

New Hope Lutheran Church

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August 15, 2021

12th Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

Aug 16 – 27 Both offices closed.

Email and telephone messages will be checked periodically.

Aug 17

1:00 Worship & Musing mtg **Zoom**

Aug 18

10 – 1 Wed Café **Regent St. (outside only)**

Aug 22

10:00 Finn. Worship Service † **Voima Hall**

2:00 Eng. Worship Service † **Regent St.**

In our prayers Ruth, Fred, Esme.

We are 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 – God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind (400)
<https://youtu.be/gphSbqIW7x8>

Prayer of the Day

Ever-loving God, your Son gives himself as living bread for the life of the world. Fill us with such a knowledge of his presence that we may be strengthened and sustained by his risen life to serve you continually, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalms 34:9 – 14

9 Fear the LORD, you his holy people, for those who fear him lack nothing.

10 The lions may grow weak and hungry, but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.

11 Come, my children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

12 Whoever of you loves life and desires to see many good days,

13 keep your tongue from evil and your lips from telling lies.

14 Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.

First Reading “Proverbs 9:1 – 6”

1 Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars.

2 She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. **3** She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, **4** “Let all who are simple come to my house!” To those who have no sense she says, **5** “Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed. **6** Leave your simple ways and you will live; walk in the way of insight.”

Second Reading “Ephesians 5:15 – 20”

15 Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, **16** making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil. **17** Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is. **18** Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit, **19** speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit. Sing and make music from your heart to the Lord, **20** always giving thanks to God the Father for everything, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Gospel “John 6:51 – 58”

51 I am the living bread that came down from heaven. Whoever eats this bread will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.” **52** Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” **53** Jesus said to them, “Very truly I tell you,

unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you. **54** Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day. **55** For my flesh is real food and my blood is real drink. **56** Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in them. **57** Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. **58** This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your ancestors ate manna and died, but whoever feeds on this bread will live forever.”

Sermon

By Rev. Jerry Borkowsky

Assistant to the Bishop, Saskatchewan Synod

Grace and Peace be unto you from God our Creator and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

As I go through the process of sermon preparation, I always ask, so what does this text say, what am I hearing and what is the congregation hearing? These are all valid questions. I believe it is also important that we are mindful of what is going on around us and in the world.

Just think of some of the challenges that have been on our plates these past 16 months.

The pandemic and all that goes along with the virus. The anxiety and depression and the list goes on. It has not been an easy time.

Then the discovery of the remains of 215 children at the Kamloops Indian Residential School and then later the remains of over 700 unmarked graves on the Cowessess Reserve here in Saskatchewan.

Racism rampant all over our country and then the Killing of four members of a Muslim family by a person who hated Muslims.

And the list goes on.

So, when I’m reading a text, I am not looking for academic or theological controversies, rather I come to the text for council and comfort in dealing with life.

Two of my go-to resources in sermon preparation are Dr David Lose and Dr. Karoline Lewis.

I very much appreciate their insights.

As David Lose says in his comments on this text: “I think I come to the text for meaning, not meaning in the sense of answering all my questions but meaning which makes life worth living.” I say amen to that!

Dr Karoline Lewis suggests that as we listen to this text, we are expecting another sermon on the eucharist. Rightly so - but our text takes us in a slightly different direction. So she says, “...but this is not your ordinary sacrament at the table.” How is it not “ordinary”?

Think about it this way: When we gather as the people of God for Holy Communion and as the pastor prepares us, we hear the words for the institution of the Lord’s Supper.

These are the words we hear every time that Holy Communion is celebrated, and these words are central to the “Thanksgiving at the Table”: “In the night in which he was betrayed our Lord Jesus took the bread, gave thanks and broke it... then he took the cup...” “Remembering, therefore, his death, resurrection and ascension...” I am sure you could fill in most of the blanks because they are so central to our faith.

What is noteworthy, is to remember that the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke all have these words as part of the institution of the Lord’s Supper. In these three Gospels the institution of the Lord’s Supper is linked — first to the Passover and secondly to Jesus’ death.

Now, John does not include the words to the institution of the Lord’s Supper as the other Gospels do. But John does have, Jesus feeding the 5000 as part of this chapter where we are told: “Then Jesus took the loaves and when he had given thanks, he distributed them...” (John 6:11 a).

If we can accept that the feeding of the 5000 and the bread of life discourse as we heard it read in our gospel, does this not look very much like John’s version of the Last Supper?

This then allows us to “dislodge the sacrament from Jesus’ death and locate it in the middle of Jesus’ life”, so suggests Dr. Lewis. And that gives us permission to ask, how does what John say make a difference in our understanding of Holy Communion?

What difference does it mean if we take seriously that Jesus says he is the Living Bread? “I am the Living Bread that came down from heaven...” 6:51 a., and then Jesus goes on to say in verse 52: “whoever eats of this bread will live forever.”

What John has done, helps us to see, appreciate and understand that when we receive Holy Communion it is a celebration of the abundant life with God, NOW! RIGHT NOW! and it is not only a remembrance of Jesus’ death.

I have discovered that attention to detail is a good practice when doing biblical work for sermon preparation.

Karoline Lewis puts it this way: “That...life according to John means that what you need for your life to be sustained, God provides: the abundant life.”

In John 10:10 we read, “I came that they may have life and have it abundantly.” John reminds us that eternal life is not something we postpone to our future, but it is our promise in the present, right now! That any claims about life with Jesus, life with God, means an abiding, it means a real relationship, here and now! Life is not a remembrance of Jesus ‘past life or a hope for a future but life lived in the moment as God’s grace upon grace.

In John 1:16, we read “From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.” Recall that John’s gospel begins with these words: “In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God” and a few verses later (John 1:14a) John says, “and the Word became flesh and lived among us”.

In Jesus, the Word was made flesh and the Word was given a physical form, and we meet the God who will be satisfied with nothing less than our whole lives. When Jesus speaks of giving us his flesh and blood, it is helpful to be reminded that “flesh and Blood “can also be understood as a Hebrew idiom which refers to the whole person, hearts, minds, spirit, feeling, hopes, dreams—EVERYTHING!

David Lose puts it this way: “In Jesus, the whole of God meets us to love, redeem and sustain the whole of who we are, good, bad, and ugly.”

Throughout John’s Gospel we encounter many of the wonderful images that he uses to describe our relationship with God: Jesus is the shepherd; we are the sheep. He is the vine, and we are the branches. He abides in God, and we abide in him. The language John uses here in this text is pressed to its limits.

Jesus’ life is so much a part of ours that there can be no separation, that when we receive Jesus, his life clings to our bones.

Martin Copenhaver puts it this way: “He can no more be taken from the believer’s life than last Thursday’s breakfast can be plucked from one’s body.”

This is God’s promise made to us in the sacrament — to be one with us and for us forever, to stick with us, even in us no matter what.

Jesus is the living bread and when we celebrate Holy Communion, God comes to us to offer us promises that we can touch and feel and taste and eat.

Jesus is the Word that became flesh and lived among us so that we may have life and have it abundantly.

THANKS BE TO GOD
AMEN.

Hymn – O Living Bread from Heaven (542)
<https://youtu.be/UqUpkoTBGSU>

Prayers

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

You have revealed your love for people overlooked and cast aside, sending your son to be born among the humble and poor. Send your church to proclaim good news to those who feel abandoned, despised, or rejected and make our congregations places of genuine welcome and hospitality. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

All creation longs for healing and restoration. Thwart the destruction of plant and animal habitats and amplify the voices of those who advocate for wise stewardship of the earth’s resources. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We remember your promise to our ancestors and look to you for justice. Expose pride, greed, and exploitation wherever it is found and raise up humble leaders who act on behalf of those who are poor, oppressed, or in other need. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Your Spirit lives in our hearts and makes us heirs of salvation. Rescue us from shame and dishonor. Lift up the lowly, fill the

hungry with good things, and have mercy on those who turn to you for help. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Forgiving Lord, you tell us over and over again in your word how to be your servants. Help us to achieve that goal so that we can discover the joys of serving you alone. Forgive us when we stray to the point where we serve ourselves and refuse to see the needs of your children. Guide us to always strive for a servant attitude. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

We give thanks for the saints who have found refuge in you, O God. As you have delivered them from all their afflictions, so save us from all our earthly troubles until that day when we sing your praise together in heaven. God, in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

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 – Be Thou My Vision (793)
<https://youtu.be/Optrm7IF16s>