

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
you tube: New Hope Lutheran Church Sudbury

Pastors:

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

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

July 11, 2021

7th Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

All services have been cancelled.

July 18 Sermon emailed

In our prayers Ruth, Fred, Esme.

Remembering

Elsie Paasila 78 yrs.



Almighty God; we ask you would look over the family and friends of Elsie Paasila, that they may be aware of your presence in their time of grief. In their sorrow, bless them with words of comfort, with people who sit with them, and with the silence they may require in their lives. We ask in Jesus' name. Amen.

Announcement

Tentatively we are planning to re-open both Finnish and English worship services on Sunday August 15 in their respective worship locations; Finnish worship at Voima Hall at 10:00 a.m., and English worship at Regent St. beginning at 2:00 p.m. We do expect to have restrictions in place such as wearing a mask and social distancing, as well as receiving the communion wine "in kind", as we did last fall.

We are also tentatively planning a Bilingual Rally Sunday service for Sunday September 12, 10:00 a.m. at Voima Hall so please mark your calendars for this special service.

As we prepare to come together once again, we are reminded that our worship services require worship assistants, beginning in August, and a growing need as restrictions increase. Please consider being a part of this important ministry and let Hilikka know of your interest by calling the office at 705-673-2933 or email office@nhlc.ca

Opening Hymn – Just a Closer Walk with Thee (697)
<https://youtu.be/Y6Ks49apfIE>

Prayer of the Day

O God, from you come all holy desires, all good counsels, and all just works. Give to us, your servants, that peace which the world cannot give, that our hearts may be set to obey your commandments; and also that we, being defended from the fear of our enemies, may live in peace and quietness, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord Amen.

Psalm 85:8 – 13

- 8** I will listen to what God the LORD says; he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants— but let them not turn to folly.
9 Surely his salvation is near those who fear him, that his glory may dwell in our land.
10 Love and faithfulness meet together; righteousness and peace kiss each other.
11 Faithfulness springs forth from the earth, and righteousness looks down from heaven.
12 The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.
13 Righteousness goes before him and prepares the way for his steps.

First Reading “Amos 7:7 – 15”

7 This is what he showed me: The Lord was standing by a wall that had been built true to plumb, with a plumb line in his hand. **8** And the LORD asked me, “What do you see, Amos?” “A plumb line,” I replied. Then the Lord said, “Look, I am setting a plumb line among

my people Israel; I will spare them no longer. **9** “The high places of Isaac will be destroyed and the sanctuaries of Israel will be ruined; with my sword I will rise against the house of Jeroboam.” **10** Then Amaziah the priest of Bethel sent a message to Jeroboam king of Israel: “Amos is raising a conspiracy against you in the very heart of Israel. The land cannot bear all his words. **11** For this is what Amos is saying: “ ‘Jeroboam will die by the sword, and Israel will surely go into exile, away from their native land.’ ” **12** Then Amaziah said to Amos, “Get out, you seer! Go back to the land of Judah. Earn your bread there and do your prophesying there. **13** Don’t prophesy anymore at Bethel, because this is the king’s sanctuary and the temple of the kingdom.” **14** Amos answered Amaziah, “I was neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet, but I was a shepherd, and I also took care of sycamore-fig trees. **15** But the LORD took me from tending the flock and said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’

Second Reading “Ephesians 1:3 – 14”

3 Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. **4** For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love **5** he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will— **6** to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. **7** In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace **8** that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, **9** he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, **10** to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ. **11** In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, **12** in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. **13** And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, **14** who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.

Gospel “Mark 6:14 – 29”

14 King Herod heard about this, for Jesus’ name had become well known. Some were saying, “John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and that is why miraculous powers are at work in him.” **15** Others said, “He is Elijah.” And still others claimed, “He is a prophet, like one of the prophets of long ago.” **16** But when Herod heard this, he said, “John, whom I beheaded, has been raised from

the dead!" **17** For Herod himself had given orders to have John arrested, and he had him bound and put in prison. He did this because of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, whom he had married. **18** For John had been saying to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." **19** So Herodias nursed a grudge against John and wanted to kill him. But she was not able to, **20** because Herod feared John and protected him, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man. When Herod heard John, he was greatly puzzled; yet he liked to listen to him. **21** Finally the opportune time came. On his birthday Herod gave a banquet for his high officials and military commanders and the leading men of Galilee. **22** When the daughter of Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the girl, "Ask me for anything you want, and I'll give it to you." **23** And he promised her with an oath, "Whatever you ask I will give you, up to half my kingdom." **24** She went out and said to her mother, "What shall I ask for?" "The head of John the Baptist," she answered. **25** At once the girl hurried in to the king with the request: "I want you to give me right now the head of John the Baptist on a platter." **26** The king was greatly distressed, but because of his oaths and his dinner guests, he did not want to refuse her. **27** So he immediately sent an executioner with orders to bring John's head. The man went, beheaded John in the prison, **28** and brought back his head on a platter. He presented it to the girl, and she gave it to her mother. **29** On hearing of this, John's disciples came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Sermon

*By Rev. Adam Snook
Assistant to the Bishop
Eastern Synod*

Herod the king heard about these things, because the name of Jesus had become well-known. Some were saying, "John the Baptist has been raised from the dead, and this is why miraculous powers are at work through him." Others were saying, "He is Elijah." Still others were saying, "He is a prophet like one of the ancient prophets." But when Herod heard these rumors, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised to life."

He said this because Herod himself had arranged to have John arrested and put in prison because of Herodias, the wife of Herod's brother Philip. Herod had married her, but John told Herod, "It's against the law for you to marry your brother's wife!" So, Herodias

had it in for John. She wanted to kill him, but she couldn't. This was because Herod respected John. He regarded him as a righteous and holy person, so he protected him. John's words greatly confused Herod, yet he enjoyed listening to him.

Finally, the time was right. It was on one of Herod's birthdays, when he had prepared a feast for his high-ranking officials and military officers and Galilee's leading residents. Herod's daughter Herodias came in and danced, thrilling Herod and his dinner guests. The king said to the young woman, "Ask me whatever you wish, and I will give it to you." Then he swore to her, "Whatever you ask I will give to you, even as much as half of my kingdom."

She left the banquet hall and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?"

"John the Baptist's head," Herodias replied.

Hurrying back to the ruler, she made her request: "I want you to give me John the Baptist's head on a plate, right this minute." Although the king was upset, because of his solemn pledge and his guests, he didn't want to refuse her. So he ordered a guard to bring John's head. The guard went to the prison, cut off John's head, brought his head on a plate, and gave it to the young woman, and she gave it to her mother. When John's disciples heard what had happened, they came and took his dead body and laid it in a tomb.¹

Torah-defying decisions. Confrontation. Grudges. Admiration. An arrest. A questionable birthday party (even before you start to read between those scriptural lines). And ultimately the beheading of John the Baptist.

Needless to say—that there is A LOT going on in today's gospel reading; a seemingly odd text perched precariously between the sending of the disciples...and their eventual return just in time for the feeding of the 5,000.

The good news—is that you're certainly not alone if the gruesome details of today's text have left you scratching your head—baffled as to their meaning. After all—even Matthew and Luke (the first to grapple with these words) struggled themselves. Matthew's gospel shortens this account into little more than a footnote—and Luke's gospel omits it altogether. Maybe we should heed their advice!

But Mark (on the other hand)—usually known for his brevity and immediacy—oddly chooses to luxuriate over the grim details surrounding John's death for sixteen bleak verses.

Add to that the reality that this is the only story Mark tells in which Jesus doesn't make an appearance...it is, for literary purposes, a strange sort of flashback...and (to put it bluntly) it just doesn't fit.

I think that we are justified in our bafflement...our confusion...and our feelings of disorientation this morning.

BUT, and to paraphrase theologian Emerson Powery²—when we relegate these odd verses to nothing more than an interlude we'd prefer to sweep under the rug...we actually deprive ourselves of the rich opportunity to explore just how intimately the manner of John's death is tied to Jesus' mission—(and to go one step further) how intimately it is tied to the broader mission of God's church!

Wise advice!

And so what do we do, then, with this Torah-defying...confrontational...grudge-filled...arresting...and gruesome story? What do we do with this portion of scripture which leaves us feeling quite unsettled? What do we do if, instead of sweeping this precariously perched text under the proverbial rug, we choose to dive deeply into the depths of its purpose?

Well—it's going to involve some truth-telling. In fact, as David Lose³ cautions: if we're truly going to dwell with this text, we're going to need to tell the truth...not once...but twice.

The first truth—is the reality that the kingdom Jesus preached, and the kingdom to which we have also been called to proclaim in our own time—doesn't fit neatly into a world whose cultural presumptions set wealth...status...power...and fame over and above the work of justice...mercy...love...and grace. As hard as it may be to read these sixteen verses of Mark's gospel—we need this story...because this story, is a part of our story. We know—ever more profoundly—that not only did Jesus meet with political obstacles...but so did his followers, and so did (and will) his radical message in a world so penchant for the status quo.

Or...and to put it another way...the gospel is transformational! But seldom does such transformation come easy.

And that brings us to the second truth with which we need to dwell this Sunday—the profound promise that God's story doesn't end with the gruesome demise of a beloved prophet. True, that in the story of John's beheading...we are confronted with the realities of a counter-cultural gospel in a status-quo world: **but it's not the whole story.**

¹ Common English Bible

² Powery, Emmerson. Commentary on Mark 6:14-29. [Working Preacher](#). Available [HERE](#)

³ Lose, David. Commentary on Mark 6:14-29. [In The Meantime](#). Available [HERE](#)

In fact...maybe that's why Mark tucked it so oddly mid-way through his sixth chapter—to remind us that God's story doesn't end here!!! Far from it!!

Jesus came:
...to make possible more than just the pursuit of wealth, power and fame;
...to announce a different way of being...and a different way of loving...and a different way of living in God's world;
...to proclaim the assurance of a God who knows our pains...and the assurance of a God who has felt our pains;

Jesus came to show us that there is something more...more than heartache...more than power ...more than struggle...more than division.

Jesus came to show us life—and life abundantly!

You know, it occurs to me that the sixteen verses with which we have dwelt today...they are not meant to scare us. Not at all! I wonder, if perhaps, they may be meant to free us—free us to know that even in the face of all that seems simply insurmountable...that even then God has written us into a story the likes of which we never could have imagined. A story bigger...and a story more beautiful...than we could ever comprehend.

And so let me ask you a question: how do these two truth manifest in your life? Better yet, how do these truths manifest themselves in the life of our church?

How have we...do we...and will we experience the realities of a counter-cultural gospel in a status-quo world?

It's a tough question, I know!

But even more important—is the question of how we've been freed to participate in the still (and in the ever) unfolding story of God's love in and of God's love for this world!

Seeing the hungry—how does God's mercy call us to set an extra place at the table?

Hearing the lonely—how does God's compassion call us to be companions to one another?

Witnessing the pain of racism, sexism, xenophobia, homophobia, gender-bias, and discrimination—how does God's love call us to be allies in the work of justice?

Standing on land that does not belong to us, while our indigenous siblings still weep for their lost ones—how does God's stillness call

⁴ Taylor, Barbara Brown. *Learning To Walk In The Dark*. Harper One. (2014) P. 82

us to stop...and to listen...and to commit ourselves to the work of reconciliation?

Gathering inside walls that for far too long have turned people away—how does God's example of radical welcome call us to live fully into that same hospitality?

As people—I hope that we will choose to wrestle with these questions. But as a church—I PRAY that we will. For in loosening ourselves from the fears of the first truth—we will be freed to live more fully into the second.

In her book, *Learning to Walk in the Dark*, author and professor Barbara Brown Taylor writes, “The only real difference between anxiety and excitement was my willingness to let go of fear”⁴

To me, there is something strikingly beautiful about this quote that drives to the heart of the matter this morning. Christ has freed us, dear siblings and partners on this journey. Christ has freed us to let go of our fear: the fears of being ignored or judged...the fears of being disregarded or side-eyed...the fears of being thought strange or even dangerous to the status quo...and to embrace the excitement (THE EXCITEMENT) made possible by a gospel that beckons us out of those anxious places...and into the possibility of a world freed to live more fully all because the love of God has been whispered into its ears.

May we, the church, hear those whispers!

May we sense the Spirits leading!

And may we go forth, confident in the promise that the one who first wrote us into this story...continues to call us away from fear—and into a world set free.

For this we say—Thanks be to God.

AMEN.

Hymn – Listen, God is Calling (513)
<https://youtu.be/NKn81yyGrwc>

Prayers

Let us come before the triune God in prayer.

Holy parent, you welcome your people into one family and gather all things to yourself. Bestow your grace upon your beloved church, lavish your wisdom upon us, and redeem us from our faults, that by our witness all might praise your glory. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Awesome Creator, you steadfastly tend to the smallest of seeds and the mightiest of sycamore trees. Spring up green growth from the earth, nourish the growth of fruit, grain, and other crops, and bless the work of farmers and laborers. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of the oppressed, turn the ears of those who are in power to the voices of prophets in our own day. Protect those who speak difficult truths when it is risky to do so. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

God of strength, you are near to those who endure difficulty. Comfort all who are survivors of violence, guard the refugee and the immigrant, and protect all those who are victims of prejudice and discrimination. Lord, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, guide us to see in our lives that which is of true value. Help us to turn aside from the things that promise so much but deliver so little. Guide us so that we might always turn to you, the great Shepherd of the sheep for our meaning and purpose. Lord, in your mercy. **Here our prayer.**

We thank you, God, for the saints, martyrs, and prophets who have died in the faith. We remember those in this community who have recently died. United with them as God's children, assure us that we are yours forever. 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 – God, Who Stretched the Spangled Heavens (771)
<https://youtu.be/Wh29qEjlqKY>