

New Hope Lutheran Church

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September 12, 2021

16th Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

Sept 14

2:00 Finnish Bible Study **Finlandia-Sali Bldg A**

Sept 15

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

2:00 Mission Circle **Finlandia**

Sept 19

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

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

Funeral Mary Frantila 91 yrs



Almighty God; you bring us hope in our times of grieving through the resurrection of our Lord Jesus. May this hope be spread to all those who grieve today, especially the friends and family of Mary Frantila, that they may find your comforting presence with them. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

In our prayers Ruth, Fred, Esme.

Opening Hymn – Immortal, Invisible God Only Wise
<https://youtu.be/awiYvBj4Hw4>

Prayer of the Day

O God, through suffering and rejection you bring forth our salvation, and by the glory of the cross you transform our lives. Grant that for the sake of the gospel we may turn from the lure of evil, take up our cross, and follow your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalms 116:1 – 9

- 1 I love the LORD, for he heard my voice; he heard my cry for mercy.
- 2 Because he turned his ear to me, I will call on him as long as I live.
- 3 The cords of death entangled me, the anguish of the grave came over me; I was overcome by distress and sorrow.
- 4 Then I called on the name of the LORD: "LORD, save me!"
- 5 The LORD is gracious and righteous; our God is full of compassion.
- 6 The LORD protects the unwary; when I was brought low, he saved me.
- 7 Return to your rest, my soul, for the LORD has been good to you.
- 8 For you, LORD, have delivered me from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling,
- 9 that I may walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

First Reading "Isaiah 50:4 – 9a"

4 The Sovereign LORD has given me a well-instructed tongue, to know the word that sustains the weary. He wakens me morning by morning, wakens my ear to listen like one being instructed. 5 The Sovereign LORD has opened my ears; I have not been rebellious, I have not turned away. 6 I offered my back to those who beat me, my cheeks to those who pulled out my beard; I did not hide my face from mocking and spitting. 7 Because the Sovereign LORD helps me, I will not be disgraced. Therefore have I set my face like flint, and I know I will not be put to shame. 8 He who vindicates me is near. Who then will bring charges against me? Let us face each other! Who is my accuser? Let him confront me! 9 It is the Sovereign LORD who helps me.

Second Reading "James 3:1 – 12"

1 Not many of you should become teachers, my fellow believers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly. 2 We all stumble in many ways. Anyone who is never at fault in what they say is perfect, able to keep their

whole body in check. 3 When we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we can turn the whole animal. 4 Or take ships as an example. Although they are so large and are driven by strong winds, they are steered by a very small rudder wherever the pilot wants to go. 5 Likewise, the tongue is a small part of the body, but it makes great boasts. Consider what a great forest is set on fire by a small spark. 6 The tongue also is a fire, a world of evil among the parts of the body. It corrupts the whole body, sets the whole course of one's life on fire, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7 All kinds of animals, birds, reptiles and sea creatures are being tamed and have been tamed by mankind, 8 but no human being can tame the tongue. It is a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9 With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse human beings, who have been made in God's likeness. 10 Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this should not be. 11 Can both fresh water and salt water flow from the same spring? 12 My brothers and sisters, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce fresh water.

Gospel "Mark 8:27 – 38"

Jesus and his disciples went on to the villages around Caesarea Philippi. On the way he asked them, "Who do people say I am?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." "But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?" Peter answered, "You are the Messiah." Jesus warned them not to tell anyone about him. He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. "Get behind me, Satan!" he said. "You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it. What good is it for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? If anyone is ashamed of me and my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, the Son of Man will be ashamed of them when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

Sermon

By National Bishop Susan Johnson

Grace to you and peace in the name of our lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

And greetings to you from your siblings in Christ from coast to coast to coast that make up this family of God that we call the ELCIC.

I have often struggled with this text, and let me share a little bit with you why. It's really verses 34 and 35:

8:34 - *He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.*

8:35 - *For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.*

"Take up your cross." It certainly doesn't seem like a pleasure cruise, does it? Maybe I'm a little chicken sometimes, but I don't really think that's what bothers me about this text. I think what bothers me is the way sometimes that it's been misused.

One way that it's been misused is some people think that this call to take up your cross is a call to martyrdom. A call to die as part of your faith. And I believe very strongly that is not the case.

We do lift up and honour those who have been martyred for their faith because of the example of their discipleships and their commitment to live a life following Jesus. But we never celebrate their deaths. We mourn their deaths because of the oppressive systems that they lived that caused their persecution and death.

We also recommit ourselves to work to end oppression and injustice in our world in response to the example of the martyrs.

This gospel also gets misused by those who would preach a gospel of prosperity, because they define taking up your cross in a very specific way, namely to live a very pure and moral life, that in return you'll be rewarded with riches here on earth as well as in heaven. If you colour within all the lines, where you

will be rewarded with wealth, and health, a good job, a great family, promotions and who knows what else. And that's not right. That's not what the gospel promises us. In fact, I think it's heretical.

Another way it gets twisted is by trying to use what sounds like a hard road to water down what the expectations of Christianity are, to some kind of "Christianity lite." And that is certainly not what God is calling us to.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a martyr in the faith, has written about this in his book "The Cost of Discipleship," and I just want to read one very brief passage:

"If our Christianity has ceased to be serious about discipleship, if we have watered down the gospel into emotional uplift, which makes no costly demands, and which fails to distinguish between natural and Christian existence, then we cannot help regarding the cross as an ordinary everyday calamity, as one of the trials and tribulations of life. We have then forgotten that the cross means rejection and shame as well as suffering."

And indeed, that is very much what Jesus experienced.

I think the call to take up our cross and follow Jesus is a call to discipleship – and I think it means living life through the filter of loving God and loving one's neighbour.

I think this is what we are called to do in all aspects of our life. In our work, in our volunteer time, in our church community and our wider community, in how we care for the Earth and how we spend our money, and how we choose to use our time and the choices we make about purchasing or not purchasing...all of these things, everything that we do in our life, needs to come through the lens of that filter.

Jesus gave us many examples of people who lived costly lives of discipleship.

For example, the story of the widow who went into the temple and gave her all, her one *mite* - a very small coin, but all she had - for praise and honour and love of God.

Or the story of the woman who lost one coin, searched and

searched, and upon finding it was so happy that she threw a party for all her neighbours to celebrate with her. In trying to save that one coin, she spent a whole bunch of money on throwing a party. It's a sign of our call to seek for those that are lost, in terms of their physical and emotional and spiritual needs, but also to be lavish in our hospitality.

Or the wonderful story about the father who receives the return of his son who has gone rogue, or prodigal, and welcomes him with wide open loving arms, and forgiveness and hospitality and generosity. Who places a robe upon him, a ring on his finger, and throws him a party and promises him more because he is so happy his son is alive and back with him. The son wasn't entitled to that, he'd already received half of his father's estate - what was owed to him - but this is the sign of God's working and God's ways - the cost of discipleship.

Or the story of the Samaritan man who found the Jewish man beaten up on the side of the road, attended to his needs and took him farther to a place where he would be taken care of, and paid for that care.

It's going that extra mile, in all that we do in life. I'm not saying the life of discipleship is easy - it's challenging, and it's a muscle that we need to exercise and grow into.

That's why we're doing this four-year emphasis on Living our Faith. We've spent three years really focusing on strengthening our relationship with God, because that is what is going to help us get to year four.

In year one we looked at prayer, and year two we looked at reading scripture, and right now we're starting a year of focusing on our devotional life and our worship life, but in year four, a year from now, we'll be looking at how we live out love in action, in all aspects of our lives.

Taking up your cross is not always easy. It sometimes means being willing to take a stand that is not popular and receiving criticism for it. It's being willing to stand up for a classmate who's being bullied in school, or to speak for the co-worker who's being harassed or subjected to micro-aggressions because of gender, or gender identity or expression, or sexual orientation, or race, or differing abilities. It's being willing to make costly decisions to give something to that person who's

going by your car yet one more time with a hat out, to volunteering at a food bank, or saying maybe we don't need a new car this year and let's use the money that we would have spent in terms of helping with this or that.

Or it means carefully thinking about your values and what's important in your life as you prepare to vote in this upcoming federal election.

It's about how we live all aspects of our life together, and there are consequences to those actions.

I read a tweet by someone named Carlos A. Rodríguez. I've never seen one of his tweets before but this really struck me. He said:

There are no conditions on "Love Thy Neighbour."

There are no addendums to "Welcome The Stranger."

There are zero amendments to "The Golden Rule."

And if we're wrong, let's err on the side of inclusion and love.

Always, love.

The reality is that we are marked out for this life of discipleship, this life of taking up our cross to follow Jesus in our baptisms, right at the start of our life of faith. We are splashed with water three times in the name of the trinity. We are then signed with the mark of the cross of Christ on our foreheads, and then anointed and sealed with the Holy Spirit. But that marking with the cross means something. It's right here on our foreheads. It's where we lead from, where we walk out from, and we don't always remember it; we don't see it when we look in the mirror, but maybe we should. It's what we are called to do, what we are called to be - disciples.

The good news is, first of all, we are not alone in this. We know and we are promised that God is with us always, in our joys and in our sorrows, at times when carrying that cross gets very difficult.

We know that we have been called into a community, the faith community that surrounds us, to help us discern where and how Christ is calling us, both individually and then together, but also to help us when things get difficult, to bear the burdens and to continue to follow Jesus.

So that means the world to me. And I hope it means the world to you too.

At the beginning of this lesson when Peter becomes the hero and says 'you are the Messiah', and in other places along with that Jesus said 'yes, you're faithful and on you I will build my church', the reality is that just a few minutes later, here's Peter rebuking Jesus for prophesying about his death and suffering and resurrection. And Peter, we know, goes on when Jesus was arrested to deny him three times. But Peter still is the foundation on which Christ builds his church. Christ knows that even though we are called to take up our cross and follow Jesus, we will inevitably stumble. And the thing is, we are in a covenant relationship with God which will not change when we stumble, or when we falter, or when we get scared or when it's too hard, or anything.

God loves us unconditionally and promises us life abundant, now and into the future. And again, that promise that we will never be alone, that God's presence is always with us, surrounding us and supporting us.

So let's take courage from these things and let's strike out again in terms of taking up our cross and following Jesus.

You know, this really isn't such a scary passage after all.

God bless you in your journey of discipleship. Amen.

Hymn – Will You Come and Follow Me
<https://youtu.be/GiXnb00RTAU>

Prayers

Made children and heirs of God's promise, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Revealing God, you have made yourself known through bread and wine, water and word. Continue to nurture your church, that it is a place where your presence is experienced and shared. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Creating God, you brought life into being and called it good. Bring new creation to lands devastated by tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, and other disasters. Restore forests

and curb overflowing waters. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Protecting God, you desire all people to live in peace and safety. Provide for all who are in danger. Strengthen first responders to help meet the complex needs of others. Provide care and compassion as they face trauma themselves. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Transforming God, you announce release to the captives and freedom to the oppressed. Break chains of discrimination and injustice. Amplify voices that go unheard and inspire us to advocate for those who are overlooked. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Forming God, you gather this community together. Shape our communal life, that in our prayer, praise, and worship, we honor you and encourage one another. Keep our disagreements civil and increase our joy in working together. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Redeeming God, you accompany your people through every stage of life. We give you thanks for the saints who now rest in your embrace. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Receive these prayers, O God, and those in our hearts known only to you; 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 – Great Is Thy Faithfulness
<https://youtu.be/NT0HcAr9ael>