

New Hope Lutheran Church

189 Regent St.
Sudbury, Ontario
P3C 4C4

705-673-2933

email: office@nhlc.ca

website: nhlc.ca

face book: New Hope Lutheran Church

Pastors:

Rev. Charles Nolting

phone: 705-920-3573 email: pcn@nhlc.ca

Rev. Johanna Porkola

phone: 705-688-6284 email: pjp@nhlc.ca

March 7, 2021

Third Sunday of Lent

Coming Events

- Mar 9 1:00pm Zoom Raamatupiiri
6:30pm Council meeting **Regent St & Zoom**
- Mar 10 7:00pm Zoom Lenten service & coffee
- Mar 14 10:00am No service **Voima Hall**
- Mar 14 2:00pm No service **Regent St**
- Mar 21 10:00am Messu † **Voima Hall**
1:00pm Annual mtg
Regent St, Voima Hall & Zoom
2:00pm Worship Service **Regent St**

In our prayers Fred, Esme, Martha.

Remembering Maija Hautamaki 93yrs
Kirsti Jutila 89yrs



Merciful Lord; you are the hope of the broken-hearted, the comfort of the grieving. We pray today for all who grieve the deaths of Maija Hautamaki and Kirsti Jutila. Comfort them, comfort us all, with the sure knowledge of the resurrection to eternal life, we pray in the name of Jesus, our savior and Lord. Amen.

Opening Hymn - There in God's Garden -
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3G_ZsezOuUI

Psalm 19

¹The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

²Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they reveal knowledge.

³They have no speech, they use no words; no sound is heard from them.

⁴Yet their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world. In the heavens God has pitched a tent for the sun.

⁵It is like a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, like a champion rejoicing to run his course.

⁶It rises at one end of the heavens and makes its circuit to the other; nothing is deprived of its warmth.

⁷The law of the Lord is perfect, refreshing the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple.

⁸The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes.

⁹The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The decrees of the Lord are firm, and all of them are righteous.

¹⁰They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb.

¹¹By them your servant is warned; in keeping them there is great reward.

¹²But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults.

¹³Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression.

¹⁴May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, through your Son you have called us to live faithfully and act courageously. Keep us steadfast in your covenant of grace, and teach us the wisdom that comes only 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 “**Exodus 20:1-17**”

1 And God spoke all these words: **2** “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. **3** “You

shall have no other gods before me. **4** “You shall not make for yourself an image in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. **5** You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, **6** but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments. **7** “You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name. **8** “Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. **9** Six days you shall labor and do all your work, **10** but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. **11** For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy. **12** “Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. **13** “You shall not murder. **14** “You shall not commit adultery. **15** “You shall not steal. **16** “You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. **17** “You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

Second Reading “**1 Corinthians 1:18 – 25**”

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.” **20** Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? **21** For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. **22** Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, **23** but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, **24** but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. **25** For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Gospel “John 2:13 – 22”

13 When it was almost time for the Jewish Passover, Jesus went up to Jerusalem. **14** In the temple courts he found people selling cattle, sheep and doves, and others sitting at tables exchanging money. **15** So he made a whip out of cords, and drove all from the temple courts, both sheep and cattle; he scattered the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. **16** To those who sold doves he said, “Get these out of here! Stop turning my Father’s house into a market!” **17** His disciples remembered that it is written: “Zeal for your house will consume me.” **18** The Jews then responded to him, “What sign can you show us to prove your authority to do all this?” **19** Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and I will raise it again in three days.” **20** They replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and you are going to raise it in three days?” **21** But the temple he had spoken of was his body. **22** After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. Then they believed the scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.

Sermon

“Blind to the Law”

Many years ago there was an email going around regarding a guy in Michigan who got a letter sent to him from the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality which accused him of building an unauthorized “*wood debris*” dam across a stream. He was informed that he should have had a permit for this dam and since the dam had burst after a heavy rainfall, he was required to clean up the mess and restore the stream back to free flowing condition by January of the following year, or face legal repercussions.

In his letter of reply, the landowner pointed out that he hadn’t built the dam, and the department should chase after the real culprits; which were beavers. He also questioned whether this was discrimination, or could he see permits that had been taken out by other beavers building dams? Since the beavers were financially destitute (not to mention illiterate and therefore unable to receive the notice), would they receive state funding for a lawyer if this went to court? He informed the department that they may as well begin legal action immediately, since by January the beavers would be under the ice and unable to be contacted. The landowner closed by saying that, in his opinion, it would be pointless to prosecute the beavers as they are natural resources (supposedly protected by this same department), and perhaps the department should be instead

focusing on a greater problem to human health which were the defecating bears in the area.

What this story points out to us is that following the law to the letter can lead to some rather ridiculous situations. And this is what Jesus was upset over in this morning’s gospel lesson. Humans had so twisted the laws of the Lord that they were doing more harm than good! In order to follow the laws to the letter that humans had prescribed to them, it had become necessary to even have a market in the temple area. This blindness to the purpose of the law was what angered Jesus.

In our time, it would appear that the pendulum has swung in exactly the opposite direction from Jesus day. Rather than taking the law of God seriously as a nation, it has been more or less allowed to lie fallow, and little is ever done with it. It seems that we too have blinded ourselves to what the law is really about. People have the feeling that it is too confining, too restricting, and resists freedoms we feel are rightfully ours. Is that really what the 10 commandments are about?

In our first lesson we heard a little bit of when the 10 commandments came into being. The people of Israel were wandering around in the wilderness after having escaped the slavery in Egypt. Back in Egypt their boundaries had been set for them by their Egyptian masters. There were rules to be followed. Harsh rules. But once they had their freedom, they were able to do as they pleased.

Now, on the surface, this being able to do as you please sounds rather attractive, doesn’t it? You can do what you want, when you want, wherever you want. You may be aware that such a state of affairs is referred to as “*anarchy*”. All people rule. The unfortunate side of this rather ugly coin is that everybody only looks after themselves, and there is no protection for anybody. Its kind of like running around naked in a swamp during Black Fly season. You’re free to do it, but do you really want to?

So God had made a covenant with the people of Israel, and because God loved them he saw that they needed some boundary system so that they would be protected from each other as well as outside enemies. The boundary system would help them to organize themselves into a nation as well. And so as part of the covenant, as part of the promise, God gave them the 10 commandments to help them be protected from the evil forces within themselves and out side of themselves. This morning we heard the foundation for this covenant – *God is to be god. God is to come above all else.* Once you can live by

that defining rule, everything else falls into place. When you love God, you obey God and you follow Gods ways. This is what the 10 commandments follow up on.

So, rather than being restricting, the 10 commandments are actually good for us! How we use them is sometimes what is hurtful. A lady walks into a drug store and tells the pharmacist she needs some cyanide. The pharmacist said, “*Why in the world do you need cyanide?*” The lady then explained she needed it to poison her husband. The pharmacist’s eyes got big and he said, “*Lord have mercy, I can’t give you cyanide to kill your husband! That’s against the law! I’ll lose my license, they’ll throw both of us in jail and all kinds of bad things will happen! Absolutely not, you can NOT have any cyanide!*” Then the lady reached into her purse and pulled out a picture of her husband in bed with the pharmacist’s wife. The pharmacist looked at the picture and replied, “*Well now, you didn’t tell me you had a prescription.*”

In that case, what we have here is a matter of “fixing” the broken adultery command by breaking the command against murder. If we found that joke funny, we realize it doesn’t work that way. This is an example of how breaking one commandment can lead to breaking other commandments. At the root of it all God has been allowed to lie fallow and people are blind to the law – not by taking it excessively seriously as in our gospel or that first story I gave you, but because they ignore it.

Ignoring the Law can become as binding as following it to excess. Take the command to remember the Sabbath day. In Jesus’ day this meant Saturday was the day one was to refrain from working. When taken to excess (as the Pharisee’s did) it meant that one could only do so much on that day before it was considered work. Only so many steps could be walked. There were a limited number of things one could do. It was all laid out in the Pharisee handbook. The only way to get around things that absolutely had to be done was to either prepare in advance (such as meals), or hire someone to break the law for you (such as having a servant care for the animals on that day). This is taking things to excess.

Our society, on the other hand is quite the opposite with regards to a Sabbath day. Everywhere you look there is a universal refrain: “*I am so busy.*” This is usually said as if it were some kind of trophy, an ability to withstand stress our forebearers couldn’t have been bothered to withstand. I guess that the busier we are, the more important we seem to ourselves,

and imagine we are to others. To be unable to find time for anything except work is the new model of a successful life.

In many ways, we have forgotten what the idea of Sabbath is about. It's a time to celebrate and enjoy what is beautiful and good about life. It's a time to worship, tell stories, give thanks, share meals, nap, and take walks – among other leisure activities. It's a time to be refreshed as we let the chores and projects lie fallow. It follows the idea of dormancy, just as some animals and most plants go dormant in the winter, building strength for the new productive season ahead.

As wonderful as it all sounds, one problem we have with all this is the sense of terrible guilt when we take time to rest. We are always reminded that there is so much to be done and feel pressured to be doing something. However, when this idea of Sabbath is more than an idea – when it's an actual command – that gives us permission to stop; and restore our souls. It allows us to, just for one day a week, to cease our desperate striving for more and, instead, taste the blessings we have already been given, and give thanks. Too often we work hard to achieve things, and then rarely get to enjoy it because we are on to something else. What then is the point?

So today I'm going to ask you to reconsider how you look at the law. Do you see it as something that binds you up to restrict and restrain you? Or is it something that frees us to live life as God created us to live it – joyfully, fruitfully, and allowing God to be God? Amen.

Prayers

Prayers of intercession “Hear us, O God.”

Response: **“Your mercy is great.”**

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

There is no God before you. Purify the faith of your church, that your people place their trust in nothing beside you. Your name is holy. Guide your church, that in every situation your people's words and actions honor your name. Hear us, O God...

The heavens declare your glory. Renew your creation. Provide leaders in the struggle for clean air and water; protect creatures and crops that rely on healthy ecosystems; give all people the willingness to repent when our way of life pollutes the earth and skies. Hear us, O God....

Your foolishness is wiser than human wisdom. Fill leaders with the foolishness of your peace and mercy. You law defends the vulnerable. Work through legislators, judicial systems and systems of law enforcement to protect the wellbeing of the most vulnerable. Hear us, O God...

You overflow with grace upon grace. Expand the imaginations of those who serve in positions of authority. Open their hearts to the needs of their nations and communities. Protect all those in harm's way and those risking danger for the sake of others. Hear us, O God...

You call us to proclaim Christ crucified. Give clarity to this congregation and our leaders, so that we might follow Christ beyond our own habits and comfort. Clear out anything in our common life that would obscure the gospel or that serves our own interests. Hear us, O God...

Your blessed Son Jesus Christ went about doing good, and healing all manner of sickness and disease among the people: Continue this, his gracious work among us in regard to the spread of Covid-19 and other forms of illness. Cheer, heal, and sanctify the sick; especially those we now name in our hearts, or aloud... Hear us, O God...

We entrust ourselves and all our prayers to you, O faithful God, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray...

Lord's Prayer

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Save us from the time of trial and deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and forever. Amen.

Hymn – Send Me Lord (Thuma Mina)-

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=axbo9Wqri5Y>