

New Hope Lutheran Church

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September 12, 2021

16th Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

Sept 21

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

Sept 22

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

Sept 26

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

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

In our prayers Ruth, Fred, Esme.

Opening Hymn – All Are Welcome (641)
<https://youtu.be/js8RtT0mJpc>

Prayer of the Day

O God, our teacher and guide, you draw us to yourself and welcome us as beloved children. Help us to lay aside all envy and selfish ambition, that we may walk in your ways of wisdom and understanding as servants of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalms 116:1 – 9

- 1 Save me, O God, by your name; vindicate me by your might.
- 2 Hear my prayer, O God; listen to the words of my mouth.
- 3 Arrogant foes are attacking me; ruthless people are trying to kill me— people without regard for God.
- 4 Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.
- 5 Let evil recoil on those who slander me; in your faithfulness destroy them.
- 6 I will sacrifice a freewill offering to you; I will praise your name, LORD, for it is good.
- 7 You have delivered me from all my troubles, and my eyes have looked in triumph on my foes.

First Reading “**Jeremiah 11:18 – 20**”

18 Because the LORD revealed their plot to me, I knew it, for at that time he showed me what they were doing. 19 I had been like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; I did not realize that they had plotted against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree and its fruit; let us cut him off from the land of the living, that his name be remembered no more.” 20 But you, LORD Almighty, who judge righteously and test the heart and mind, let me see your vengeance on them, for to you I have committed my cause. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Second Reading “**James 3:13 – 4:3, 7 – 8a**”

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness.

4:1 What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don’t they come from your desires that battle within you? 2 You desire but do not have, so you kill. You covet but you cannot get what you want, so you quarrel and fight. You do not have because you do not ask God. 3 When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. 8 Come near to God and he will come near to you.

The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel “**Mark 9:30 – 37**”

They left that place and passed through Galilee. Jesus did not want anyone to know where they were, because he was teaching his disciples. He said to them, “The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it. They came to Capernaum. When he was in the house, he asked them, “What were you arguing about on the road?” But they kept quiet because on the way they had argued about who was the greatest. Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, “Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.” He took a little child whom he placed among them. Taking the child in his arms, he said to them, “Whoever welcomes one of these little children in my name welcomes me; and whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.”

*The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.***

Sermon

By Pastor Charles Nolting

“Servant Attitude”

With the coming of an election, we have been exposed to a lot of people attempting to explain to us why they deserve the seats of power in this country. And to me it feels like most, if not all of them, are trying to convince us that they are the greatest. Now the way one normally might go about this is to explain who might do the best job, who has the best plan, who would bring us the greatest benefits, and then we decide with a vote. This is how we do democracy.

What I find disheartening though, is that most often, rather than just showing us a plan and allowing us to decide for ourselves, candidates seem to find it easier to attack each other's weaknesses, and we may wind up just choosing a person who we feel is the best at attacking their opponents. I have yet to be convinced that is the best way to choose people to run a country, because I feel that the real issues that concern us become buried under a mountain of optics. A person's credentials for governing are tossed, in exchange for someone's ability to undercut another's credibility.

So when I view an election in this light, I can understand how Jesus might have felt when he overheard disciples arguing over who might be the greatest. It would seem that, for Jesus, the problem was in the way they defined the word "greatest".

While we aren't given any details about these arguments, it shouldn't be too hard to imagine how parts of that conversation might have gone. "I'm the greatest because I have the ability to attract a lot of people to this movement." "No, I'm the greatest because I know the scriptures so much better than any of you." Or how about: "Well, I think I'm the greatest because I am the best example of humility."

Their problem was that they were defining what it means to be great in human terms. They were thinking about being admired, or the glory of being a leader, or gaining power so that they could make decisions on behalf of others. Their motives for greatness were about what they could gain personally. It almost makes one think that in all that time with Jesus, they hadn't listened to a word he said, or paid attention to how he behaved.

Of course, we have to keep in mind that we are at the point in the gospel story when Jesus was the most popular. Until now, Jesus had been all about uplifting the masses, performing amazing miracles, and speaking words of wisdom. It is only at this time Jesus begins to fully explain what his mission may all entail. And we know from this lesson that the disciples didn't want to hear about this part since they didn't understand, and were afraid to ask him about it. At this point in time they were more interested in their own personal gain.

And who can blame them? Let's face it, we are all tempted to be the greatest in some area of our lives. The problem is that in

the attempt, things like our pride get in the way. There is a story about a turtle who wanted to spend the winter in Florida, even though he knew it would be impossible to walk that far. So he convinced some geese to help him, by each holding the end of a piece of rope in their beaks while the turtle clamped his vise-like mouth in the middle. The flight went fine until someone on the ground looked up in admiration and asked, "Who in the world thought of that?" Unable to resist the chance to take the credit, the turtle opened his mouth to shout, "I did...."

Attempting to be the greatest in any earthly way can be one of the surest ways of falling for temptations like pride, greed, and envy. Falling for them is going to be our downfall, and take us further away from God rather than closer to God. I think this is why Jesus tries to steer the disciples and us to redefine what greatness is all about.

True greatness requires a servant attitude, meaning that the needs of others should always come before our own petty wants. True greatness means we develop an attitude of giving rather than getting. True greatness means that we see how God values others regardless of who they are or what they are. And in the process of developing a servant attitude we ourselves become closer to God, and of more value in the kingdom of God.

We live in a part of the world that most would say has been incredibly blessed with good things. We have homes, income, and health that is the envy of many other parts of the world. While we may think that is great, we may want to ask ourselves if we are at the same time – as a nation - losing the greatness found in a servant attitude, and perhaps even our closeness to God.

According to Pew Research, among others, the fastest growing Christian communities are in Asia and Africa, especially in countries where the majority religion is not Christianity. These fellow believers face incredible odds every day, and yet it would appear that their closeness to God grows in the face of poverty and even persecution. Their humility and servant attitude is growing their faith.

Now I'm not saying we need to become a Third World country. But it would be helpful for us to consider and re-consider how well we show the servant attitude in our lives. The disciples in

our lesson (and sometimes even politicians) have a habit of putting themselves first as a way to gain greatness. Jesus calls us to re-define greatness as being the best of servants to others so that we may be in an even closer relationship to God. Amen.

Hymn – Children of the Heavenly Father (781)
<https://youtu.be/26rq0spuLao>

Prayers

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

God of community, we pray for the church around the world. Unite us in our love for you. Help us overcome our divisions, that we are encouraged to work together for your sake. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of creation, we pray for this hurting earth. Awaken in us a new desire to care for this world and empower us to support agencies, organizations, and individual efforts to heal our environment. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of cooperation, we pray for nations of the world embroiled in conflict. Inspire leaders to listen to each other and work towards peaceful solutions to disagreements. Protect the vulnerable, especially children, who cannot find safety in their home or country. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of comfort, we pray for all who live with mental or physical illness. Help them find appropriate care. Bring healing and wholeness when the path forward seems bleak. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of compassion, we pray for the young people of this congregation. Renew in us your call to welcome the children in our midst. As they grow, strengthen their faith and our commitment to them. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of consolation, we give you thanks for our loved ones who have died and pray for all who grieve today. Shine your grace on all your saints. 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 – The Lord Now Sends Us Forth (537)

<https://youtu.be/8WtrAwF3Z-w>