

New Hope Lutheran Church

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January 17, 2021
2nd Sunday after Epiphany

Coming Events

English services have been paused,
until February 7, 2pm at **Regent St.**

Finnish services have been paused,
until February 7, 10am at **Voima Hall.**

Sermons are available on our website nhlc.ca

In our prayers Fred, Esme, Martha.

Mission Statement

Encourage and support people in their Christian faith while reaching out, in love, to the community.

*We now have a **donate button** on our web site nhlc.ca
Previous Sunday sermons and bible studies can be found
on the website.*

Psalm 139:1 – 6, 13 – 18

- 1 You have searched me, LORD, and you know me.
- 2 You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar.
- 3 You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways.
- 4 Before a word is on my tongue you, LORD, know it completely.
- 5 You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me.
- 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain.
- 13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.
- 14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.
- 15 My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth.
- 16 Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.
- 17 How precious to me are your thoughts, God! How vast is the sum of them!
- 18 Were I to count them, they would outnumber the grains of sand— when I awake, I am still with you.

Prayer of the Day

Thanks be to you, Lord Jesus Christ, most merciful redeemer, for the countless blessings and benefits you give. May we know you more clearly, love you more dearly, and follow you more nearly, day by day praising you, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading “1 Samuel 3:1 – 10”

1 The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions. 2 One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. 3 The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the house of the LORD, where the ark of God was. 4 Then the LORD called Samuel. Samuel answered, “Here I am.” 5 And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he

went and lay down. 6 Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” “My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” 7 Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him. 8 A third time the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.” Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. 9 So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place. 10 The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!” Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.”

Second Reading “1 Corinthians 6:12 – 20”

12 “I have the right to do anything,” you say—but not everything is beneficial. “I have the right to do anything”—but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 You say, “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.” The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit. 18 Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. 19 Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Gospel “John 1:43 – 51”

43 The next day Jesus decided to leave for Galilee. Finding Philip, he said to him, “Follow me.” 44 Philip, like Andrew and Peter, was from the town of Bethsaida. 45 Philip found Nathanael and told him, “We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote— Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” 46 “Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?” Nathanael asked. “Come and see,” said Philip. 47 When Jesus saw Nathanael approaching, he said of him, “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no

deceit.” **48** “How do you know me?” Nathanael asked. Jesus answered, “I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you.” **49** Then Nathanael declared, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.” **50** Jesus said, “You believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree. You will see greater things than that.” **51** He then added, “Very truly I tell you, you will see ‘heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending on’ the Son of Man.”

Sermon

*Bishop Larry Kochendorfer
(Synod of Alberta and the Territories)*

Welcome to this sermon series that our Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada is providing for congregations throughout the Sundays after Epiphany. I am Larry Kochendorfer and I serve as the Bishop of the Synod of Alberta and the Territories. It is great to be with you this Sunday.

Let us pray:

Come, Holy Spirit, that we may see and taste the grace of God afresh. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might share the grace of God with others. Come, Holy Spirit, that we might bear witness with our whole lives to the grace of God made manifest and available to us in Jesus. Amen.

It was a Thursday. It was a moment so alive that it was almost unbearable. It was so simple really. I had brought our niece, Amanda, who was fifteen at the time, and our youngest son, Jordan, who was then four, over to the church on a Thursday afternoon and while I was in my office returning a couple of telephone calls they were in the sanctuary.

With the phone calls completed I threw on my coat and walked into the sanctuary where I stopped in a moment of epiphany, a moment of revealing, a moment filled with the glory of God – God’s presence – wonderful and mysterious.

Amanda was sitting at the piano playing while Jordan was distributing communion to his invisible congregants who were kneeling at the altar rail.

After a moment he saw me standing at the door to the sanctuary and he yelled out to me, “We’re playing communion, Dad!”

And I looked at this four-year-old dressed in grey sweats, with a face still partially covered with lunch, and his face glowing with an utterly new discovery. He was sharing communion.

And I saw a glimpse of God’s presence, a revelation of God’s work – the father, the pastor in me saw, in a fleeting moment, the emerging worshipper, communion sharer, worship leader in our son – something so touching, so incandescent, so alive that it was almost beyond bearing – and I was changed – transformed.

Is it simply too ordinary? Too unsuspecting? Too unexpected? Or is it too wonderful, this moment of clarity, of unveiling, of revealing, of God’s presence?

We have entered the season of Epiphany. A season of revealing. Of appearance. Of manifestation. Epiphany: an immediate and meaningful understanding of something. Surprising. Sudden. Profound. Epiphany: an illuminating discovery, realization, or disclosure. A revelation.

What is revealed in this season is what it means that God became human. That God entered our world, no longer satisfied just to be with us but now is one of us. When that happens, when the incarnation happens, we change too. Our humanity changes. Suddenly, who we see ourselves to be can no longer remain the same because we have seen God in who we are.

We tend to expect that Epiphany is only about the revelation of Jesus. About seeing Jesus, of witnessing Jesus in various revealing moments. It is not supposed to be about being found ourselves.

But John’s Gospel invites us to imagine that these can be one and the same. That is, seeing Jesus in those revelatory moments, those unexpected moments is also when you find yourself — who you are, who you are called to be. In those moments of seeing Jesus you realize your identity as a follower, a disciple; and you see a glimpse, perhaps a new glimpse of something you have not seen before when it comes to your own faith story, your own understanding of what it means to be a disciple, your answering of your baptismal call: “follow me.”

Maybe this epiphany season might take on a mirror effect. That is, when you hear these texts, when you look for Jesus, when you experience these revelatory moments of Jesus, you simultaneously see something about yourself, and ask what does this mean?

John’s Gospel is full of these moments of epiphany, and of what following Jesus will look like.

For this Gospel writer it will mean taking John 3:16 seriously. It will mean taking the witness of the woman at the well seriously. It will mean finding those who have been cast out of communities for their courage to confess their faith in Jesus...like the man born blind (John 9:34). It will mean believing that the Spirit is indeed your very breath as Jesus sends you out into the world (John 20:21-22). It will mean being thrown out yourself (16:2), rejected for insisting that God’s love for the world and everyone in it – everyone – is actually true.

The incarnation of Jesus changes everything. The revealing of Jesus changes us. These epiphanies transform people.

Listen to Martin Luther King, Jr., who we will remember tomorrow, and his description of an epiphany and his response in his book, *Stride Toward Freedom*:

I was ready to give up. With my cup of coffee sitting untouched before me, I tried to think of a way to move out of the picture without appearing a coward. In this state of exhaustion, when my courage had all but gone, I decided to take my problem to God. With my head in my hands, I bowed over the kitchen table and prayed aloud.

The words I spoke to God that midnight are still vivid in my memory. “I am here taking a stand for what I believe is right. But now I am afraid. The people are looking to me for leadership, and if I stand before them without strength and courage, they too will falter. I am at the end of my powers. I have nothing left. I’ve come to the point where I can’t face it alone.”

At that moment, I experienced the presence of the Divine as I had never experienced God before. It seemed as though I could hear the quiet assurance of an inner voice saying: “Stand up for justice, stand up for truth; and God will be at your side forever.” Almost at once my fears began to go. My uncertainty disappeared. I was ready to face anything.

(Martin Luther King Jr, *Stride Toward Freedom: The Montgomery Story*, 1st edition [©1958 Harper & Brothers], 124–125.)

Martin Luther King, Jr. was transformed by this epiphany often referred to as his “vision in the kitchen.”

Nathaniel's epiphany, in which he saw who Jesus was, changed Nathaniel, who, then, proclaimed Jesus as: Rabbi, Son of God, King of Israel.

It was a Thursday – it was a moment so alive that it was almost unbearable....“We’re playing communion Dad!”

I suspect that most of us glimpse these moments of epiphany, of aliveness, of revelation, of unveiling – of God’s presence – the Spirit’s work – in the regular, ordinary patterns of life: in a blinding moment of conversion; in a moment of deepened awareness of the presence of God; in a moment of realizing the truth and call of Christ; in the play ritual of a child; through parents, ever so lovingly, showing a child how to swing a bat; through our children singing “*You Are Holy, You are Whole,*” “*Beautiful Savior,*” “*O Come All Ye Faithful*”; in the hike up a mountain to pray; in a word of absolution; in an act of justice and peace; in a moment of sacramental meeting – when we hear the drops of water drowning and bringing with the Word new life – when the bread in our hands and the wine on our lips suddenly acquires a flavor and a vintage which takes us out of time and out of our human limitations and intoxicates us with God.

As we glimpse God at work, this unveiling, this revelation, this epiphany – we hold it in our heart and we return to life, different, transformed ourselves because for one shining, mysterious moment we have seen.

These glimpses do not evaporate our doubts or tell us what to do next, nothing will be visibly different but beloved people of God, siblings in Christ – it does make a difference to have seen, even for a moment, a taste, a glimpse, something so alive that it is almost beyond bearing, for we return to daily life, back to work, back to ministry, to family, to this time of COVID pandemic. Different, changed, transformed, back to where mission and ministry is engaged, where the love of God is shared, and where grace is gifted.

Where we are invited to live out our baptismal calling, to follow Jesus, in the midst of our daily lives:

*to live among God's faithful people,
to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's
supper,
to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through
word and deed,
to serve all people, following the example of Jesus,
and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.*

*(Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Affirmation of
Baptism. ©2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America, Augsburg Fortress, p. 236.)*

Epiphany is a short season. Expect to discover many things about Jesus. And in the process, anticipate learning something about yourself. Sometimes the change is monumental. Sometimes incremental. Either way, something will happen. Something epiphanous!

Let us pray:

Into your hands, almighty God, we place ourselves: our minds to know you, our hearts to love you, our wills to serve you, for we are yours.

Into your hands, incarnate Savior, we place ourselves: receive us and draw us after you, that we may follow your steps; abide in us and enliven us by the power of your indwelling.

Into your hands, O hovering Spirit, we place ourselves: take us and fashion us after your image; let your comfort strengthen, your grace renew, and your fire cleanse us, soul and body, in life and in death, in this world of shadows and in your changeless world of light eternal, now and forever. Amen.

*(Evangelical Lutheran Worship: Additional Prayers –
Commitment. ©2006 Evangelical Lutheran Church in
America, Augsburg Fortress, p. 86.)*

Prayers

Guided by Christ made known to the nations, let us offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all people in need.

For the body of Christ gathered throughout the world and for all servants of the gospel, that following Jesus, the church lives out its calling every day, let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

For the well-being of creation, for plants and animals, and for all that God has marvelously made, that we serve as wise stewards of Earth, our home, let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

For police officers and firefighters, for attorneys and paralegals, for peacekeepers and military personnel, and for the leaders of governments, that they provide protection to all people, especially the most vulnerable, let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

For those lacking food or shelter, for those who are sick or grieving, and for those who are imprisoned or homebound, that God console all who suffer, let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

For our neighborhood, for visitors joining us for the first time or returning, and for those absent from our assembly, that all who seek to know God are nourished by word and sacrament, let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

In thanksgiving for the saints who have gone before us, that their lives give us a vision of the gospel in action, let us pray, **Have mercy, O God.**

Merciful God, hear the prayers of your people, spoken or silent, for the sake of the one who dwells among us, your Son, Jesus Christ our Savior. **Amen.**