

New Hope Lutheran Church

189 Regent St.
Sudbury, Ontario
P3C 4C4

705-673-2933
email: office@nhlc.ca
website: nhlc.ca

face book: New Hope Lutheran Church
you tube: New Hope Lutheran Church Sudbury

Pastors:

Rev. Charles Nolting
phone: 705-920-3573 email: pcn@nhlc.ca

Rev. Johanna Porkola
phone: 705-688-6284 email: pjp@nhlc.ca

April 3, 2022

The 5th Sunday in Lent

Coming Events

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| Apr 4 | 1:00 | Worship & Music Zoom |
| Apr 5 | 1:30 | Finnish Bible Study Impola Room |
| | 7:00 | English Bible Study Zoom |
| Apr 6 | 10 - 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St |
| | 6:30 | Finnish Lenten Service Regent St (downstairs) |
| | 6:30 | English Lenten Service Regent St (upstairs) |
| Apr 7 | 6:30 | Council meeting Regent St |
| Apr 10 | 10:00 | Messu † Voima Hall |
| | 2:00 | English Worship † Regent St |
| Apr 10 | 3:30 | we are invited to an Ecumenical Christian Prayer Service For Ukraine at St. Mary's Ukrainian Catholic Church |

In our prayers Ruth, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

Creator God, you prepare a new way in the wilderness, and your grace waters our desert. Open our hearts to be transformed by the new thing you are doing, that our lives may proclaim the extravagance of your love given to all; 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.

Psalms 126

- 1 When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, we were like those who dreamed.
- 2 Our mouths were filled with laughter, our tongues with songs of joy. Then it was said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them."
- 3 The LORD has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.
- 4 Restore our fortunes, LORD, like streams in the Negev.
- 5 Those who sow with tears will reap with songs of joy.
- 6 Those who go out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with them.

First Reading "Isaiah 43:16 – 21"

16 This is what the LORD says— he who made a way through the sea, a path through the mighty waters, **17** who drew out the chariots and horses, the army and reinforcements together, and they lay there, never to rise again, extinguished, snuffed out like a wick: **18** "Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. **19** See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland. **20** The wild animals honor me, the jackals and the owls, because I provide water in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland, to give drink to my people, my chosen, **21** the people I formed for myself that they may proclaim my praise.

Second Reading "Phillippians 3:4b – 14"

4b If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: **5** circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of

Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; **6** as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. **7** But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. **8** What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. **10** I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. **12** Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. **13** Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

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

Gospel "John 12:1 – 8"

Glory to you, O Lord.

Six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with him. Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. But one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray him, objected, "Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money

bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it. "Leave her alone," Jesus replied. "It was intended that she should save this perfume for the day of my burial. You will always have the poor among you, but you will not always have me."
The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
"Gift of Grace"*

On what do you rely as a basis for your relationship with Jesus Christ? There are a variety of responses to that question. Some people rely on what they have been taught since they were small children, never considering questioning or not taking that teaching at face value. Some people rely on what they discover intellectually through reading and investigation, embracing Jesus through the proof of their studies. Others rely on their experience of God's loving grace as a basis for their relationship, always grasping the mercy offered by Christ in a time of difficulty or crisis.

A good number of people rely on the work that they have done for God as the basis of their relationship with Jesus. I must admit that while I also sometimes identify with that group, it is a theological struggle because the concept of working for your relationship with Jesus was a problem the apostle Paul had to deal with and addresses in our 2nd lesson for today.

In Philippians 3, Paul encourages the church at Philippi against the temptation of putting their confidence and trust in their own abilities and works alone. This was a topic near and dear to the apostle's heart. After all, Paul spent a chunk of his adult life as part of a culture that encouraged a close obedience to the law and "doing things" as part of the quest for righteousness.

When he had been a devout Pharisee, Paul sought this righteousness with vigor. You may recall that as part of

Paul's commitment, he worked hard in his younger years to discourage the Christian movement and was on a mission to do just that when he encountered the grace of Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. That encounter, and all that happened afterward, convinced him of the importance of grace over work. Paul taught his mission churches likewise.

In this particular passage, Paul retells the story of his life as a Pharisee and of all his work and legalism, which was probably familiar to the Philippians. In verses 7 and following, he relates how he came to the conclusion that all of that life of work and accomplishment is nothing compared to the knowledge of Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection. In his new life with Christ, the only righteousness that Paul seeks is the righteousness that comes from faith in God. Paul completes this section of scripture by admitting that he has yet to fully grasp this righteousness through faith, but that he is pressing on toward that very goal.

It may be that the idea of just pressing on towards the goal is attractive for some who don't participate in the life of the church, but this isn't what Paul is talking about. Paul obviously believed that it is important for Christians to work and care for one another and for the furthering of the gospel. He spent, and probably lost his life working for the cause of Jesus Christ, in spite of a firm belief that it is impossible to earn righteousness though hard work in the church. True righteousness is through faith and faith alone. No amount of work can make up for a missing or neglected relationship with Christ.

That isn't to say that work isn't important. But the impulse to do the work of the church should never come from some idea that it will help us somehow earn our way into heaven. The impulse needs to come from the realization that Christ has done so much for us, and

so extravagantly, that we work and sacrifice ourselves out of a sense of thankfulness.

It's an appropriate reminder for the Lenten season. Jesus doesn't require a certain number of hours or tasks. Being a good Christian is not about how much or little you do. It is not about how many years you served on a committee, or taught a class, or have been a member. While these are very commendable, what matters most is your personal relationship with Jesus Christ, which comes by faith and cannot be earned. A complete trust in God is what is asked of us so that we are free to do the work in God's kingdom out of a sense of thankfulness for what God has already done for us.

So we are reminded today that we are not to stop doing whatever work we do, but remember what is truly required by God: faith – the absolute trust that God will guide and be with us regardless of circumstances. The righteousness that you receive is part of the gift of grace.
Amen.

Prayers

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

Do a new thing in the church. Free us from paradigms that no longer serve the gospel and bring forward leaders who imagine fresh ways of doing ministry. Give us courage in the face of change. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Do a new thing for creation. Reverse the trajectory of climate change and environmental catastrophe. Revive habitats already impaired by human disregard. Amplify the voices of climate scientists and researchers working to chart a new course. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Do a new thing in our world. Break barriers that prevent political enemies from working together for the well-being of all. Make a way for peace and

collaboration among the nations. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Do a new thing for those who suffer. Reveal a path for any who are unemployed or underemployed, for those experiencing homelessness, and for all who struggle with finances. Comfort those who grieve and restore those who are sick. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Do a new thing within us. Direct us into encounters that broaden our understanding of the human experience. Amplify voices that are ignored or devalued. Deliver us especially from the scourge of racism. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Do a new thing in our death. Fill us with the knowledge of Christ and the power of his resurrection as we give thanks for all the saints who have attained the prize of their heavenly call. 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.**