

New Hope Lutheran Church

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July 18, 2021

8th Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

All services have been cancelled.

July 25 Sermon emailed

In our prayers Ruth, Fred, Esme.

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 Hilka know of your interest by calling the office at 705-673-2933 or email office@nhlc.ca

Opening Hymn – O Holy Spirit, Enter In (786)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N0uRSkUs4wg>

Prayer of the Day

O God, powerful and compassionate, you shepherd your people, faithfully feeding and protecting us. Heal each of us, and make us a whole people, that we may embody the justice and peace of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalms 23

- 1 The LORD is my shepherd, I lack nothing.
- 2 He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters,
- 3 he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right paths for his name's sake.
- 4 Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.
- 5 You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies. You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.
- 6 Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.

First Reading “**Jeremiah 23:1 – 6**”

1 “Woe to the shepherds who are destroying and scattering the sheep of my pasture!” declares the LORD. 2 Therefore this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says to the shepherds who tend my people: “Because you have scattered my flock and driven them away and have not bestowed care on them, I will bestow punishment on you for the evil you have done,” declares the LORD. 3 “I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the countries where I have driven them and will bring them back to their pasture, where they will be fruitful and increase in number. 4 I will place shepherds over them who will tend them, and they will no longer be afraid or terrified, nor will any be missing,” declares the LORD. 5 “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. 6 In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteous Savior.

Second Reading “**Ephesians 2:11 – 22**”

11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (which is done in the body by human

hands)—12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two groups one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by setting aside in his flesh the law with its commands and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new humanity out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit. 19 Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, 20 built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. 21 In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. 22 And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Gospel “**Mark 6:30 – 34, 53 – 56**”

30 The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. 31 Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, “Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.” 32 So they went away by themselves in a boat to a solitary place. 33 But many who saw them leaving recognized them and ran on foot from all the towns and got there ahead of them. 34 When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things.

53 When they had crossed over, they landed at Gennesaret and anchored there. 54 As soon as they got out of the boat, people recognized Jesus. 55 They ran throughout that whole region and carried the sick on mats to wherever they heard he was. 56 And wherever he went—into villages, towns or countryside—they placed the sick in the marketplaces. They begged him to let them touch even the edge of his cloak, and all who touched it were healed.

Sermon

By Rev. Prema Samuel

Assistant to the Bishop

Synod of Alberta and the Territories

We are exhausted.

As I am preparing this sermon, I am hot and sticky and tired. It is 34 degrees and I have a whole week of this ahead. How I feel this dry, hot day reflects how I have felt the past number of months.

I turn to Facebook for some escape. I usually enjoy pictures of people's camping trips and flower gardens, beautiful baby pictures and family events. But populated throughout social media are stories of the great injustices – injustices perpetrated on our Muslim brothers and sisters... the horrors of the residential schools. These issues, along with concerns of climate change and gender equality, are of immense importance. But for just a few blessed minutes I want to find an escape from all that needs to be done, to be challenged, voiced — to find peace. Quickly enough, that quest for positivity becomes swallowed up by the darkness I was hoping to avoid for a few, precious minutes.

When I check out the news feeds from my family and friends in India, I find the same thing waiting for me. The grim realities of COVID, as my country of birth faces levels of death and trauma due to the virus which some have referred to as a genocidal in nature. Of course, that does not even take into consideration the migrant workers seeking work or refuge, amidst the numerous atrocities towards women and young children, students and so on. I feel helpless, knowing I am half a world away and can do nothing to help. All I can do is pray and hope that God will see my family and my country through this horrible time, and I worry.

The COVID realities here in Canada are fraught with uncertainty. The province I am currently living in is set to open on July 1st and many await it with anxiety. Yes, it will be nice to see everyone again and do the many things we have put on hold, but there is always the worry that this might precipitate another wave. We do not want to go through anymore lockdowns, but we certainly don't want to see any more loss of life either.

Needless to say, I am exhausted, deep in my bones and soul and I know that I echo a sentiment shared by many. I am exhausted!

In our Gospel reading, Mark tells of the disciples returning to Jesus from their missionary work, excited by all that they have done and taught. It reminds me of the day when my grade 1 child returned from a hot field trip day at the Zoo. He was so excited to tell all me about all that he saw and did at the Zoo, that he did not give any thought to the heat of the day and that he had been walking through most of it and possibly very tired. As a mother, my first thought was, "did you eat your lunch, did you drink enough water throughout the day?" – to ensure that he was well and cared for.

Responding to them, Jesus recognizes that and offers the disciples the invitation for rest and nourishment. They are invited to eat and rest, knowing that soon enough they will need to return to world. But right now, rest is far more important. Without it, they will not be able to do what they have been called to do.

How many times, over the last many months, have you rested? And when I say rested, I mean truly rested. A soul rest that leaves you nourished and feeling alive. The soul rest that is so needed after the soul work, the Spirit's work that comes from passion and love for the speaking and doing – proclaiming the Gospel.

This soul rest has certainly been a challenging one for me through this time of COVID. Along with negotiating the world we live in, to negotiate education and care for my family, ensure the call I have been invited to serve is... to worry about loved ones' health and well-being. Not even to mention the exhaustion from weeping for and with our Indigenous siblings, speaking for climate justice, challenging discrimination against persons of color and disabilities, against the many oppressions and injustices... This is soul work and it is exhausting! And needs the soul nourishment and soul rest.

There isn't time for soul rests and taking the kind of nourishment that brings fullness to the soul. I am sure that like me, you have to make do with little dribblets of rest, most of which feel like cat naps when what we need is a long, real soul rest.

When Jesus offers his disciples rest, there is a part of me that wants to call out, "Me too. Please. I need that food and rest too!" It sounds so wonderful, to rest in the presence of Jesus.

Perhaps that sentiment was shared by others outside of the disciples. Because, as they rest, others, many others, come to Jesus. They are seeking something. Perhaps it is healing or wholeness or perhaps just standing in the presence of Jesus. Jesus, seeing them, goes to them because he has compassion on them. As the disciples rest, Jesus continues the soul work of teaching and healing. Many, like the Syrophenician woman from the June 27th reading, are content just reaching out to touch the fringe of Jesus' cloak. In that moment, they find the rest, the love and the wholeness that they need. We don't know what kind of life they were facing, but it was likely not easy. The Romans and the Judean elites would have made life difficult for them. But in Jesus, they had found life and it was enough just to touch the fringe of his cloak. It was enough for them to find the healing they needed so that they could keep moving and keep living.

In this moment of our history, we need the rest in Jesus. We echo the needs of the disciples and those that came running and those that were brought to Jesus. Whether we were trying to help negotiate the church through this unprecedented time or whether we were just trying to hold on, our very being cries out for relief and for hope. We are crying out for our God. And as Christ does, he comes to us in compassion and offers us that peace, that rest. Christ gathers us in and bids us to rest, to put down our burdens and let go.

That is not to say that we are no longer needed in the world. Soon enough, we will need to set off once again and be agents of Christ's love in the world. But we also need to rest and find nourishment and succor for our souls. We need to find that healing and peace that only Christ can give, or we risk being taken down by the cares of the world.

And mind you, as he did that day... while the disciples rested, Christ continued to heal, teach, nourish and care.

In our need, Christ comes and offers us food and rest knowing that we will have to go back out into the world. As we rest Christ continues the healing and teaching. We rest in Christ to be

strengthened to get back to where Christ is to speak, challenge, heal, teach, nurture and nourish in compassion – to go and do the soul work. We are needed to be the hands, heart, ears, voice, eyes of Christ. But for now, knowing Christ continues the work of compassion, we are invited to rest, to rejuvenate, to renew. We will go out with renewed strength to clearly see and do, with refreshed heart to passionately love and challenge, with revived hope to heal and forgive. But he won't let us do that so exhausted that we cannot even function. Instead, he will grant us peace, restore our hope and help us to see again that we are valued and loved always so that in turn, we can value and love God's children.

To this God who, in challenging and calling us to be the missionaries of justice, healing and peace, invites and reminds us of the peace, healing and rest bringing wholeness, we say, "Amen and thanks be to God."

Hymn – Where Cross the Crowded Way of Life (719)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6a0KcMbkGlg>

Prayers

Rooted in Christ and sustained by the Spirit, we offer our prayers for the church, the world, and all of creation.

Tend your church, O God. Encourage bishops, pastors, and deacons in their proclamation of the gospel. Raise up new leaders and encourage those pursuing a call to ministry. Embolden all the baptized to embody your love and justice. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Restore your creation, O God. Sustain croplands and pastures and safeguard all farm animals and livestock. Preserve lakes, rivers, and streams that offer refreshment. Revive lands recovering from natural disasters and protect coastlands threatened by rising oceans. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Reconcile the nations, O God. Break down the dividing walls that make us strangers to one another and unite us as one human family. Equip leaders to deal wisely with conflict and guide diplomats who seek peaceful solutions. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Heal your people, O God. Look with compassion on immigrants, exiles, and all who are afraid or feel lost. Give rest to those who are weary, comfort to those who are grieving, and recovery to those who are ill. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

Nourish this congregation, O God. Prepare a table where we receive food for our hungering spirits. Renew our commitment to provide for one another and revitalize our ministries of feeding and nurturing hungry neighbors. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You lead us home, O God. We give thanks for all who have died, now citizens with the saints. As you have received them into your heavenly home, so welcome all of us to dwell in your house forever. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

We lift these and all our prayers to you, O God, confident in the promise of your saving love; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who taught us to pray.

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 – Savior, like a Shepherd Lean Us (789)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mTuwAOBuQVQ>