

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastors:

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*February 20, 2022*

*7<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Epiphany*

## Coming Events

Feb 22 7:00 English Bible Study **Zoom**  
Contact Pastor Charlie if you wish to participate

Feb 24 6:30 Finnish Bible Study **Zoom**  
Contact Pastor Johanna if you wish to participate

Feb 27 10:00 Messu † **Voima Hall**  
2:00 English Worship † **Regent St**

Mar 1 7:00 English Bible Study **Zoom**  
Contact Pastor Charlie if you wish to participate

Mar 2 **Ash Wednesday**  
10 – 1 Kahvi Time **Regent St**  
12:00 Finnish Lenten Service **Regent St**  
7:00 English Lenten Service **Regent St**  
(joint with Trinity)

**In our prayers** Ruth, Marilyn.

Opening Hymn – Spirit, Open My Heart  
<https://youtu.be/YMoG9C-0iZw>

## Prayer of the Day

O Lord Jesus, make us instruments of your peace, that where there is hatred, we may sow love, where there is injury, pardon, and where there is despair, hope. Grant, O divine master, that we may seek to console, to understand, and to love in your name, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Psalms 37:1 – 11, 39 – 40

- <sup>1</sup> Do not fret because of those who are evil or be envious of those who do wrong;
- <sup>2</sup> for like the grass they will soon wither, like green plants they will soon die away.
- <sup>3</sup> Trust in the LORD and do good; dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture.
- <sup>4</sup> Take delight in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart.
- <sup>5</sup> Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him and he will do this:
- <sup>6</sup> He will make your righteous reward shine like the dawn, your vindication like the noonday sun.
- <sup>7</sup> Be still before the LORD and wait patiently for him; do not fret when people succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.
- <sup>8</sup> Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret—it leads only to evil.
- <sup>9</sup> For those who are evil will be destroyed, but those who hope in the LORD will inherit the land.
- <sup>10</sup> A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found.
- <sup>11</sup> But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy peace and prosperity.
- <sup>39</sup> The salvation of the righteous comes from the LORD; he is their stronghold in time of trouble.
- <sup>40</sup> The LORD helps them and delivers them; he delivers them from the wicked and saves them, because they

take refuge in him.

## First Reading “**Genesis 45:3 – 11, 15**”

**3** Joseph said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is my father still living?” But his brothers were not able to answer him, because they were terrified at his presence. **4** Then Joseph said to his brothers, “Come close to me.” When they had done so, he said, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt! **5** And now, do not be distressed and do not be angry with yourselves for selling me here, because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you. **6** For two years now there has been famine in the land, and for the next five years there will be no plowing and reaping. **7** But God sent me ahead of you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to save your lives by a great deliverance. **8** “So then, it was not you who sent me here, but God. He made me father to Pharaoh, lord of his entire household and ruler of all Egypt. **9** Now hurry back to my father and say to him, ‘This is what your son Joseph says: God has made me lord of all Egypt. Come down to me; don’t delay. **10** You shall live in the region of Goshen and be near me—you, your children and grandchildren, your flocks and herds, and all you have. **11** I will provide for you there, because five years of famine are still to come. Otherwise you and your household and all who belong to you will become destitute.’

**15** And he kissed all his brothers and wept over them. Afterward his brothers talked with him.

## Second Reading “**1 Corinthians 15:35 – 38, 42 – 50**”

**35** But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?” **36** How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. **37** When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. **38** But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body.

**42** So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised

imperishable; **43** it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; **44** it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. **45** So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being”; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. **46** The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. **47** The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. **48** As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. **49** And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man. **50** I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

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

Gospel **“Luke 6:27 – 38”**

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*“But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. “If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who are good to you, what credit is that to you? Even sinners do that. And if you lend to those from whom you expect repayment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, expecting to be repaid in full. But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. Be merciful, just as your*

*Father is merciful. “Do not judge, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

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

### **Sermon**

*By Rev. Charles Nolting  
“Sacrificial Love”*

One of the most difficult parts of the Christian faith for others to understand is that God’s loving grace is free. There is no cost, because the cost was paid on the cross by Jesus.

This goes against everything that most people believe at the heart of their being; that everything has a cost to it. If you receive something, you must have to pay something. Even if you win the lottery, someone still has to purchase a ticket. Nothing is free according to worldly thinking so to attempt to convince people that God will accept them even if they aren’t good enough without any added cost just seems to be preposterous to many.

Of course it doesn’t help that the next hardest thing for people to believe about the Christian faith is that while God’s love is unconditional and without cost, it can still be a costly thing to be a follower. Sometimes even followers have problems with this one. Being a dedicated follower of Christ demands that we do things that go against our nature as mentioned in today’s gospel: loving enemies, praying for those who mistreat you, giving to those whom you owe nothing, and - perhaps worst of all - not judging others. A sacrifice on our part is involved.

Those two difficulties appear to contradict each other which is why we need to keep in mind the reasoning behind why we would be willing to pay such a high price for something that is freely given. It’s not that we owe God anything, but rather we pay the costs of discipleship because we have come to the realization that God has already paid such an immense price for us. What happens then, is that we give thanks for that sacrifice through attempting to fulfill God’s vision for us, even if we ourselves have to sacrifice pride, greed, wrath, or envy – which are actually not bad things to rid ourselves of.

Another reason we may not mind paying such a price is because we have become aware of the benefits of following Jesus words to us today in the gospel lesson. We live in a very hate-filled time. Hatred and reasons to hate are almost everywhere you look, especially if you follow the news. There are groups of people all over the world who hate other groups of people all over the world, and express that hatred through war, threats, murder, insults and a variety of other nasty habits.

The result is that such hatred just breeds more hatred. One hateful action is followed by hateful retaliation, and the cycle just continues to roll on and on; often escalating. In that process more and more people die, are displaced, perpetuate even more hatred, or suffer in some other way from the effects of hateful acts.

It’s really too bad that there isn’t a way of cutting hate off at the knees, a way of stopping it in its tracks. But you know something? That’s exactly what today’s gospel lesson is about. Too often we think faith is about what we all have to give up, whereas it actually is about what we can all gain.

If we want to get serious about denying hatred the fuel it needs to burn further, we need to love our enemies. We need to pray for them. We even need to forgive them. So often people toss hatred our way with the expectation that hatred will be returned, allowing them

to hate even more. Loving them is like taking the fuel away from a raging fire. Without fuel, it has nothing to burn on.

You may recall taking fire safety at some point in your life. A fire needs three things in order to survive: fuel, heat, and oxygen. Take any one of those things away and the fire disappears. Loving our enemies is like taking either the fuel, heat or oxygen away. The fire dies. This is why Jesus encourages us to love our enemies, to give to those who cannot repay you, to stand down from judging and condemning others, and to be lavish with forgiveness.

I know those things aren't easy to do, and I'm sure Jesus does too. But we need to remember that Jesus was our example, showing us that it is possible to live like that. Perhaps it will help you to remember that God loves all God's creatures including any enemies we might have. While God may not approve of their actions or thoughts, God still longs for them to be led into a relationship with God, and how can that possibly happen if God's people simply return hate with hate?

We are instead to love as Jesus loves us; with a sacrificial love. Such love has within it a redemptive power which, when used lavishly for long periods of time, can actually transform enemies. By continuing to love it's possible for the power of your love to eventually break a cycle of hatred. And while there is not absolute guarantee (depending on how much another ties themselves to hatred), being loving is the best choice for quelling the raging and destructive fires that hatred spews.

The power of this sacrificial love that Christ preaches to us today is so great that it can actually transform people who have chosen to hate. We are reminded that we can change things in this world with the redemptive power of love that reaches out to our enemies, and blesses those that curse us.

As we've heard in other places in scripture; darkness cannot drive out darkness, only light can do that, even when it is a small amount of light. As we go out to face hatred in our world today, how will you deal with it? Will you continue a cycle of hatred – or will you begin the work of breaking that cycle by using the power of Christ's sacrificial love? Amen.

Hymn – Light Dawns on a Weary World (726)  
<https://youtu.be/ZPsSm2sto8A>

### Prayers

The Spirit of the Lord is poured out upon us in abundance; so we are bold to pray for the church, the world, and all that God has made.

You teach us to love our neighbors and enemies alike. Encourage your church to follow the leading of your love, especially when it is risky or difficult. Help us to show mercy just as we have first received mercy. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Bless farmers and all who cultivate fields and urban gardens around the world. Nurture fields that lie dormant, resting until it is time to bloom again. Give favorable weather for planting. Bring forth from buried seed an abundant harvest, and guard against famine and disease. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Look upon our world with mercy, that we delight in an abundance of peace. Protect all whose lives are marred by war and civil unrest. Release political prisoners and amplify the voices that challenge us to seek forgiveness and pursue nonviolence. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Your people cry out for mercy. Console hearts that long for forgiveness. Men broken relationships. Heal bodies that suffer chronic pain or illness. Strengthen and deliver all whose spirits are troubled. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

You bind us together into one family. Teach us to forgive one another and to resolve conflicts with

humility and patience. Bless families of all shapes and sizes, and show love to those who are lonely or grieving. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

We praise you for the saints who have inherited the fullness of your kingdom. As you have raised them to imperishable and eternal life, sustain us in faith by the promise of resurrection. God of grace, **hear our prayer.**

Since we have such great hope in your promises, O God, we lift these and all our prayers to you in confidence and faith; through Jesus Christ our Savior, 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 – Build a Longer Table  
<https://youtu.be/NrstV-4iGw8>