

New Hope Lutheran Church

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May 30, 2021



Trinity Sunday

Coming Events

All services have been cancelled.

June 1 6:30pm Zoom Raamatupiiri

In our prayers Ruth, Fred, Esme, Martha.

Father's Day bilingual zoom service

For Father's Day, June 20, 2021 at 10:00am, we are planning a bilingual service by **zoom only**. If you would like to take part, please send the office an email to let us know. Then on June 19, 2021 you will receive an invitation with instructions to join.

Opening Hymn – Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty
<https://youtu.be/AgHrNNM23p8>

Prayer of the Day

Almighty Creator and ever-living God: we worship your glory, eternal Three-in-One, and we praise your power, majestic One-in-Three. Keep us steadfast in this faith, defend us in all adversity, and bring us at last into your presence, where you live in endless joy and love, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm 29

- 1 Ascribe to the LORD, you heavenly beings, ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
- 2 Ascribe to the LORD the glory due his name; worship the LORD in the splendor of his holiness.
- 3 The voice of the LORD is over the waters; the God of glory thunders, the LORD thunders over the mighty waters.
- 4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is majestic.
- 5 The voice of the LORD breaks the cedars; the LORD breaks in pieces the cedars of Lebanon.
- 6 He makes Lebanon leap like a calf, Sirion like a young wild ox.
- 7 The voice of the LORD strikes with flashes of lightning.
- 8 The voice of the LORD shakes the desert; the LORD shakes the Desert of Kadesh.
- 9 The voice of the LORD twists the oaks and strips the forests bare. And in his temple all cry, "Glory!"
- 10 The LORD sits enthroned over the flood; the LORD is enthroned as King forever.
- 11 The LORD gives strength to his people; the LORD blesses his people with peace.

First Reading "Isaiah 6:1 – 8"

1 In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord, high and exalted, seated on a throne; and the train of his robe filled the temple. 2 Above him were seraphim, each with six wings: With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they were flying. 3 And they were calling to one another: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD Almighty; the whole earth is full of his glory." 4 At the sound of their voices the doorposts and thresholds shook and the temple was filled with smoke. 5 "Woe to me!" I cried. "I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips, and my eyes have seen the King, the LORD Almighty." 6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a live coal in his hand, which he

had taken with tongs from the altar. 7 With it he touched my mouth and said, "See, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away and your sin atoned for." 8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send? And who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I. Send me!"

Second Reading "Romans 8:12 – 17"

12 Therefore, brothers and sisters, we have an obligation—but it is not to the flesh, to live according to it. 13 For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. 14 For those who are led by the Spirit of God are the children of God. 15 The Spirit you received does not make you slaves, so that you live in fear again; rather, the Spirit you received brought about your adoption to sonship. And by him we cry, "Abba, Father." 16 The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. 17 Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory.

Gospel "John 3:1 – 17"

1 Now there was a Pharisee, a man named Nicodemus who was a member of the Jewish ruling council. 2 He came to Jesus at night and said, "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the signs you are doing if God were not with him." 3 Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." 4 "How can someone be born when they are old?" Nicodemus asked. "Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!" 5 Jesus answered, "Very truly I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless they are born of water and the Spirit. 6 Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. 7 You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' 8 The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." 9 "How can this be?" Nicodemus asked. 10 "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things? 11 Very truly I tell you, we speak of what we know, and we testify to what we have seen, but still you people do not accept our testimony. 12 I have spoken to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how then will you believe if I speak of heavenly things? 13 No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man. 14 Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man

must be lifted up, **15** that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” **16** For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. **17** For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Sermon

“Called”

Over the years I’ve often mulled over the question of why we have a problem with people falling away from the church. Does the church not do things that benefit society? Does the church not offer comfort and support for people when they are going through the rough patches in life? Does the church not offer answers to the bigger questions of life? And death? Isn’t the church available for everybody?

When I got thinking about it, it seems that either people aren’t aware of what the Christian church is about, or they just don’t see how it might be important to them. Maybe the church needs to do a better job of explaining this. And yet, in order to try to fill that void, the church, at its various levels, puts out newsletters and magazines, videos and web sites – and a whole host of other information, especially since we began living in a pandemic. So we can’t say the information isn’t out there. The problem seems to be that unless people are in crisis, they aren’t that interested. I suspect they have fallen into the temptation to turn to other pursuits.

So I think we can conclude that a lot of people have some interest in the church, but aren’t all that interested. They want to know about Christ, but it seems they don’t want to appear too zealous. You could say they are a little bit like Nicodemus in that gospel lesson we heard. Nicodemus felt there was something about Jesus that was worth looking into. But he doesn’t want to appear too interested to his colleagues. And so he goes to pay Jesus a little visit – very late at night – when no one else will know what he is up to. In other words, he doesn’t want anyone to know that he might be feeling a little bit called to Jesus.

In spite of the late hour and all the secrecy, Jesus is willing to talk to the man. Unfortunately, the man wasn’t really willing to listen. Well, to be fair, he wanted to - but it seems like his ears

were plugged. He appears to only be hearing what he wanted to hear. And in doing that, he allowed himself to get stuck on details. It’s kind of like trying to describe the purpose of a tree to someone and we happen to mention that the leaves are green. That sounds fine, but what are we to do with someone who then asks why the leaves are green? Why can’t they be another colour, like pink, it would be so much prettier. You see what’s happening? This person is stuck on details and it’s kind of hard to go on with your explanation of trees until they can get past the details. They allow the details to hinder their understanding.

And that’s what happened with Nicodemus. He got stuck on this whole “born again” idea, and it was hindering him from understanding the big picture of who Jesus is and what Jesus is about. Jesus accused him of using the questions to procrastinate and avoid the real issue. I sometimes wonder if well-meaning people do the same with their faith. Do they get stuck on some detail, and miss out on what being a Christian is all about? Do they understand the whole concept of being called by God, and what an honor it is to be considered a child of God? Or are they stuck on a detail; like they don’t think they are qualified enough?

This is what hit the prophet Isaiah in our first lesson today. In a vision, Isaiah has come before God, and when he sees all the glory, all the magnificence, all the power - he realizes that he is nowhere good enough to be anywhere near God. He has what he calls, “*unclean lips*”, and has always hung around people of the same disposition. They have not been faithful to God. They have no right to even ask for an audience with God. For the way they have allowed their relationship to God die, they deserve to be banished from God’s presence and mercy forever.

But in spite of that Isaiah is still in God’s presence, realizes how unworthy he is to be there, and then a strange thing happens. A six-winged Seraph, using some tongs, picks up a hot coal, and presses it to his unclean lips. It’s kind of like cauterizing a wound to make it heal. You disinfect by burning. Because of this Isaiah is now qualified, and when he hears a call from God, he offers himself.

Have you ever heard a call from God? If we were to do a survey, I wonder how many would say that they had - or hadn’t.

So many people don’t think they ever had a call from God. The truth is, everybody gets a call from God. The reason many miss it is that they expect it to be some awe inspiring event or vision kind of like Isaiah had. Something you just can’t miss. In reality, God calls us quite regularly, in what we would consider rather ordinary ways. We may not be called to do what we would consider incredible feats of miraculous proportions, and yet every time we respond to the Holy Spirit to do something great or small, we are part of a larger miracle.

In spite of our unworthiness, God accepts those who take him up on his call. Our sins are cauterized, taken away, wiped out. The slate has been wiped clean by the sacrificed blood of Jesus. To come forward and receive that forgiveness is to answer a call from God. To help out the needy, the poor, and the oppressed – that is a call from God. To treat the lowly with dignity and respect – is a call from God. To participate in worship and be a worker within the church – is a call from God.

God doesn’t just call us once and that’s it, we’ve had our chance. God calls each one of us every single day. The question then is: why don’t more people respond? Why are so many kind of like Nicodemus – procrastinating with questions, or claiming to have never heard a call? The secret, as Nicodemus had to learn, is that God is lovingly calling us every single day. The questions for us then are; are we open to those calls, are we receptive to hearing them and acting on them? Are we willing to step forward to receive the blessed life that God calls each of us to live each and every day? Amen.

Hymn – Come, Join the Dance of Trinity
<https://youtu.be/P15ZLwMO7iw>

Prayers

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

We pray, O God, for your holy church around the world. Revitalize and renew us, that we may be reborn once again through the waters of baptism and the blowing wind of your Spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

We give you thanks for your power revealed to us in creations; for cedar and oak trees, for rushing waters, for the echoes of thunder. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

We pray for the nations and our leaders, that led by your Spirit, they work towards a world where all of your children enjoy peace. We pray especially for Peru, Columbia, Venezuela, Israel, Mali, and Ethiopia. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for healing for all those who suffer, especially victims and survivors of trauma or violence. Give respite to those living with PTSD or any other mental health concerns. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for this worshiping community New Hope Lutheran, that the splendor of your majesty and the holiness of your mystery may be glorified through our worship and our relationships with one another. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We give you thanks, O God, for those who have died in the faith. We remember also those whose lives have been lost due to the horrors of war. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your abiding grace.

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 – Holy God, We Praise Your Name

https://youtu.be/e5vLtzm_4E