

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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*March 27, 2022*

*The 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent*

## Coming Events

- |        |        |   |
|--------|--------|---|
| Mar 29 | 1:30   | Finnish Bible Study <b>Impola Room</b>                  |
| Mar 30 | 10 - 1 | Kahvi Time <b>Regent St</b>                             |
|        | 6:30   | Finnish Lenten Service <b>Regent St</b><br>(downstairs) |
|        | 6:30   | English Lenten Service <b>Regent St</b><br>(upstairs)   |
| Mar 31 | 6:30   | Finnish Bible Study <b>Zoom</b>                         |
| Apr 3  | 10:00  | Messu † <b>Voima Hall</b>                               |
|        | 2:00   | English Worship † <b>Regent St</b>                      |

**In our prayers** Ruth, Marilyn.

## Prayer of the Day

God of compassion, you welcome the wayward, and you embrace us all with your mercy. By our baptism clothe us with garments of your grace, and feed us at the table of your love, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

## Psalm 32

<sup>1</sup> Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

<sup>2</sup> Blessed is the one whose sin the LORD does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

<sup>3</sup> When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup> For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.

<sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

<sup>6</sup> Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.

<sup>7</sup> You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

<sup>8</sup> I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

<sup>9</sup> Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

<sup>10</sup> Many are the woes of the wicked, but the LORD's unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.

<sup>11</sup> Rejoice in the LORD and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

## First Reading "Joshua 5:9 – 12"

**9** Then the LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." So the place has been called Gilgal to this day. **10** On the evening of the fourteenth day of the month, while camped at Gilgal on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the

Passover. **11** The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. **12** The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan.

## Second Reading "2 Corinthians 5:16 – 21"

**16** So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. **17** Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! **18** All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: **19** that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. **20** We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God. **21** God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

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

## Gospel "Luke 15:1 – 3, 11b – 32"

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, "This man welcomes sinners and eats with them." Then Jesus told them this parable:*

*"There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them. "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his*

fields to feed pigs. He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything. "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.' So he got up and went to his father. "But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. "The son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' "But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let's have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' So they began to celebrate. "Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. 'Your brother has come,' he replied, 'and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.' "The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. But he answered his father, 'Look! All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!' " 'My son,' the father said, 'you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' " The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.**

## Sermon

By Debbie Fräntilä  
"New Beginnings and Fresh Starts"

I knew the gospel reading for today was about the prodigal son and I had some ideas in the back of my head. Then I read the passage from Joshua and when I read Psalm 32 the words a fresh start jumped up off the page. I sat back and thought about the story of the prodigal son. The father made the decision to make a fresh start in his relationship with his son. So I decided to do some research on making a fresh start.

The following passage is taken from the website a daily prayer for everyone.

"New beginning, fresh start, reinvention, or do-over are all terms that we tend to equate with major life changes. The beginning (or end) of a marriage, a move across the country, a new home, birth of a child or starting a new job. (or retiring)

What I'd like you to consider today is the ability you have to considerably broaden that concept by simply exercising the power you have to choose.

You can choose to create a fresh start in a relationship by forgiving someone (or yourself), changing your attitude, letting go of the past, creating a new habit or banishing an unwanted one. You can choose to do the work to redeem yourself for hurting someone, failing to fulfill a promise or behaving badly. You can choose to stop using "but it's hard" as an excuse to avoid reaching beyond what's comfortable to change or leave an unacceptable situation or to do the work to achieve your dreams and goals. And you can choose to face your fears of uncertainty and change to embrace all the opportunities within a future that is different from the one you originally planned.

What is clear from this passage is the writer believe that making a fresh start is making a conscientious choice. I agree with that – which is why I chose to use the

passage and a start point. The passage is followed by a list of quotes that I narrowed down to five. This was not an easy task.

*I've learned that sometimes you need to let go of everything you're clinging to and start over, whether because you've outgrown it or because it's not working anymore, or because it was wrong for you in the first place. ~Kelly Cutrone*

*Redemption just means you make a change in your life and you try to do it right this time. ~Ice T*

*Don't start your day with the broken pieces of yesterday. Every day is a fresh start. Each day is a new beginning. every morning we wake up is the first day of our new life. ~Author Unknown*

*Birthing is never easy or without pain, be it a universe, a child, or a fresh start in life. Contraction precedes expansion. Darkness comes before dawn. Joy follows pain. This is the way of things. ~John Mark Green*

*It's good to start over. It will be scary but you will see what you're really made of; it's the best opportunity to achieve what you never thought you could. ~Jennifer Coletta*

So, making a new beginning is a good thing and it is a choice. But what about God and the Bible? I found a passage entitled "Making a Fresh Start with God" from a website called "For the Church." The writer, Jared C. Wilson, sounded so much like me it was scary.

"If you're like me, it often takes until spring begins to even start thinking about taking new steps in your routine or transitioning into healthier habits..."

And because I'm slightly OCD (or something), I always feel like it's best to start something new at an official starting point. This is why I'll only start diets on Mondays. Once I've missed those starting points, then, my self-justifying logic kicks in, and I figure it won't hurt

to wait until the next starting point—whether that’s next week or next year—to finally make it a point to start.

Maybe you’re in the same boat when it comes to your spiritual life. Maybe you have been wanting to start fresh with your relationship with God, but you keep putting it off for whatever reason. Might I suggest your apprehension may have less to do with the right timing and more with the right approach?

If time and time again you have struggled to start or maintain your devotional life, and you’re interested in what might be done to begin anew with a routine that is sustainable, here are three subtle but important shifts in your time with God that can make a huge difference in your relationship with God.”

The writer then goes on to list and explain the three subtle but important shifts.

The first is to shift your load. Wilson describes how his all or nothing personality leads him to bit off more than he can chew. This included his study of the bible. He set out a stringent plan to study the Bible that the meaning of the passages and his prayers were lost. I particularly like this quote. “I have good news for you! Every verse of Scripture is inspired and infallible. And God does wonders with mustard seeds.” I had to walk away from the computer to check the fire and the expressions “a little bit at a time” and “slow and steady wins the race” came to mind.

The second shift is about expectations. Wilson describes how he felt his relationship with God hinged on him – his time and what he did to the point that he would “...end up being tempted to cynicism about prayer and God’s word.” The shift in expectations is to... “Take the pressure off yourself and put it on God. He can handle it!”

“If prayer really is talking to the God of the Universe, who loves us and wants to hear from us, maybe it’s time we felt the freedom to come to him as meek,

messed-up children relying on the grace of an all-powerful Dad. When you pray and study your Bible, expect less from yourself and expect more from God.”

The third shift is that of focus. This shift of focus is actually a core component of being Lutheran. It is about or relationship with God through Christ. We don’t have to jump through hoops to please God – Jesus did that for us.

“This is a crucial shift, because the difference between gospel-driven discipleship and works-focused discipleship can lead to burnout, brokenness, and bitterness. Good works, whether study or prayer or fasting or serving others, are always more joyful when they come from a heart that cherishes knowing good works don’t earn God’s favor.

Wilson concludes by saying...” I wish you well as you endeavor to grow closer to God who desires to be close to you. I think with these three shifts in your approach, you may find your time with Jesus sweeter, enduring, and fruitful.”

Okay – So what about the Prodigal Son? I actually googled “the prodigal son as a new beginning” and found a sermon by David Martyn Lloyd-Jones. The following is an excerpt from that sermon.

#### A REAL NEW START

When you turn to God, you will find a real, solid new beginning and new start. It is not something mystical. It is no mere matter of sentiment or feelings. It is real and actual. In Jesus Christ a real genuine new start and new beginning are possible. And they are possible in Him alone!

The greatness of the father’s love in the parable is seen in what he did. Observe how when the father goes to meet the son, he embraces him and kisses him (v. 20). And how quickly he commands the servants to strip off the rags and the tatters of the far country, and remove from his son every trace of his evil past. That is always

the first thing that happens when a sinner turns to God. We go to Him and expect just as little as the prodigal; all we ask for is a kind of new beginning. God amazes and surprises us in His very first action by blotting out our past. I know that my rags and tatters have really gone when I see them on the person of Jesus Christ the Son of God, who wore them in my stead and became a curse in my place. The Father commanded Him to take my filthy rags off me and He has done so. He bore my iniquity, He clothed and covered Himself with my sin. He has taken it away and has drowned it in the sea of God’s forgetfulness. And when I see and believe that God in Christ has not only forgiven but also forgotten my past, who am I to try to look for it and to find it?

But the father does not stop at that. He clothes the boy in a way that is worthy of a son and places a ring on his finger (v. 22). No one else could do that but the father. It is precisely the same with us when we turn to God. He not only forgives and blots out the past, He makes us sons [and daughters]. He gives us new life and new power. He will clothe you with the robe of Christ’s righteousness. He will not only tell you that He regards you as a child, but make you feel that you are one. The world only tries to clean the old suit and make it look respectable. God in Christ alone can clothe us with the new robe and really make us strong.

#### NOW IS YOUR CHANCE

Here is an opportunity for a real new beginning. It is the only way. God Himself has made it possible by sending His only begotten Son into this world, to live and die and rise again. It matters not at all what you have been, nor what you are like at this moment. You only have to come to God confessing your sin against Him, casting yourself upon His mercy in Jesus Christ, acknowledging that He alone can save and keep. Come!

Amen.

## Prayers

Drawn close to the heart of God, we offer these prayers for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

Jesus formed the disciples in the ways of extravagant mercy and profound welcome. Lead your church to be a community marked by forgiveness, hospitality, and celebration. Send us to transform a world plagued by fear and condemnation. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You make the land to produce a harvest that sustains your entire creation. Equip farmers and farm workers who till the soil. Nourish the earth with ample rainfall and abundant sunshine. Heal grounds tainted by pollution or misuse. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Countries are divided and leaders often harbor grudges. Reconcile nations that experience conflict. Act quickly to bring an end to war. Anoint peacemakers trained in the art of diplomacy and foster a spirit of collaboration among political rivals. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your people cry for help in times of distress. Resolve disagreements among family members. Save those experiencing financial hardship. Hear our prayers for those who are sick or grieving. Console us with the promise that everything can become new. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your love comes to us when a table is set and a feast is prepared. Bless the feeding ministries of this community. Bring an end to hunger in our community and around the world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

The one who was dead is alive again. We give thanks for those who have died, confident that steadfast love surrounds them. Shelter them in your love until we are gathered at your heavenly banquet. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Accept the prayers we bring, O God, on behalf of a world in need, for the sake of Jesus Christ, 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.**