

New Hope Lutheran Church

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February 21, 2021 First Sunday of Lent

Coming Events

- Feb 23 1:00pm Zoom Raamatupiiri,
registration pjp@nhlc.ca
Feb 24 7:00pm Zoom Lenten service & coffee
registration office@nhlc.ca
Mar 7 10:00am Messu † **Voima Hall**
Mar 7 2:00pm Worship Service **Regent St**

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 - A Mighty Fortress

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bONV_YZCKdg

Psalm 25:1 – 10

- ¹ In you, LORD my God, I put my trust.
² I trust in you; do not let me be put to shame, nor let my enemies triumph over me.
³ No one who hopes in you will ever be put to shame, but shame will come on those who are treacherous without cause.
⁴ Show me your ways, LORD, teach me your paths.
⁵ Guide me in your truth and teach me, for you are God my Savior, and my hope is in you all day long.
⁶ Remember, LORD, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old.
⁷ Do not remember the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you, LORD, are good.
⁸ Good and upright is the LORD; therefore he instructs sinners in his ways.
⁹ He guides the humble in what is right and teaches them his way.
¹⁰ All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, heavenly Father, in the waters of the flood you saved the chosen, and in the wilderness of temptation you protected your Son from sin. Renew us in the gift of baptism. May your holy angels be with us, that the wicked foe may have no power over us, 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 “**Genesis 9:8 – 17**”

8 Then God said to Noah and to his sons with him: **9** “I now establish my covenant with you and with your descendants after you **10** and with every living creature that was with you—the birds, the livestock and all the wild animals, all those that came out of the ark with you—every living creature on earth. **11** I establish my covenant with you: Never again will all life be destroyed by the waters of a flood; never again will there be a flood to destroy the earth.” **12** And God said, “This is the sign of the covenant I am making between me and you and every living creature with you, a covenant for all generations to come: **13** I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth. **14** Whenever I bring

clouds over the earth and the rainbow appears in the clouds, **15** I will remember my covenant between me and you and all living creatures of every kind. Never again will the waters become a flood to destroy all life. **16** Whenever the rainbow appears in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and all living creatures of every kind on the earth.” **17** So God said to Noah, “This is the sign of the covenant I have established between me and all life on the earth.”

Second Reading “**1 Peter 3:18 – 22**”

18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive in the Spirit. **19** After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits— **20** to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water, **21** and this water symbolizes baptism that now saves you also—not the removal of dirt from the body but the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, **22** who has gone into heaven and is at God’s right hand—with angels, authorities and powers in submission to him.

Gospel “**Mark 1:9 – 15**”

9 At that time Jesus came from Nazareth in Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. **10** Just as Jesus was coming up out of the water, he saw heaven being torn open and the Spirit descending on him like a dove. **11** And a voice came from heaven: “You are my Son, whom I love; with you I am well pleased.” **12** At once the Spirit sent him out into the wilderness, **13** and he was in the wilderness forty days, being tempted by Satan. He was with the wild animals, and angels attended him. **14** After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. **15** “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!”

Sermon

Pastor Charles Nolting

Step by Step

As we often find in the gospel of Mark, events happen in quick succession without a lot of details. Jesus gets baptized. Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan for 40 days. John was imprisoned. Jesus began proclaiming the good news.

The way Mark writes it, Jesus' life almost appears to have some kind of master plan - as if event A had to happen before event B could happen, and on and on. If Mark isn't going to include a lot of detail, why does he include all these steps? We, on the other hand, might think that the most logical course of events would be that Jesus was baptized, and immediately began preaching the good news. Forget about wasting 40 days in the wilderness and imprisoning poor John; let's just jump ahead already! But not according to Mark. For whatever reason, Jesus *had* to go into the wilderness and John *had* to go to jail before Jesus could get moving with the one thing people were longing for. But why wait?

It might help to think of it like an automotive assembly line. One might have the opinion that when building a car, the whole process could be made faster by putting together the body, slapping the wheels on, and just shipping it out without an engine or transmission. Production could be ramped up in a hurry if they would build cars that way, don't you think?

We probably know the result. Nobody would want a car you need your family to push so you can get groceries - no matter how little fuel it uses. All the steps have to be followed if you want to end up with the desired results.

Our lives often work out that way as well. Sometimes one or more things have to happen, (even unpleasant things) before other events can come into play. Jesus first had to have a miserable time in the wilderness. John had to go to prison. We can guess, but we can't ever be totally sure why. God's plans aren't usually revealed until afterwards, and we don't always see that either; especially if we aren't really looking for God at work in our lives.

As a young man working as a carpenter I often wondered why I wound up with low paying jobs and being laid off for a few months every year. The economists said it was because we were in a recession and the demand for housing was low. Because of this, there was a glut of trades personnel and construction workers. (How times have changed!) While my job prospects kept getting better as the years went on, my reality was that I was just keeping up with inflation, and questioned why I had to struggle so much just to keep ahead of being broke.

In retrospect, it's pretty clear to me why I had to endure that kind of lifestyle. I know firsthand what it is like to live from pay to pay. I've been there and done that. I learned many lessons that would come in useful much later in life after I became a

pastor. When those struggling with financial woes come to me, I know what they are talking about. I don't offer platitudes I heard somewhere, but can offer something from my own experience. The difficult times in my life became times of learning and education, although I never realized it for many years. In my life, as in many others, step A had to come before step B, and that all before step C. God knows that we best grow when living life one step at a time.

Something similar might be said for the pandemic we are living through at this time. When it began, we thought we had it all figured out. We will isolate for 4 to 6 weeks and then it will be all over, and we can get back to normal. Remember when we thought we'd be worshipping together just like old times by last Easter? Instead we went through the first wave, then a summer lull, then back to an unrecognizable form of in-person worship, back to lockdown by Christmas, and now...? We aren't even sure what the next step will be, or when.

At this point many of us are fatigued. We are tired of this pandemic. We are weary of masks and hand sanitizer, and isolating, and being afraid. We want this vaccine to come to us soon because we just want to get together again; to sing, to worship, to hug each other or shake hands without fear.

One reason for our fatigue may be that we thought a pandemic would be a sprint rather than a marathon. How were we to know? We've never lived through a pandemic before! And so, while we ran wildly at the beginning, we have lost steam, and may well be tempted to just give up on all precautions.

But what if we were to look at this as a learning experience instead? What if we were to consider that God may be leading us somewhere - step by step - to something we could never achieve without this experience, and every other one inbetween?

Noah moved forward one step at a time in faith - believing God's word in preparing for a major flood. Jesus moved forward one step after the other because he had the faith to know that God was leading him to the place he had to be, learning what he needed to know. While we may still be uncertain of what God has in mind for us, we are encouraged to continue to be faithful so that we too can see God's plan - whatever it may be - unfold before us. Amen.

Prayers

Relying on the promises of God, we pray boldly for the church, the world, and all in need.

In Jesus your realm has come near to us in every place and time. Give your church throughout the world a spirit of humility and repentance; teach us to trust always in the good news of your salvation. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You have made a covenant of mercy with every living creature. Protect all the earth's creatures from destruction. Empower the work of biologist, conservationists, and science educators. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

All your paths are steadfast love and faithfulness. Direct the words and actions of leaders in our community and throughout the world, that they may maintain justice for the lowly. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Even in the wilderness you are with us. Walk alongside migrants and refugees crossing dangerous lands. Tend to those whose lives feel desolate. Give healing and strength to all who suffer. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the covenant of baptism you claim us as beloved children. Nurture us in our baptismal identity and teach us to live within it for the sake of others. Strengthen this congregation's ministries of care and concern. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In baptism you join us to the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. We praise you for all those who have died trusting in your faithfulness. Bring us with them to the fullness of your reign. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

Hymn - I Want Jesus to Walk With Me

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=90ZGXp89FyU>