

**May 3, 2026, 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Easter**  
**Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church**

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

**CALL TO WORSHIP:** From Psalm 146

PASTOR: Praise the LORD.

ALL: Praise the LORD, O my soul.

PASTOR: I will praise the LORD all my life;

ALL: I will sing praise to my God as long as I live.

PASTOR: Do not put your trust in princes,

ALL: In mortal men, who cannot save.

PASTOR: The LORD watches over the alien and sustains the fatherless and the widow,

ALL: But he frustrates the ways of the wicked.

PASTOR: The LORD reigns forever,

ALL: Praise the LORD.

**HYMN #231 “Father, We Praise You” (composed about 570 AD!)**

**CONFESSION OF SIN:** *Almighty God, our Maker and Redeemer, we poor sinners confess to You that we are by nature sinful and unclean, and that we have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. Therefore we flee for refuge to Your infinite mercy and ask You for Christ's sake, grant us forgiveness of all our sins, and by Your Holy Spirit increase in us true knowledge of You and of Your will and true obedience to Your Word, to the end that by Your grace we may come to eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

**PRAYER**

**CHILDREN'S SERMON:**

**Reader: Bob Hawksford**

**FIRST LESSON:** *Acts 6:7-15 So the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly, and a large number of priests became obedient to the faith. 8 Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, did great wonders and miraculous signs among the*

*people. 9 Opposition arose, however, from members of the Synagogue of the Freedmen (as it was called)-Jews of Cyrene and Alexandria as well as the provinces of Cilicia and Asia. These men began to argue with Stephen, 10 but they could not stand up against his wisdom or the Spirit by whom he spoke. 11 Then they secretly persuaded some men to say, "We have heard Stephen speak words of blasphemy against Moses and against God." 12 So they stirred up the people and the elders and the teachers of the law. They seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin. 13 They produced false witnesses, who testified, "This fellow never stops speaking against this holy place and against the law. 14 For we have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy this place and change the customs Moses handed down to us." 15 All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*

**GOSPEL LESSON:** *John 14:1-7 "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. 2 In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. 4 You know the way to the place where I am going." 5 Thomas said to him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" 6 Jesus answered, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. 7 If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him."*

**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: “HOW TO HANDLE VITRIOL” 1 Peter 2:1-10**

**MANNERS:** What has happened to good manners? If you watch an old Presidential Debate from the 1970’s you hear intelligent questions answered calmly and respectfully without any harsh or inflammatory language. You will hear news broadcaster never uttering a curse word. Now foul words are everywhere.

**SAD:** Times have changed, and not for the better. I am saddened by the cutting words people on both sides of important issues used to describe those they disagree with: traitor, stupid, idiot, worthy of death. This kind of language is called VITRIOL.

**VITRIOL:** Here is the meaning of vitriol: *Vitriol refers to bitterly harsh, abusive, or venomous language intended to hurt, criticize, or express deep malice. It also refers historically to sulfuric acid or metallic sulfates, known for being highly corrosive. The term acts as a metaphor for language that "eats away" at someone, similar to acid.*

**TARGETS:** Some of you have been the target of VITRIOL, even by family members or co-workers. It hurts. The fledgling Christian church at the time of Peter was targeted by vitriol from both the Roman government and the Jewish leaders. Peter

discusses HOW TO HANDLE VITRIOL in I Peter 2. I hope this helps you deal with harsh word that may be coming your way from someone. Let’s talk about it. First of all...

## **I. BATHE IN THE WORD OF GOD**

***1 Peter 2:1-3 Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. 2 Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, 3 now that you have tasted that the Lord is good.***

**INTROSPECTION:** We cannot handle harsh words and actions against us until we get harsh words out of our own vocabulary. If we don’t get our own souls cleansed, the poison that comes our way will mix with our poison and become a toxic explosion. Here is what Peter tells us to remove from our lives:

- DECEIT
- HYPOCRISY
- ENVY
- SLANDER

**EASY:** It is easy to get caught up in this kind of mindset. The only way to be cleansed from these acidic sins is to bathe in the Word of God.

***Romans 8:6 The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.***

**PEOPLE:** Psalm 1 also reminds us to avoid people who use vitriolic language because it spreads to our souls like a deadly virus:

***Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked or stand in the way of sinners or sit in the seat of mockers. 2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and on his***

*law he meditates day and night. 3 He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in season and whose leaf does not wither. Whatever he does prospers.*

PERSONAL: I struggle with sins like deceit, hypocrisy, envy and slander myself. It is a battle to keep my tongue wholesome. The best thing I can do to fight the power of sin is listen to Scripture as I drive the car. I have the Bible on CD! You can listen right through your cell phone. If I have to drive alone for long hours by myself, sometimes I listen to a passage or Bible book many times. It puts my mind back in the right place. The Word of God makes a big difference.

HEALING: There is nothing better to heal our angry hearts and caustic tongues than to take our Bible with us on a walk to a beautiful park and sit and read the Word of God. Faithfully coming to church, singing God's praise, listening to the Word of God are important ways to wash away the acidic language from our minds. Communing with Christ, who is the Word of God, at the Lord's Table today will also help. TO HANDLE VITRIOL, BATHE IN THE WORD OF GOD. Secondly,

## II. CLOTHE YOURSELF WITH CHRIST

*1 Peter 2:4-8 As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him- 5 you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 For in Scripture it says: "See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame." 7 Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, "The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone," 8 and, "A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall." They stumble because they disobey the message-which is also what they were destined for.*

JESUS: This is what Peter says that Jesus does for us:

- He builds us into a spiritual house
- He makes us a royal priesthood
- The one who trusts in Him will not be put to shame

FOCUS: The power to overcome our own vitriol and to endure the vitriol that others heap upon us is a result of a close and personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Peter wants to show us the big picture of what God is doing and not to focus on the nasty slander that is being sent their way. Peter wants to see the eternal kingdom that Christ is building and not focus upon the temporary evil that Satan and his helpers are doing.

KINGDOM: One day all of God's wicked enemies will be subdued and Christ will bring us the fullness of His righteous reign. In that day we will be ruling and reigning with Christ. If I understand Revelation 20 correctly, those who give their lives for Christ will have a special assignment in His kingdom. It will all work out well.

CAPSTONE: A capstone holds a giant stone arch together. Peter says clearly that Christ is the capstone. He holds the building together. Peter says that we are the stones he holds together to make a spiritual household. He holds us together as we navigate the stormy seas of life.

HEN: You have heard the story of the fire that burned through the farmer's dry barnyard grass that some animals did not have a chance to get away. After the fire was over the farmer saw a black clump in the yard and pushed it over. It was a burned-up hen who died as she covered her little chicks who were all alive. That is what Jesus has done for us. He gave his body to be beaten and crucified. He shed his innocent blood. He clothed us with His righteousness to protect us from consequences of our sins. He protects us from being destroyed by the burning fires that come against us from the tongues of others.

To make it through this life with joy and peace we need to CLOTHE OURSELVES WITH CHRIST. We can't do it on our own. We will get bitter if we try. No matter how malicious people get, run to Christ and he will give you the love you need to respond in the right way. TO HANDLE VITRIOL: Bathe in the Word of God. Clothe yourself with Christ. Finally,

### III. LIVE IN THE DIGNITY OF YOUR CALLING

*1 Peter 2:9-10 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.*

AUTHORITY: In this world there are times that very nasty people are in positions of authority. They treat you shamefully. They lash out against you. Often times they slander you behind your back to ruin you. At those times Peter wants to remind you in many ways who you are as a child of God:

- You are chosen
- You belong to God
- You are created to praise the Lord
- You are taken out of darkness into the light
- You are the people of God
- You are objects of his mercy

ROYALTY: People who are truly royal are able to maintain their dignity because they know who they are. We can live in the dignity of who we are as children of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

EMIL: I would like us to close with a song that was submitted to our hymnal by a man who worked in a very toxic city for his entire

career. He worked for the State Department in Washington, DC. He grew up in a country Free Lutheran Church near Dalton, Minnesota. He never married. He was a translator who knew the record number of twenty-five languages. His name was Emil Fossan.

KIND: Washington never hurt this godly man. He was kind and generous. He had a bad stroke and retired to the Augustana Apartments in downtown Minneapolis. He advised Bible translators. He painstakingly edited every line our hymnal for spelling and grammar errors. He generously supported us when funds ran low.

REQUEST: He had just one request that we include this revival hymn from the days of Evangelist Dwight Moody and Billy Sunday in the hymnal. I have never used it in a church service until today. But I chose it because it seems to reveal the secret of what kept this man kind, pure, wholesome and Christlike during a lifetime career in Washington, D.C. It contains the keys to LIVE IN THE DIGNITY OF OUR CALLING. It is the key to HANDLING VITRIOL. It is a good preparation for holy communion. *Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding, guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen*

### HYMN #610 “Jesus, Rose of Sharon”

**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

### POST COMMUNION PRAYER

**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