

New Hope Lutheran Church

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February 14, 2021 Transfiguration of Our Lord

Coming Events

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

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

Sermons are available on our website nhlc.ca

We now have hymns you can hear using the link provided.
One at the beginning and one at the end of the bulletin.

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.

Hymn -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KoHkmJDazDk>

Psalm 50:1 – 6

- 1 The Mighty One, God, the LORD, speaks and summons the earth from the rising of the sun to where it sets.
- 2 From Zion, perfect in beauty, God shines forth.
- 3 Our God comes and will not be silent; a fire devours before him, and around him a tempest rages.
- 4 He summons the heavens above, and the earth, that he may judge his people:
- 5 “Gather to me this consecrated people, who made a covenant with me by sacrifice.”
- 6 And the heavens proclaim his righteousness, for he is a God of justice.

Prayer of the Day

Almighty God, the resplendent light of your truth shines from the mountaintop into our hearts. Transfigure us by your beloved Son, and illumine the world with your image, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

First Reading “2 Kings 2:1 – 12”

1 When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. 2 Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel.” But Elisha said, “As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. 3 The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, “Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?” “Yes, I know,” Elisha replied, “so be quiet.” 4 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho.” And he replied, “As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So they went to Jericho. 5 The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?” “Yes, I know,” he replied, “so be quiet.” 6 Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.” And he replied, “As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them walked on. 7 Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. 8 Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. 9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what

can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,” Elisha replied. 10 “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.” 11 As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. 12 Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.

Second Reading “2 Corinthians 4:3 – 6”

3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. 4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. 5 For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus’ sake. 6 For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God’s glory displayed in the face of Christ.

Sermon

Bishop Michael Pryse
(Eastern Synod)

The Holy Gospel according to Mark:

Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. Then Peter said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah.” He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, “This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!” Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them anymore, but only Jesus. As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead. The Gospel of the Lord!

Hi everybody! It is a real delight to be here with you today and to be a part of your Sunday worship and to give your pastor this small bit of relief. Our rostered ministers have been doing a magnificent job of providing opportunities for us to worship over the course of this long pandemic. But friends, it is very hard work and anything we can do to help lighten the load they are carrying is well worth supporting!

Today I'd like to share a few thoughts with you concerning the subject of vision. And I'm sure that most of you would agree that vision is a very important thing. You know very well from your own experience, both individually and as a congregation, that you need vision to carry a task through to completion. You need vision to sustain you and refresh you as you press through the bumps, turns and valleys we will inevitably encounter in life.

There is, however, a potential danger involved in this vision business. Vision is good, but the line between being visionary and being delusional can sometimes become very fine! Let me spell out the differences I see by way of an incident that happened to me some years ago on a golf course.

Now, for those of you who know not the pleasure of chasing a little bouncy ball over hundreds of acres of mixed terrain, let me tell you that all golfers carry a common vision. It is the vision of the perfect shot, a drive to the pin, a smooth effortless stroke and perfect backswing. You can imagine the gentle arc of the ball as it climbs into the sky. Perhaps a few astonished *oohs* and *aaahs* from the gallery. And then lastly, you imagine the final, graceful drop of the ball, pin high and just a few feet from the cup.

Well, one day it actually happened for me. The vision became a reality. A perfect shot on a 265 yard par three followed by a gentle, dare I say casual, tap-in for birdie! It had never happened before nor since!

In retrospect, I now know that I should have accepted that vision, that unique experience, for what it truly was. I should have enjoyed this brief glimpse of golfing glory and then set it aside in my mind for future inspiration and guidance. But I didn't do that. Instead I immediately adopted the delusional posture of a naïve visionary.

I was no longer Michael, the intimate friend of sand trap and water hazard. I now stood among the great ones; a veritable Tiger Woods! And, of course, I encountered the end which ultimately comes to all naïve visionaries; and by the time I had finished the fourth hole I had lost seven balls; torn up enough

divots to generously sod my front lawn and was seriously contemplating how much my clubs would fetch at our next neighbourhood garage sale!

My vision was left in tatters. Not because there was anything wrong with the vision itself, but rather because I had naïvely assumed to have claimed and contained that vision rather than allowing myself to be carried forward, guided and inspired by it.

Do you see the distinction? In our Gospel lesson we see elements of this dynamic played out in more sacred terms. Jesus and his disciples go up a mountain. Jesus moves on ahead and then, suddenly and unexpectedly, apparent magic starts to happen. Jesus form starts to change, he becomes like pure energy, pure light. Glorified beings seem to appear; Moses and Elijah. And then finally the whole episode is dramatically concluded by a mysterious voice from the heavens that proclaims this same Jesus to be God's own Son.

Can you imagine having such an experience? And who can really know how or what was happening! Regardless, it was extraordinary and the response of the disciple's is understandable. They are both terrified by and captivated by this vision and want to hold onto it. They want this glorious moment to go on forever. They want to set up tents and live right there on the mountain!

But as quickly as the vision had come, it was gone. In an instant the disciples went from being privileged witnesses of the glories of heaven, back to being tired fisherman huddled on the unfamiliar face of a mountainside! The vision had come, and in spite of the disciples' desire to contain it and hold onto it, it had just as quickly passed. They confused this temporary and transitory vision for that which was eternal. They had confused the means with the end!

This is a danger which we, as a church, also need to continually guard against. We too can become misdirected and confused about the means and the end in ways that can distract us from our primary mission. Let me give you a secular example of what I mean.

In 1960 a Harvard business professor named Theodore Levitt wrote a classic article that focussed on the dramatic decline of the railroad industry in early 20th century North America. The decline of the industry, Levitt concludes, didn't come about because people and freight no longer needed to be transported. The railroad declined, rather, because the railway managers came to believe that they were in the railroad business rather than the transportation business. They confused the means -

tracks and engines - with the ends - the transportation of people and freight!

Can you see any analogies for the church? Do we not sometimes function as if we were in the church business instead of the blessing business; the "we exist for ourselves" business as opposed to the "God's mission to bless the world" business?" Do we not sometimes fall into this same trap of confusing the means with the ends and making it all about us; acting as if the church – our buildings, institutions, practices and beliefs were an end in and of themselves, rather than being a means by which we can support and participate in the ultimate end of advancing God's mission to bless and save the world.

I believe that there are many people in our communities who are open to experiencing the kind of conversions that many people experienced through Jesus' life and ministry, many people who are coming to recognize the emptiness and hollowness of the false gospels of contemporary life. But those questioners and seekers won't look for a renewed life in a community, in a church, that doesn't provide evidence of having experienced a similar conversion; that doesn't believably express the new life that we claim to be calling others to embrace. They won't easily be drawn to the life of a church which appears to be more interested in the church business than in the blessing business.

One of the unexpected, albeit forced, blessings of this time of pandemic has been a reordering of priorities; a renewed appreciation of the means and the ends. During this time where we have been cut off from our church buildings and from the activities and practices that received so much of our attention and care in a pre-pandemic time, we've been given the opportunity to focus on the real end and purpose of everything that we do; advancing the reign of God through faithful proclamation, prayer and service. It's been a kind of forced re-set that we really need to hang onto when the day eventually comes when we can return to some measure of normalcy in our life together.

The same voice that proclaimed Jesus to be "well loved" on the mount of transfiguration speaks that same blessing to us, today. That blessing is a means, and not an end. It is a means by which we are called to aid and abet the ultimate end of God's mission to bless and save the world; a means by which we are empowered to share the Gospel of love and reconciliation that has been entrusted to us; generously, freely and extravagantly for the world's salvation. AMEN

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 gospel proclaimed in word and deed, for communities of faith far and near, and for all who show the face of Christ throughout the world, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For creation: sun, moon, and stars; life forming in the dark earth and ocean deep; mountains, clouds and storms, and creatures seen and unseen, and for the Holy Spirit's guidance in our stewardship of God's creation, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For those responsible for safety and protection: for emergency responders and security guards, attorneys and advocates, civil servants and leaders of governments, that they witness to mercy and justice throughout the world, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For all who suffer this day, that Christ our healer transform sickness into health, loneliness into companionship, bereavement into consolation, and suffering into peace, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

For companions on life's journey in this worshiping community, for loved ones who cannot be with us this day, and for guidance during struggles we face, that God's glory is revealed around and among us, let us pray. **Have mercy, O God.**

In thanksgiving for the faithful departed who now rest from their earthly pilgrimage, that their lives of service and prayer inspire us in our living, 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.**

Hymn -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7OlwSQmyCg4>