

New Hope Lutheran Church

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August 1, 2021

10th Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

All services have been cancelled.

Aug 4 Wed Café **Regent St.** (outside only)
Aug 8 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 Hilikka know of your interest by calling the office at 705-673-2933 or email office@nhlc.ca

Opening Hymn – Blest Be the Tie that Binds (656)
<https://youtu.be/3oiNQidLwoA>

Prayer of the Day

O God, eternal goodness, immeasurable love, you place your gifts before us, we eat and are satisfied. Fill us and this world in all its need with the life that comes only from you, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalms 78:23 - 29

- 23** Yet he gave a command to the skies above and opened the doors of the heavens;
24 he rained down manna for the people to eat, he gave them the grain of heaven.
25 Human beings ate the bread of angels; he sent them all the food they could eat.
26 He let loose the east wind from the heavens and by his power made the south wind blow.
27 He rained meat down on them like dust, birds like sand on the seashore.
28 He made them come down inside their camp, all around their tents.
29 They ate till they were gorged— he had given them what they craved.

First Reading “**Exodus 16:2 -4, 9 – 15**”

2 In the desert the whole community grumbled against Moses and Aaron. **3** The Israelites said to them, “If only we had died by the LORD’s hand in Egypt! There we sat around pots of meat and ate all the food we wanted, but you have brought us out into this desert to starve this entire assembly to death.” **4** Then the LORD said to Moses, “I will rain down bread from heaven for you. The people are to go out each day and gather enough for that day. In this way I will test them and see whether they will follow my instructions.

9 Then Moses told Aaron, “Say to the entire Israelite community, ‘Come before the LORD, for he has heard your grumbling.’” **10** While Aaron was speaking to the whole Israelite community, they looked toward the desert, and there was the glory of the LORD appearing in the cloud. **11** The LORD said to Moses, **12** “I have heard the grumbling of the Israelites. Tell them, ‘At twilight you will eat meat, and in the morning you will be filled with bread. Then you will know that I am the LORD your God.’” **13** That evening quail came and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. **14** When the dew was gone, thin flakes like frost on the ground appeared on the desert floor. **15** When the

Israelites saw it, they said to each other, “What is it?” For they did not know what it was. Moses said to them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.

Second Reading “**Ephesians 4:1 – 16**”

1 As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. **2** Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. **3** Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **4** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; **5** one Lord, one faith, one baptism; **6** one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. **7** But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. **8** This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he took many captives and gave gifts to his people.” **9** (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? **10** He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) **11** So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, **12** to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up **13** until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. **14** Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. **15** Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. **16** From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Gospel “**John 6:24 – 35**”

24 Once the crowd realized that neither Jesus nor his disciples were there, they got into the boats and went to Capernaum in search of Jesus. **25** When they found him on the other side of the lake, they asked him, “Rabbi, when did you get here?” **26** Jesus answered, “Very truly I tell you, you are looking for me, not because you saw the signs I performed but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. **27** Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For on him God the Father has placed his seal of approval.” **28** Then they asked him, “What must we do to do the works God requires?” **29** Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” **30** So they asked him, “What sign then will you give that we may see it and

believe you? What will you do? **31** Our ancestors ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written: 'He gave them bread from heaven to eat.'" **32** Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. **33** For the bread of God is the bread that comes down from heaven and gives life to the world." **34** "Sir," they said, "always give us this bread." **35** Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty.

Sermon

*By Bishop Jason Zinko
Manitoba / Northwestern Ontario Synod*

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you in the name of Christ our Saviour. Amen.

Thank you for inviting me into your congregations and into your homes today to reflect on today's gospel reading. I do this from Treaty 1 land, the traditional territory of the Anishinaabeg, Cree, and Dakota Peoples and the homeland of the Metis Nation.

I don't know about you, but I am exhausted.

I am exhausted from the heat; from a long stretch since I had time off; from the ongoing restrictions due to COVID (even though those are finally lifting). I am exhausted from the horrendous news almost weekly about Indigenous children's unmarked graves; ongoing racism; leaders who just don't seem to get it; watching our forests burn; and civil unrest across the globe. I am exhausted from waiting and wondering when I will feel full again.

Can you relate? Do you hunger for these things that often seem just out of reach?

I don't think that we are alone. I think that many people – Christian or not – struggle with the challenge that some are full while some are hungry. And while we are challenged by that, we also operate as though there is nothing that can be done about it. We work, almost by default, with the belief that there is only so much to go around, so we better get what we can before it runs out.

So, we are left with a particular challenge today when we hear Jesus say, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." It's a challenge because we know of faithful people who

hunger and thirst. We see faithful people being kicked down because who they are doesn't fit with a standard that our dominant culture defines. On the flip side, we know decidedly *unfaithful* people who seem to have all they could ever want and more.

So, what does it mean? What does it mean for us to say that Jesus is the bread from heaven that gives life to the world?

For starters, we need to expand our view of what is possible with God. We need to understand that God is at work in ways that we often miss. That certainly happened to the crowd in the gospel reading for today. Jesus took two fish and five loaves of bread, fed 5,000 people with leftovers, walked across the lake, and then the crowd asked when he was going to show them a sign?

When was he going to show them a sign?!? What did they think he was doing?

The writer of John referred to anything miraculous that Jesus did as a sign. So rather than extraordinary miracles, Jesus gave signs that were meant to point to something important about God and show us a way that God is present and active for God's people.

Jesus' work of feeding the people wasn't just about filling stomachs or providing dinner on a shoestring budget. Through that sign, Jesus was trying to show the people then, and us today, that he is the one who provides life and nourishment for his followers. Yes, he provides eternal life in the sense that Jesus will raise up people on the last day. But it's more than just that. Jesus gives life now. Jesus shows us and helps us to live abundant lives now. Jesus works to take away real hunger and thirst now.

But we also need to realize that Jesus is not just a dispenser of things we need. Jesus calls us to take an active part in this work through our baptism.

In the promises of identity, faithfulness, community, and the gift of Spirit, Jesus also sends us out into the world to work in all ways for justice and peace. God claims us in those waters so that we can be part of this global and timeless family following Jesus' example and command.

This means that we are called to stand up against racism – including our own. We are called to help lift up the voices of those who are often silenced or ignored. The way of Jesus is to help those who cannot help themselves and to welcome those

who are often unwelcome. As we follow Jesus' call and work together as the Body of Christ, we have the opportunity to witness the life that Jesus is bringing into the world.

Of course, these actions do not mean that we are the bread of the world, or that we are the ones who satisfy the needs of everyone. They are simply signs of us living out the gift of faith that we were given in baptism and that Jesus continues to grow in us. And they are only part of what it means to be a follower of Jesus.

Focusing only on what we do is the wrong approach. We do have a role to play in God's work in the world, and there are many things for us to do, but that isn't the primary thing that Jesus tells us to work toward. In John's gospel lesson, Jesus says that the work of God we are instructed to do is to believe in the one that God sent. In other words – our primary job is to be attentive to our faith lives.

Faith itself is a gift, but we have a responsibility to nurture that faith, to grow in our spiritual practice and to let our faith impact everything about us. A strong faith helps to open our eyes to see all that God is doing around us. A well-practiced faith allows us to follow Christ who brought us to faith in the first place. Faith helps us to realize the many ways in which Jesus feeds us, restores us, and gives us new life.

That is why building up faith is such a central focus for the ELCIC. Bishop Susan has asked us to focus on living our faith through Praying, Reading, Worshipping, and Loving. The more that these practices become a part of our daily lives, the more that we connect with how Jesus walks beside us, and the more we are able to rely on God's promises for us.

So, if you haven't yet looked into those opportunities to grow in your discipleship, I strongly encourage you to. They can be the start of growing a deeper relationship with Christ, and help us to rely on Christ to be the bread of life for us.

I know that I started off by saying I'm exhausted. And I am. But it is only through Jesus' abundant gifts that we can be fed enough to carry on. It is Jesus' nourishment that sees us through the times when we feel empty. It is Christ alone who will continue to sustain us in all that lies ahead.

I pray that you experience the nourishment and life that you receive from Jesus today and each day. And I pray that the peace of God, which passes all of our human understanding, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus into eternal life. Amen.

Hymn – Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer (618)
https://youtu.be/hGI5N9dD_us

Prayers

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

You call your church to be the body of Christ. Awaken all the baptized to the gifts you provide for carrying out the work of ministry. Where the church is divided, knit us together and restore the unity of the faith. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You command the clouds above and cause the wind to blow in the heavens. Watch over deserts and wilderness places. Regenerate rainforests, defend species at risk of extinction, and strengthen the work of conservation organizations. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You summon leaders to respond to the needs of your people. Instill those who govern with patience when confronted with grievances and perseverance in seeking what promotes the well-being of the community. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You draw near to those who cry out for help. Feed those who are hungry, reassure those who are despairing, and accompany those who are imprisoned. Rain down the true bread from heaven that gives life to the world. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You receive all who come seeking a sign of grace. Make this congregation a place of hospitality for those accustomed to rejection. To those who have felt excluded here or elsewhere, prepare us to welcome them in the name of Christ. Hear us, O God. **Your mercy is great.**

You provide food that endures for eternal life. Sustain us each day with the bread of life until we are gathered with all the saints and feast together at your heavenly banquet. 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 – Son of God, Eternal Saviour (655)
https://youtu.be/VXDjkXe_btA