, and rightly so, because your faith is growing more and more, and the love every one of you has for each other is increasing.***

BENEFITS: What happens to us when we suffer, especially when we suffer persecution? ...our faith in God grows and our love for our fellow believers INCREASES.

AFLUENZA: When things go easy, we fuss about silly things. My church in Ohio had a half a million dollars in the bank and it is the only church council that I have served where there were arguments out in the parking lot after the meetings. Another church fell to pieces arguing about using Cool Whip or real whipped cream on the jello that they served at church dinners.

ETHIOPIA: When we come under attack from evil powers and evil people, we become united. When the Muslims were persecuting the Christians in Ethiopia a number of years ago, the once shallow church grew in faith and love. It was to the point that they didn't want the persecution to end because it helped the church come alive.

SCRIPTURE: One might be upset at God for allowing his children to be persecuted in this life. God sees the big picture and he allows it to happen for a season, for our good and for His sovereign plan. R.T. Kendall, pastor emeritus of Westminster Chapel in London calls this “GOD'S SECRET WISDOM.” One of my favorite Bible verses about this is: ***1 Peter 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.***

MARTYR: During the time of Caesar Nero around the year of 60 AD, Christians were thrown to the lions in the arena for the sport of watching them be torn to pieces. Rome was a depraved city by that time. Some Christians were willing to be the ones thrown to the lions because they wanted to honor Christ by dying for him. They were martyrs. The word “martyr” means “witness.” These Christians publicly witnessed for Christ by giving their lives for Christ. Their relationships with God were deep and their love for their fellow believers was strong.

USA: *1 Peter 4:1* tells us that **“he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin.”** I know people fear the hard times that could come against Christ’s church in America, but I personally believe the lack of faith and love that comes from easy times and prosperity.

FINANCES: I applied for social security this week and found out that Sharon and I combined together will have to live off of considerably less money. We talked about it. We believe that trusting God for provision and working together to make ends meet will only draw us closer to God and to each other. One of the greatest reasons for marriage failure in America is when the man and woman each have a good income and don’t need each other. Sharon and I need each other to survive. It is not persecution but it is a test that will stretch our faith.

A persecuted church is A CHURCH THAT LOVES God and loves each other. Secondly, A PERSECUTED CHURCH is...

## II. A CHURCH THAT HANGS ON

***2 Thessalonians 1:4-5 Therefore, among God's churches we boast about your PERSEVERENCE and faith in all the persecutions and trials you are ENDURING. 5 All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering.***

ENDURING: Key words in this passage are PERSEVERENCE and ENDURING. The Apostle Paul was not making light of the persecutions and trials they faced. But he just wanted them to know that he notices how well they were holding up under it. He himself had suffered greatly for the faith. Listen to his testimony from *2 Corinthians 11:23-27* ***I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. 24 Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. 25 Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, 26 I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. 27 I have labored***

***and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.***

ARV: Paul persevered; the Thessalonians persevered. Arvid and Sue Erickson faced many serious challenges in their personal and business life and they talked to me about the importance of perseverance. You all know Arv’s saying, “Keep on keeping on.” When we had some Sundays here with less than twenty people in attendance, Arv counted and told me it was 19 and then he looked at me and said, *“Pastor, keep on keeping on!”*

HERO: God is greater than our trials. A hero is a person who hangs on one minute longer than those who quit. There is a reason for every trouble we face. Sometimes it is our own fault and the result of sin or unbelief. In that case the troubles are a lesson. Sometimes the troubles are a part of God’s personal spiritual fitness program for our lives.

CANCER: I have needed to visit with a number of people diagnosed with cancer these past two months. God allowed me to get cancer and I can’t tell you how much it means to people diagnosed with cancer when I look at them and say, “I am a cancer survivor, I know what it is like to hear those words ‘You have cancer.’ The day in September of 2007 when I heard those words is burned into my memory. God was with me every step of the way and He will be with you to no matter how it comes out.” Did you ever think that your trials are actually a platform for your life of ministry and witness for Christ?

EXAMPLE: Paul said here that he boasted about the Thessalonians to the other churches. It was the perseverance under trial of the Thessalonians that became a bright light of encouragement for other suffering Christians.

KINGDOM: He also reminded them that these problems were preparing them for the eternal kingdom of God: ***“as a result you will be counted worthy of the kingdom.”*** The idea there is not that they were earning salvation but that these trials were preparing them for the coming assignments God had for them for all eternity. This life is basic training for the coming, literal, kingdom of God. How we do now will affect our assignment then.

*Matthew 25:21 "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'*

THE PERSECUTED CHURCH HANGS ON. Thirdly, THE PERSECUTED CHURCH is...

### III. A CHURCH THAT GOD WILL VINDICATE

*2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you 7 and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. 8 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power 10 on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.*

REVENGE: I won't belabor this point but I want us to remember that, God will make things right. If you have been abused, hurt, stolen from, violated in any way, God will one day punish those who did that to you if they don't repent and make it right in this life. Jeff Epstein's victims want justice. He had one of the most expensive homes in New York but he came to a bitter end and is undoubtedly in hell. So don't take out your revenge, leave it to God. He will make things right.

MUSLIMS: One of the reasons that Muslims are becoming Christians all over the world is because they see that the Christians they are killing do not take revenge. They die with a peace that their killers don't have. I have heard the testimonies. It is true...they want the peace we have. GOD IS VINDICATING THE PERSECUTED.

Finally, A PERSECUTED CHURCH is...

### IV. A CHURCH THAT GLORIFIES GOD

*2 Thessalonians 1:11-12 With this in mind, we constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling, and that by his power he may fulfill every good purpose of yours and every act*

*prompted by your faith. 12 We pray this so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you, and you in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

RESULT: The END RESULT of persecution and martyrdom is that GOD IS GLORIFIED. The world sees what a beautiful and peaceful people the true followers of Christ are in comparison to the hateful wickedness of their persecutors. The world may hate us for standing for the truth, but the hosts of heaven are cheering us on.

*Hebrews 12:1-3 Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. 2 Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.*

TODAY: So today we remember and pray for our persecuted brothers and sisters in Christ around the world. We trust that we too will be able to walk in faith and love if we ever are tested like they are.

COME: Come quickly Lord Jesus and save your suffering children. Amen. And *now may the peace of God, which passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

### HYMN #486 "Soldiers of Christ, Arise"

**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 that 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*

The last hymn written by Annie Johnson Flint. Her hands were so gnarled by arthritis that she was unable to hold a pen, so a crayon or stick of chalk was wedged between her fingers, so she could write on a surface suspended over her bed. She had hoped to become a concert pianist, but

in her late twenties she was diagnosed with arthritis. By the end of her life she was just four feet tall.

### WHAT GOD HAS PROMISED

By Annie Johnson Flint

God hath not promised,  
skies always blue,  
flower strewn pathways  
all our lives through.

God hath not promised,  
sun without rain,  
joy without sorrow,  
peace without pain,

God hath not promised,  
we shall not know,  
toil and temptation,  
trouble and woe.

He hath not told us,  
we shall not bear,  
many a burden,  
many a care.

But hath promised,  
strength for the day,  
rest for the labour,  
light for the way,  
Grace for the trials,  
help from above,  
unfailing sympathy,  
undying love.

God hath not promised smooth roads and wide,  
Swift, easy travel, needing no guide;  
Never a mountain rocky and steep,  
Never a river turbid and deep.

But God hath promised strength for the day,  
Rest for the labour, light for the way,  
Grace for the trials, help from above,  
Unfailing sympathy, undying love.

### **BENEDICTION**

**CLOSING SONG: Picked by Carol**

**POSTLUDE: Carol Gustafson**