

SERVICE INFORMATION: July 26, 2026
9th Sunday after Pentecost
Pastor Tom Olson; Minnesota Valley Free Lutheran Church

PRAISE AND WORSHIP: Ruth Antal
SINGERS: Dave Reynolds, others?
READER: Jacob O'Flanagan

PRELUDE: Ruth Antal

INVOCATION: *In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen*

CALL TO WORSHIP: *Psalm 8*

PASTOR: O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

You have set your glory above the heavens.

ALL: From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger.

PASTOR: When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place,

ALL: what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

PASTOR: You made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.

ALL: You made him ruler over the works of your hands; you put everything under his feet:

PASTOR: all flocks and herds, and the beasts of the field, 8 the birds of the air, and the fish of the sea, all that swim the paths of the seas.

ALL: O LORD, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!

HYMN #154 “Jesus Shall Reign Where’er the Sun”

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 MESSAGE:
Reader: Jacob O’Flanagan

OLD TESTAMENT LESSON: *Deuteronomy 7:6-9 For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. 7 The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. 8 But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your forefathers that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. 9 Know therefore that the LORD your God is God; he is the faithful God, keeping his covenant of love to a thousand generations of those who love him and keep his commands.*

GOSPEL LESSON: *Matt 13:44-52*

44 "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. 45 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. 46 When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it. 47 "Once again, the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. 48 When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away. 49 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous 50 and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 51 "Have you understood all these things?" Jesus asked. "Yes," they replied. 52 He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has been instructed about the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

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 AND PRAYER FOR OFFERING

PRAISE SONGS: picked out by Ruth Antal

Ready or Not, Here I Come!
1 John 2, Pastor Tom Olson, July 26, 2026

Grace be to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

EVENTS: We have big days in our lives. Graduation, marriage, birth of a child, getting hired for a job...we work hard to get prepared for them.

BIGGEST: The biggest day of our lives is going to be when we meet the Lord in person. It will happen on the day we die or on the day He comes back.

JOHN: The Apostle John spoke as if the return of Jesus could be any day. Time and again he says, "When He comes..." 1 John 2 is a chapter dedicated to getting ready to meet Jesus. Verse 28 gives the purpose of the chapter he just finished writing. It says, *"And now, dear children, continue in Him, so that when He appears we may be confident and unashamed at his coming."*

READY: John, in 1 John 2 gives us many points to ponder as we seek to be ready for Christ to return for us. Let's look at it together:

I. A NEW SAVIOR

1 John 2:1-2 "My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense-Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. 2 He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world."

SELF: Many, if not most, people are trying to save themselves. All the religions of the world, except Christianity, are this way. People are trying to be good enough on their own to get into heaven.

SINFUL: It can't be done because God is Holy and no sinful thing can be in His eternal heaven. It can't be done because we are all contaminated by sin. We all have broken His commandments in thought or word or deed. None of us can be holy no matter how hard we try.

SAVIOR: God made a way for us to be forgiven and declared to be holy through faith in the innocent blood of Christ shed on the cross. John calls Jesus "the atoning sacrifice." He is the Lamb of God who takes away our sins if we repent of them and put our trust in Him.

PRIDE: One person said, "If I can't earn it, I don't want it." That is exactly what she will get...nothing. Salvation is a gift that God is waiting for us to receive.

WE NEED A NEW SAVIOR and that is Jesus. Secondly, we are ready if we receive...

II. A NEW LIFE

1 John 2:3&4 "We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. 4 The man who says, "I know him," but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him."

CHANGE: A miracle happens when you are born of the spirit and get the gift of eternal life from God. Your desires change miraculously.

Something inside you wants to find out what Jesus taught and live like Jesus told us to live.

TEACHING: The great commission in Matthew 28 has two parts: evangelizing and teaching. Jesus told them to teach everything he commanded them. That is why we teach in every way we can the Word of God at home, in church and wherever we can to whomever will listen.

PSALMIST: The Psalmist put it this way, ***“the law of the Lord is worth more than silver or gold and sweeter than honey.”*** He had found out how good God’s ways are.

ANGRY: When I look around at how many people are angry and unhappy I realize that many people have not found the good path of life that leads to heaven with no regrets.

REGRETS: I regret my sins but I don’t regret the times I followed the Lord. Old age reveals to us that the best parts of our life were when we were living in the light of God’s Word. The worst parts of our life were when we disobeyed God’s Word.

Thirdly, we are ready to meet the Lord if we have...

III. A NEW LOVE

1 John 2:9-11 “Anyone who claims to be in the light but hates his brother is still in the darkness. 10 Whoever loves his brother lives in the light, and there is nothing in him to make him stumble. 11 But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness; he does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded him.”

BELIEVERS: Another change happens when you are born of God, you love your fellow believers. You love to be with the people of God. The old sinful gang is of no interest to you anymore. Meeting in church is the highlight of the week.

VISIT: One of the great things about not regularly preaching on Sunday mornings anymore is our ability to visit other churches. We have only

visited one but we look forward to visiting Sharon’s church where she grew up and some churches in Cumberland. We love to meet our fellow believers and find out who the family of God is in our community.

FAMILY: I get so excited to meet people who really know and love the Lord. I love to be with them. They are my family. The spirit in me loves the spirit in them. I love to visit churches far from home when we are on vacation too.

CBS: I will never forget how we ended our college campus Bible study meetings each week. We got in a circle, arm in arm and sang, “I love this family of God, so closely knitted into one, they’ve taken me into their hearts and I’m so glad to be a part, a part of this family.” Some of those people still get together once a year over forty years later.

HATE: If we hate our fellow believers, we are not ready to meet Jesus. How can you expect to be in heaven forever with people you hate? True faith produces true love.

Fourthly, we are ready to meet the Lord if we have...

IV. NEW GOALS

1 John 2:12 I write to you, dear children, because your sins have been forgiven on account of his name. 14 I write to you, fathers, because you have known him who is from the beginning. I write to you, young men, because you are strong, and the word of God lives in you, and you have overcome the evil one.

Here John addresses believers as children, young men and sons. He is speaking of levels of Christian maturity.

- The focus of the newborn child of God is forgiveness of sins and new life in Christ.
- The focus of the young man, the growing believer, is overcoming the evil one.
- The focus of the Fathers, the older, mature believers, is intimacy with God.

GOALS: These are three great goals to prepare us to meet the Lord:

1. To trust God for forgiveness of sins.
2. To fight against sin, evil and temptation in our lives.
3. To grow close to God through a deep life of prayer and meditation of God's Word.

These are new goals that prepare us to meet the Lord in the great last day. Fifthly...we are prepared to meet the Lord if we have...

V. NEW AFFECTIONS

I John 2:15-17 *Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For everything in the world-the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-comes not from the Father but from the world. 17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.*

LOVE: The Apostle John is the Disciple of Love. 1 John 4 is the chapter of love. Yet here John uses this powerful word DO NOT LOVE. Do not love THE WORLD.

COSMOS: By WORLD or Greek COSMOS, scholars agree it does not mean the created world, plants and animals. It does not mean people. We are to love our fellow man. It means the WORLD SYSTEM where Satan is the Prince of this World. It means the world of sin and evil.

The KJV calls it

- THE LUST OF THE FLESH: this is our PASSIONS, meaning our appetites out of control to the point of sinning such as gluttony and sexual immorality. It means an obsession with our cravings.
- THE LUST OF THE EYES: this refers to POSSESSIONS. It refers to an obsessive focus on accumulating money and worldly possessions. It doesn't refer to owning things but it refers to things owning our hearts.
- THE BOASTFUL PRIDE OF LIFE: this refers to POSITIONS, power, titles, accomplishments and all that puffs up our pride.

FRIENDLY: One preacher calls THE WORLD our "Friendly Enemy." Satan uses these things to lure us away from God. Many people have gotten worldly and are no longer following Christ.

DEPARTED: When Pastor Tim Carlson and friends organized a reunion of our college Bible study friends this summer, a significant number of them said they would not come because they were no longer interested in following Jesus. The world had captured their hearts. They were caught by "The Friendly Enemy" and were, for now, in his dark grip. It was so sad to hear.

ANTICHRIST: John puts it this way in verse 19, *"They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. For if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us; but their going showed that none of them belonged to us."*

HOW: How does this happen? John explains it in verse 26, *I am writing these things to you about those who are trying to lead you astray.*

COLLEGE: There are people who are tools of Satan to lead us astray. Just send your children to college and they will find out that a number of their professors will try to convince them to depart from their Christian faith. They have subtle arguments that many 18-year-olds are not prepared to refute. That is why many depart from the faith in college.

SHUDDER: I shudder to think about what Judgment Day will be like for those college professors that lured young people away from Christ. The movie, "God's Not Dead" covers that idea so well. I hope you all have seen it or can see it in the future.

CONCLUSION: We conclude where we began with verse 28, *"And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming."*

CONTINUE: When I came to Minnesota Valley Church eleven years ago, I did a number of sermons on one word such as COME, GO, TASTE, etc. I close with one word from 1 John 2:28, CONTINUE. John says that this is the key.

CONTINUE:

- Coming to church and sitting under the Word and receiving Holy Communion
- Reading your Bible and praying every day.
- Staying away from sin and worldliness and choosing to follow the commandments of Christ
- Continue trusting in the finished work of Christ on the cross, having Him be your Savior rather than trusting in your own efforts.

JEREMY: I hope that all of you have a good life but I am far more concerned that I see you in heaven someday. I love what Jeremy Hunter told me one day when he said if he did not have Muscular Dystrophy he could easily have rejected Christ and lived a wild and sinful life as an unbeliever. I am sad to see him suffer but all that truly matters is that he and I will be in heaven one day in perfect bodies. That is why we talk on the phone almost every day and encourage each other to keep trusting the Lord no matter what our circumstances are.

FAMILY: The most important part of marriage and family life is that we help one another be ready to meet the Lord, that we help keep each other in the faith until that great day.

GAME: The children play hide and seek. One shuts their eyes and counts while everyone hides. Then the seeker opens his eyes and shouts, "Ready or not, here I come." Jesus is counting too, and the countdown may be getting close.

COUNTDOWN: We sing a song in Sunday School that I just love called "COUNTDOWN," *Ten and nine, eight and seven, six and five and four, call upon the Savior while you may. Three and two, He's coming through the clouds in bright array. The countdown's getting closer every day!* I hope you will be ready when He comes.

I close with *Hebrews 10:22-25* "Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. 24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. 25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another-and all the more as you see the Day approaching."

Now may the peace of God that passes all understanding guard your hearts and minds through faith in Christ Jesus. Amen

HYMN #292 "The Church's One Foundation"

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*

BENEDICTION

Hymn #251 (vs 1) "God Be with You Till We Meet Again"

POSTLUDE: Ruth Antal