

New Hope Lutheran Church

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April 4, 2021
Easter Sunday

Coming Events

All services have been cancelled until April 18, 2021 due to COVID-19.

Apr 6 1:00pm Zoom Raamatupiiri
Apr 13 1:00pm Zoom Raamatupiiri
Apr 14 6:30pm Council meeting **Zoom**

Apr 18 10:00am Messu † **Voima Hall**
1:00pm Annual Meeting
Regent St, Voima Hall & Zoom
2:00pm Worship Service **Regent St**

In our prayers Fred, Esme, Martha.

Prayer of the Day

Living God! With the women who were the first to proclaim the good news, we gather in our many places – in our houses, apartments, rooms, in front of computers – to meditate and to sing your praises. Through your resurrection, a door has been opened and your peace is shared. Keep us in that peace throughout these exceptional times. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Opening Hymn – “The Strife is O’er, the Battle Done” Lutheran Service Book LSB #464 - YouTube
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RDHJT4sZRjk>

Psalm 118:1 – 2, 14 – 24

1 Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good; his love endures forever.

2 Let Israel say: “His love endures forever.”

14 The LORD is my strength and my defense; he has become my salvation.

15 Shouts of joy and victory resound in the tents of the righteous: “The LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”

16 The LORD’s right hand is lifted high; the LORD’s right hand has done mighty things!”

17 I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the LORD has done.

18 The LORD has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death.

19 Open for me the gates of the righteous; I will enter and give thanks to the LORD.

20 This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter.

21 I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation.

22 The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone;

23 the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes.

24 The LORD has done it this very day; let us rejoice today and be glad.

First Reading “**Isaiah 25:6 – 9**”

6 On this mountain the LORD Almighty will prepare a feast of rich food for all peoples, a banquet of aged wine—the best of meats and the finest of wines. **7** On this mountain he will destroy the shroud that enfolds all peoples, the sheet that covers all nations; **8** he will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from all faces; he will remove his people’s disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken. **9** In that day they will say, “Surely this is our God; we trusted in him, and he saved us. This is the LORD, we trusted in him; let us rejoice and be glad in his salvation.”

Second Reading “**1 Corinthians 15:1 – 11**”

1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. **2** By this gospel you are saved, if you hold

firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. **3** For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4** that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, **5** and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. **6** After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. **7** Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, **8** and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. **9** For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. **10** But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. **11** Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Gospel “**Mark 16:1 – 8**”

1 When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus’ body. **2** Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb **3** and they asked each other, “Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?” **4** But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. **5** As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed. **6** “Don’t be alarmed,” he said. “You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. **7** But go, tell his disciples and Peter, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’ ” **8** Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone, because they were afraid.

Sermon

After This, You Can’t Go Back

I would hazard a guess that, for many of us, this is only the 2nd time in our lives that we haven’t been physically present at some sort of Easter service. This pandemic just keeps going on and on, to the point that we may even wonder if things will ever get back to something approaching what we used to know as normal. It’s been a long tough slog for us and I suspect there are a lot of things we miss about how life used to be.

While some of us might be tempted to say that life always changes anyway, I think that the changes we've seen in the past year – happening so quickly and all – are like few of us have ever seen.

And I'm sure that there are many voices out there wondering if it will ever really end. Yes, vaccines are coming (they already have for some of us), but it's not really over until everyone has immunity, is it? Until then, we will still be socially distanced, we will wear masks, and we will continue to sanitize like never before. And even when it is all declared to be over, how many of these practices will we continue to carry on with us? While many aspects of life will return to what we once knew, we may not be able to go totally back.

And that can be enough to cause us worry and fear. We might worry about another pandemic (which actually could happen), and we may be fearful for our own lives and the lives of loved ones. But let me ask you; other than continuing with taking precautions, should we continue on by living our lives in worry and fear?

Our Easter story actually addresses such an issue. From the gospel of Mark, we find Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and a woman named Salome headed for the tomb, and they are all filled with worry. Somewhat similar to our situation, things had been bleak for them recently. Jesus had been crucified, and his body laid to rest in a cold stone tomb. Jesus had been a part of changing each of their lives, but with his death they also must have wondered just what lay in store for them in the future, and if things could ever get back to something resembling what they considered normal.

For them, there was a certainty that they could never go back in time to the lives they had led before meeting Jesus. It just wasn't possible because they had known, really known, Jesus – and after that experience, you don't just go back. You can't go back.

In the verses where we meet these three women, they are concerning themselves with worry. They have the spices to anoint the body, but how will they possibly get into the tomb? It's a large stone, and even though it was quite probably circular, they were very sure that they would not have the strength to move it.

Upon hearing or reading these verses, we should probably wonder why they even set out in the first place. Could they not think ahead? Did they expect to just meet some muscular

stranger who would kindly help them move the stone away, reopening a tomb? I mean, how would you even ask someone? "*Excuse me sir, could you help us reopen a grave?*"

Perhaps, like us in our pandemic situation, they just went because they longed for something normal to do, without first considering all aspects of their situation. Perhaps, considering the week that they'd had and what they had all witnessed, they didn't think it through. And so, when the realization hit them, they began to worry in earnest.

We know what happened next. The two Mary's and Salome found the tomb already opened. And not only that, but a messenger dressed in white told them that Jesus was risen, and they were to pass that on to the disciples!

In Mark's version of the resurrection, this did nothing to ease the women's stress levels. They were more afraid than ever, fleeing the tomb, and saying nothing to anyone. Perhaps surprisingly, it is exactly at that point that the earliest versions of Mark come to an end. Fortunately, at some later point in time, someone added on another 11 verses telling how others witnessed the risen Jesus, and the joy felt that - even though things were still far from what they had known as normal – Jesus was (and still is) indeed alive.

We all know that for those women who were the first witnesses of the resurrection, their worry and fear was unnecessary. They came to the tomb worried about moving a stone, and found not only that the stone was already pushed aside, but that Jesus had risen from the dead! God had not only looked after their current concerns, but in the end had also wiped away their tears of sorrow and given them a gift beyond what they could ever have expected! How great their joy must have been!

Speaking of joy, I want you to think about the celebration of joy when this pandemic is finally declared over for good. Think about how thankful you will be to have so much of what we lost returned. Think about how grateful you will be that you can once again do even the simplest of errands without worry and concern.

This is how our Easter celebration should also be whether we are together or not this year. Be joyful for the resurrection of Jesus. Give thanks to God for the salvation returned to us. Be grateful for the sacrifice made on our behalf and that God has indeed triumphed. And most of all, share this joy with others, not only through words, but also through actions. Once we

have experienced the joy of Christ's resurrection, there is no way we can go back either. Amen.

Hymn – Jesus Christ Has Risen Today ELW #365
<https://youtu.be/6sj9ljVsfk>

Prayers

Alive in the risen Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, we bring our prayers before God who promises to hear us and answer in steadfast love.

Praise to you for your power revealed in the resurrection! Fill your church with the power of your love that is stronger than death. Send us to tell the good news wherever death holds sway. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for your life at work in the resurrection! Fill all of creation with your life. Bring it to blossom and flourish; use it to remind us of your persistent grace. Cultivate our care for what you have made. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for the peace made possible in the resurrection! Fill the nations with your peace. Draw together people of all nations and languages; reveal new possibilities and inspire new beginnings. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for the hope of the resurrection! Fill all in need with hope: those who are afraid or confused, those who are sick or suffering, those who are dying, and those who grieve. Assure them of your promises. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for the joy of your resurrection! Fill this assembly with joy as we are called your beloved in baptism. Multiply that joy so that we share it at home, at work, and in our community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Praise to you for your faithfulness revealed in the resurrection! Fill us with trust, that we join with all who have gone before us in proclaiming: "your mercy endures forever!" Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

In the hope of new life in Christ, we raise our prayers to you, trusting in your never-ending goodness and mercy; through 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.

Easter Benediction – *by Bishop Susan Johnson*

May the promise of the empty tomb,
the joy of Mary in the garden,
the renewed belief of Thomas,
the eagerness of the disciples returning from Emmaus,
the love of Peter told three times,
and the peace of the risen Christ be with you this Easter.
The blessing of God, + be with you and all those you love
This day and every day.
Amen.

Hymn – Christ is Risen! Alleluia!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nqo8gMMJb0o>