



TRINITY MERRILL LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Reverend Scott Gustafson
Reverend Jonathan Chapa

July 12, 2026 - 10:30 AM

"Hey, God! What about CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION?"

Sharing the message with us today is Pastor Scott Gustafson

AS WE GATHER: for worship today, we continue our sermon series, **"Hey, God! What About _____?"** Today we ask a question that Christians have wrestled with since the days of the apostles: **"Hey, God! What about Christian Persecution?"** Jesus never promised His followers an easy path. In fact, He warned that the world would oppose those who bear His name. Yet God also assures us that suffering for Christ is never meaningless. Through persecution, trials, and opposition, the Lord strengthens His people, bears witness through their testimony, and reminds us that our true citizenship is in heaven. As we gather around God's Word and Christ's Holy Supper, we receive the courage, comfort, and confidence that come only from our crucified and risen Savior.

PRE-SERVICE: *"The Only Name (Yours Will Be)"*
"A Thousand Hallelujahs"

Praise Team #21 Key of F
Praise Team #86 Key of E

WELCOME & GREETING

OPENING SONG

"Counting Every Blessing" #34 Key of D

Vs.1 *I was blind now I'm seeing in colour
I was dead now I'm living forever
I had failed but You were my Redeemer
I've been blessed beyond all measure*

Vs.2 *I was lost now I'm found by the Father
I've been changed from a ruin to treasure
I've been given a hope and a future
I've been blessed beyond all measure*

Chorus *I am counting every blessing
Counting every blessing
Letting go and trusting
When I cannot see
I am counting every blessing
Counting every blessing
Surely every season
You are good to me*

Interlude *Oh You are good to me
Oh You are good to me*

Vs.3 *You were there in the valley of shadows
You were there in the depth of my sorrows
You're my strength my hope for tomorrow
I've been blessed beyond all measure*

(Chorus)

Bridge *Surely Your goodness pursues me
Surely Your heart is still for me
I will remember Your mercies
All my days
Through every storm and gale*

(Chorus 2x)

Ending *For Your goodness I will ever praise You
Oh You are good to me
Oh You are good to me*

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INVOCATION

Pastor: In the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

RESPONSIVE LITANY

Pastor: Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,

People: For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Pastor: Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on account of Christ.

People: Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven.

Pastor: The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?

People: The Lord is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Pastor: Though the nations rage and the powers of this world oppose Christ,

People: God's kingdom shall stand forever.

Pastor: Though we suffer loss, rejection, or hardship for the sake of Jesus,

People: Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Pastor: Let us worship the Lord.

People: Thanks be to God!

CONFESSION & ABSOLUTION

Pastor: Beloved in the Lord, let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father.

People: Most merciful God, we confess that we are by nature sinful and unclean. We have sinned against You in thought, word, and deed. We have often feared people more than we have feared You. We have remained silent when we should have confessed Christ. We have sought comfort more than faithfulness and safety more than obedience. For the sake of Your Son, Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us, forgive us, renew us, and strengthen us, that we may faithfully bear His name before the world. Amen.

Pastor: Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the T Son and of the Holy Spirit.

People: Amen.

SALUTATION

Pastor: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Pastor: Let us pray. Almighty and everlasting God, whose Son Jesus Christ suffered rejection, mockery, and death for our salvation, grant courage to Your Church throughout the world. Strengthen all who suffer for confessing Your name. Give boldness to our witness, patience in affliction, and confidence in Your promises, that we may stand firm in the faith until the day we receive the crown of life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

People: Amen.

MONTHLY VERSE (Acts 1:8a)

***"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you,
and you will be my witnesses."***

SONG**“Grateful”**

#64 Key of A

Vs.1 *This is the day that you have made
Whatever comes I won't complain
For all my hope is in your name
And now your joy awaits my praise*

Chorus 1 *I give thanks for all you have done
And I will sing of your mercy and
your love
Your love is unfailing Lord I am
grateful*

Vs.2 *When I was down you brought me out
And set my feet on higher ground
So here I stand you are my God
Your faithfulness my solid rock*

Chorus 1 *I give thanks for all you have done
And I will sing of your mercy and
your love
Your love is unfailing Lord I am
grateful*

Chorus 2 *I give thanks for all you have done
I won't forget all the battles you have
won
Your love is unfailing Lord I am
grateful*

Bridge *And as we lift our hands
The heavens open heavens open
So let our lives declare
The love our God has spoken over us
(REPEAT)*

(Chorus 1 & Chorus 2)

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FIRST READING*(God delivers three men from a fiery furnace.)***Daniel 3:1-6, 8-14, 16-30**

¹King Nebuchadnezzar made an image of gold, whose height was sixty cubits and its breadth six cubits. He set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. ²Then King Nebuchadnezzar sent to gather the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces to come to the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ³Then the satraps, the prefects, and the governors, the counselors, the treasurers, the justices, the magistrates, and all the officials of the provinces gathered for the dedication of the image that King Nebuchadnezzar had set up. And they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. ⁴And the herald proclaimed aloud, “You are commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages, ⁵that when you hear the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, you are to fall down and worship the golden image that King Nebuchadnezzar has set up. ⁶And whoever does not fall down and worship shall immediately be cast into a burning fiery furnace...”

⁸Therefore at that time certain Chaldeans came forward and maliciously accused the Jews. ⁹They declared to King Nebuchadnezzar, “O king, live forever! ¹⁰You, O king, have made a decree, that every man who hears the sound of the horn, pipe, lyre, trigon, harp, bagpipe, and every kind of music, shall fall down and worship the golden image. ¹¹And whoever does not fall down and worship shall be cast into a burning fiery furnace. ¹²There are certain Jews whom you have appointed over the affairs of the province of Babylon: Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. These men, O king, pay no attention to you; they do not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up?”

¹³Then Nebuchadnezzar in furious rage commanded that Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego be brought. So they brought these men before the king. ¹⁴Nebuchadnezzar answered and said to them, “Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, that you do not serve my gods or worship the golden image that I have set up?”

¹⁶Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, “O Nebuchadnezzar, we have no need to answer you in this matter. ¹⁷If this be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.

¹⁸But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up."

¹⁹Then Nebuchadnezzar was filled with fury, and the expression of his face was changed against Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. He ordered the furnace heated seven times more than it was usually heated. ²⁰And he ordered some of the mighty men of his army to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace. ²¹Then these men were bound in their cloaks, their tunics, their hats, and their other garments, and they were thrown into the burning fiery furnace. ²²Because the king's order was urgent and the furnace overheated, the flame of the fire killed those men who took up Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. ²³And these three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, fell bound into the burning fiery furnace.

²⁴Then King Nebuchadnezzar was astonished and rose up in haste. He declared to his counselors, "Did we not cast three men bound into the fire?" They answered and said to the king, "True, O king." ²⁵He answered and said, "But I see four men unbound, walking in the midst of the fire, and they are not hurt; and the appearance of the fourth is like a son of the gods."

²⁶Then Nebuchadnezzar came near to the door of the burning fiery furnace; he declared, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, servants of the Most High God, come out, and come here!" Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego came out from the fire. ²⁷And the satraps, the prefects, the governors, and the king's counselors gathered together and saw that the fire had not had any power over the bodies of those men. The hair of their heads was not singed, their cloaks were not harmed, and no smell of fire had come upon them. ²⁸Nebuchadnezzar answered and said, "Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who has sent his angel and delivered his servants, who trusted in him, and set aside the king's command, and yielded up their bodies rather than serve and worship any god except their own God. ²⁹Therefore I make a decree: Any people, nation, or language that speaks anything against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego shall be torn limb from limb, and their houses laid in ruins, for there is no other god who is able to rescue in this way." ³⁰Then the king promoted Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the province of Babylon.

SECOND READING (Life bears witness to our salvation)

Philippians 1:27-28

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

GOSPEL READING (Persecution will come)

Matthew 10:16-22

"Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for My sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved."

SONG OF THE DAY

“Joy of the Lord”

#78 Key of D

Vs.1 *Though the tears may fall my song will rise
My song will rise to You
Though my heart may fail my song will rise
My song will rise to You
While there's breath in my lungs
I will praise You Lord*

Vs.2 *In the dead of night I'll lift my eyes
I'll lift my eyes to You
When the waters rise I'll lift my eyes
I'll lift my eyes to You
While there's hope in this heart
I will praise You Lord*

Chorus *The joy of the Lord is my strength
The joy of the Lord is my strength
In the darkness I'll dance
In the shadows I'll sing
The joy of the Lord is my strength*

Vs.3 *When I cannot see You with my eyes
Let faith arise to You
When I cannot feel Your hand in mine*

Let faith arise to You
God of mercy and love
I will praise You Lord

Vs.4 *Oh You shine with glory Lord of light
I feel alive with You
In Your presence now I come alive
I am alive with You
There is strength when I say
I will praise You Lord*

(Chorus 2X)

Bridge *When sorrow comes my way
You are the shield around me
Always You remain
My courage in the fight
I hear You call my name Jesus I am
coming
Walking on the waves reaching for Your
light*

(Chorus (Sing 3X))

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MESSAGE

NICENE CREED

People: 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 men 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 sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will 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 in 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.

ATTENDANCE / CONNECT TIME / OFFERING (Instrumental) “Joy of the Lord”

During this time, please sign the attendance book found in the pew or use your mobile device to fill out the Connect Card or submit prayer requests on our app or online at www.trinitymerrill.com/live. You can also visit our app or www.trinitymerrill.com/give to learn more about other ways to support the ministries at Trinity. (When filling out the attendance book, please include your last names and list the names of everyone in attendance in your family.) If you are a visitor and you are interested in membership, please add your email and phone number to the attendance pad.

PRAYERS OF GOD'S PEOPLE & THE LORD'S PRAYER

✠ WELCOME TO THE LORD'S TABLE ✠

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

COMMUNION SONGS *“The Blood of Jesus Speaks For Me”* (Instrumental) #51 Key of G
“Nothing But the Blood” (Instrumental) #101 Key of A

COMMUNION BLESSING & BENEDICTION

CLOSING SONG *“All Creatures Of Our God and King”* #108 Key of D

Vs.1 *All creatures of our God and King
Lift up your voice and with us sing
O praise Him alleluia
Thou burning sun with golden beam
Thou silver moon with softer gleam
O praise Him O praise Him
Alleluia alleluia alleluia*

Vs.2 *Thou rushing wind that art so strong
Ye clouds that sail in Heav'n along
O praise Him alleluia
Thou rising moon in praise rejoice
Ye lights of evening find a voice
O praise Him O praise Him
Alleluia alleluia alleluia*

Vs.3 *Let all things their Creator bless
And worship Him in humbleness
O praise Him alleluia
Praise praise the Father praise the Son
And praise the Spirit three in One
O praise Him O praise Him
Alleluia alleluia alleluia*

Ending *O alleluia alleluia
O alleluia alleluia
O alleluia alleluia
O alleluia alleluia alleluia*

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The radio broadcast today is sponsored in celebration of the 47th Wedding Anniversary (July 14) of Jim & Jackie Jackson

The flowers on the altar are sponsored by Shawn & Laurie Schultz in loving memory of Grace Lau.

NEED A RIDE TO CHURCH? WE'RE HERE TO HELP!

Getting to church shouldn't be a barrier to worship. Thanks to the generosity of an anonymous donor, Trinity is pleased to offer **free taxi rides to and from worship services** through Blue Jay Taxi.

If you or someone you know could benefit from transportation assistance, simply call **715-921-4110** by **Wednesday** before the weekend service you plan to attend.

When leaving your message, please include:

- Which worship service you will attend
- Your pick-up address
- How many people will need transportation to Trinity Church

We are grateful for this opportunity to help connect people with God's Word, worship, and the fellowship of our church family. If transportation has been keeping you from attending worship, we encourage you to take advantage of this wonderful ministry. We look forward to welcoming you to church!

Trinity Lutheran Church – “Living River” Concert in the Park

Trinity Lutheran Church will be hosting the “Living River Quartet” on **Saturday, August 8th at 6:00 PM at Normal Park, 500 N. Center Ave in Merrill**. Bring your lawn chairs and refreshments. Help sponsor this city-wide event. Envelopes are available on the “Adopt a Bill” board if you would like to help sponsor this fun community event. Volunteers from Aspirus Merrill Hospital will be selling hamburgers, brats, chips and soda from the concession stand. Bring your family, friends, and neighbors and enjoy this wonderful concert in the park with us.

🍷❤️ You're Invited to Trinity's Community Meal! ❤️🍷

Looking for a warm meal, friendly conversation, and a welcoming place to connect with others?

Join us for **Trinity's Community Meal: Faith, Fellowship, and Food** on **Wednesday, July 15, from 4:30–6:30 PM**. Everyone is welcome! Whether you come on your own, with family, or with friends, we'd love to share an evening of food, fellowship, and community with you.

☀️ Enjoy a delicious meal featuring pulled pork, sides, and homemade desserts.

☀️ Meet new people and reconnect with familiar faces.

☀️ Experience the warmth and hospitality of the Trinity family.

At Trinity, we believe that some of life's best moments happen around the table. This event is about more than just a meal—it's about building friendships, sharing kindness, and celebrating the blessings of community together.

There is no cost to attend, and all are welcome.