

New Hope Lutheran Church

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March 6, 2022

The 1st Sunday in Lent

Coming Events

- | | | |
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| Mar 7 | 1:00 | Worship & Music Zoom |
| Mar 8 | 1:30 | Finnish Bible Study Impola Rm |
| | 6:30 | Council meeting Regent St & Zoom |
| Mar 9 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St |
| | 6:30 | Finnish Lenten Service Regent St
(downstairs) |
| | 6:30 | English Lenten Service Regent St
(upstairs) |
| Mar 10 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| Mar 13 | 10:00 | Messu † Voima Hall |
| | 2:00 | English Worship † Regent St |
| Mar 15 | 7:00 | English Bible Study Zoom |
| Mar 20 | 3:00 | Annual Mtg Regent St & Voima Hall |

In our prayers Ruth, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

O Lord God, you led your people through the wilderness and brought them to the promised land. Guide us now, so that, following your Son, we may walk safely through the wilderness of this world toward the life you alone can give, we pray through Jesus Christ, our savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm 91:1-2, 9 – 16

- ¹ Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
² I will say of the LORD, "He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust."
⁹ If you say, "The LORD is my refuge," and you make the Most High your dwelling,
¹⁰ no harm will overtake you, no disaster will come near your tent.
¹¹ For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways;
¹² they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.
¹³ You will tread on the lion and the cobra; you will trample the great lion and the serpent.
¹⁴ "Because he loves me," says the LORD, "I will rescue him; I will protect him, for he acknowledges my name."
¹⁵ He will call on me, and I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble, I will deliver him and honor him.
¹⁶ With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation."

First Reading "Deuteronomy 26:1 – 11"

1 When you have entered the land the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance and have taken possession of it and settled in it, **2** take some of the first fruits of all that you produce from the soil of the land the LORD your God is giving you and put them in a basket. Then go to the place the LORD your God will choose as a dwelling for his Name **3** and say to the priest in office at the time, "I declare today to the LORD your God that

I have come to the land the LORD swore to our ancestors to give us." **4** The priest shall take the basket from your hands and set it down in front of the altar of the LORD your God. **5** Then you shall declare before the LORD your God: "My father was a wandering Aramean, and he went down into Egypt with a few people and lived there and became a great nation, powerful and numerous. **6** But the Egyptians mistreated us and made us suffer, subjecting us to harsh labor. **7** Then we cried out to the LORD, the God of our ancestors, and the LORD heard our voice and saw our misery, toil and oppression. **8** So the LORD brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. **9** He brought us to this place and gave us this land, a land flowing with milk and honey; **10** and now I bring the first fruits of the soil that you, LORD, have given me." Place the basket before the LORD your God and bow down before him. **11** Then you and the Levites and the foreigners residing among you shall rejoice in all the good things the LORD your God has given to you and your household.

Second Reading "Romans 10:8b – 13"

10 "The word is near you; it is in your mouth and in your heart," that is, the message concerning faith that we proclaim: **9** If you declare with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. **10** For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved. **11** As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in him will never be put to shame." **12** For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, **13** for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel “**Luke 4:1 – 13**”

Glory to you, O Lord.

*Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, left the Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness, where for forty days he was tempted by the devil. He ate nothing during those days, and at the end of them he was hungry. The devil said to him, “If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become bread.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Man shall not live on bread alone.’” The devil led him up to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world. And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor; it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. If you worship me, it will all be yours.” Jesus answered, “It is written: ‘Worship the Lord your God and serve him only.’” The devil led him to Jerusalem and had him stand on the highest point of the temple. “If you are the Son of God,” he said, “throw yourself down from here. For it is written: “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you to guard you carefully; they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.’ ” Jesus answered, “It is said: ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” When the devil had finished all this tempting, he left him until an opportune time. The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.***

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
“Which Do You Choose?”*

We have now begun the season of Lent, a time that is supposed to be a thoughtful time, a reflective time, a prayerful time. But we may be wondering just what we are supposed to be thoughtful, reflective, and prayerful about?

The clue for Lent is Jesus in the wilderness where he was tempted by the devil. In the 3 temptations presented we are shown all that it means to be a human being created in the image of God. Jesus

shows his humanity here in that he has to make choices about what he will say yes to, and what he will say no to.

It can be kind of a harsh thing to discover that humans must make choices, because choices are not always easy. The desire to live on automatic pilot with everything laid out in front of us is a strong urge. The desire to have everything our hearts want is compelling. Instead we are confronted with the necessity of making a choice, where we must choose to go in one direction rather than another, where we must lay something down, in order to pick up something else.

Making choices has always been a part of the human condition. In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve were provided with everything they needed, although they could not have everything that was there. Life in the garden hinged on trust. The humans are to trust God and not try to have everything, which means staying away from forbidden fruit. They have to make the choice as to whether to trust God on God’s terms, or to live by their own design. I think we all know how that story turned out. They chose the fruit, but lost the garden.

In our gospel, Jesus, like every person, has to struggle with how he will live, whom he will trust, and what he will give his life to. He was tempted just as each of us are tempted. There was a temptation to be relevant by turning stones into bread, something he certainly could have used after being hungry for so long. He faced the temptation to be expedient by worshipping the devil which would have given him faster results, although perhaps not the results Jesus would have wanted. He also faced the temptation to be sensational and famous, by throwing himself off the top of the temple and landing without injury. In spite of his humanity, Jesus chose to say no.

The season of Lent then, is a time to think about the choices we have been making in our lives. Like Jesus,

we face similar temptations. Unlike Jesus however, we do not always make the best choices that will help us in the long run.

Take the choice to be relevant. On the surface it appears to be about practicalities. You are hungry, and if you have the means, you feed yourself. It all makes perfect sense to us, doesn’t it? Most of the time we just leave a choice at that. Why wouldn’t it make sense to feed yourself? What could possibly be evil about that?

For us, the key might well be what we are feeding ourselves. Is it something that contributes to a healthy diet? Where does this food come from? Were the farmers paid a fair wage? How big a carbon footprint does it make for this food to reach our table? Struggling with answers to such questions helps us to better understand how our choices may contribute to our own poor health, to robbing others by unwittingly underpaying them, and how we might have been contributing to the pollution of God’s creation.

If you caught the Ash Wednesday sermon, you might recall that there are sins of commission and sins of omission. We sin by doing things that are wrong, and by not doing things that are right in God’s eyes. This can also apply to our purchasing habits – do we buy according to what is cheapest, or what is just? The two do not always mesh with each other. To not even take the time to consider such things might just appear deplorable to God.

We can do similar reflection on the temptation to be expedient. How often do we have it in our minds that all things must happen ASAP, or As Soon As Possible? We see some very ugly results of such thinking in the invasion of Ukraine right now. The original plan appears to have been to go in and take over ASAP. But it has dragged on and the carnage horrifies us. Why do we need everything to happen in such a hurry? Has God not given us the blessing of decades of time?

Lastly there is the temptation to be sensational and these days we see a lot of that in the world of Youtube and Tik-Tok, where so many want fame quickly without a lot of effort. Yet how many regret making such videos? How many are nothing but drivel and escalated half-truths that spread misinformation? Is it possible we can see evil at work in choosing to fall for those temptations?

So this Lent we may want to consider what we choices we make, and how we make them. In our first lesson from Deuteronomy, we heard part of the covenant made with the Israelites for when they entered the new land. For them to choose this option it was expected that in gratitude for all their blessings they would humbly offer one tenth of their bounty to the Lord. It was a choice to be grateful, rather than chasing after relevance, expedience, or sensationalism.

Their experience shows us that we do not need to follow any of those temptations either. While we – along with the devil – can always come up with reasons to follow such temptations, we need to ask ourselves; should we?

I realize it is difficult to follow a Lenten routine, but that is no reason to avoid being reflective, thoughtful, and prayerful. While some might not care for the season of Lent, viewing it as some kind of STOP sign and choose to ignore it; the Lenten season is actually more of a YIELD sign. Slow down. Look around. Take note of your surroundings. Consider your life choices. Do you make them because you are tempted to do something for your own benefit, or because you feel God is calling you to something to benefit God's kingdom on earth? Amen.

Prayers

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

We pray for the church. Sharpen its proclamation of the word so that your people learn to reject voices of deception and distraction. Strengthen all who are tempted to believe lies about themselves or others. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the earth and all its creatures. Protect wilderness places and all plant and animal species that call them home. Sustain farmers and all laborers who work the land and harvest the fruits of its abundance. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world. Awaken elected leaders and government officials to the needs of those who are oppressed and grant them compassion to deal mercifully with immigrants and refugees who reside among us. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for those in need. Rescue those experiencing mental illness or contending with addiction. Ease the anxiety of those who live with dementia. Command your angels concerning all who are sick. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for those suffering in poverty. Lead us to refrain from mocking them or considering them as deserving of their plight. Give to us the will to erase poverty where we can and to help as we are able. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for those who have died. Gather them with all the saints into your heavenly dwelling place. Encourage us with the promise that all who call upon your name are saved. 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.**