

New Hope Lutheran Church

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November 13, 2022

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

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| Nov 15 | 2:00 | Kammari Impola |
| | 7:00 | Eng Bible Study Zoom |
| Nov 16 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| | 2:00 | Mission Circle Finlandia |
| Nov 17 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| Nov 20 | 10:00 | Finnish Worship Service † Voima Hall |
| | 1:00 | Lunch (freewill offering) Regent St |
| | 2:00 | English Worship Service † Regent St |
| Nov 27 | 9:00 | Bilingual Worship Service Voima Hall |
| | 10:15 | Congregational meeting Voima Hall |

In our prayers Leena, Eero, Ron, Ruth, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

O God, the protector of all who trust in you, without you nothing is strong, nothing is holy. Embrace us with your mercy, that with you as our ruler and guide, we may live through what is temporary without losing what is eternal, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

Psalm 98

- ¹ Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things; his right hand and his holy arm have worked salvation for him.
- ² The Lord has made his salvation known and revealed his righteousness to the nations.
- ³ He has remembered his love and his faithfulness to Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.
- ⁴ Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth, burst into jubilant song with music;
- ⁵ make music to the Lord with the harp, with the harp and the sound of singing,
- ⁶ with trumpets and the blast of the ram's horn— shout for joy before the Lord, the King.
- ⁷ Let the sea resound, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.
- ⁸ Let the rivers clap their hands, let the mountains sing together for joy;
- ⁹ let them sing before the Lord, for he comes to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples with equity.

First Reading “**Malachi 4:1 – 2a**”

¹ See, the day is coming, burning like an oven, when all the arrogant and all evildoers will be stubble; the day that comes shall burn them up, says the Lord of hosts, so that it will leave them neither root nor branch. ^{2a}But for you who revere my name the sun of righteousness shall rise, with healing in its wings.

Second Reading “**2 Thessalonians 3:6 – 13**”

⁶ Now we command you, beloved, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to keep away from believers who are living in idleness and not according to the tradition that they received from us. ⁷For you yourselves know how you ought to imitate us; we were not idle when we were with you, ⁸and we did not eat anyone's bread without paying for it; but with toil and labor we worked night and day, so that we might not burden any of you. ⁹This was not because we do not have that right, but in order to give you an example to imitate. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: Anyone unwilling to work should not eat. ¹¹For we hear that some of you are living in idleness, mere busybodies, not doing any work. ¹²Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to do their work quietly and to earn their own living. ¹³Brothers and sisters, do not be weary in doing what is right. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel “**Luke 21:5 – 19**”

Glory to you, O Lord.

⁵When some were speaking about the temple, how it was adorned with beautiful stones and gifts dedicated to God, [Jesus] said, ⁶“As for these things that you see, the days will come when not one stone will be left upon another; all will be thrown down.”

⁷They asked him, “Teacher, when will this be, and what will be the sign that this is about to take place?” ⁸And he said, “Beware that you are not led astray; for many will come in my name and say, ‘I am he!’ and, ‘The time is near!’ Do not go after them.

⁹“When you hear of wars and insurrections, do not be terrified; for these things must take place first, but the end will not follow immediately.” ¹⁰Then he said to them, “Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; ¹¹there will be great earthquakes, and in various places famines and plagues; and there will be dreadful portents and great signs from heaven.

¹²“But before all this occurs, they will arrest you and

persecute you; they will hand you over to synagogues and prisons, and you will be brought before kings and governors because of my name. ¹³This will give you an opportunity to testify. ¹⁴So make up your minds not to prepare your defense in advance; ¹⁵for I will give you words and a wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. ¹⁶You will be betrayed even by parents and brothers, by relatives and friends; and they will put some of you to death. ¹⁷You will be hated by all because of my name. ¹⁸But not a hair of your head will perish. ¹⁹By your endurance you will gain your souls.”

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

Sermon

By Rev. Charles Nolting

Immortal, Invisible

The point of this service is not only to sing, but to become a bit more familiar with some of our favorite hymns by looking at the writers and composers lives, as well as just why they wrote these hymns.

Our theme for today is based on the gospel lesson where Jesus speaks about incredibly difficult times for Christians. One of the ways that Christians sustain themselves in times of suffering is to sing hymns as the apostle Paul did while imprisoned, as mentioned in the book of Acts. Hymns that are familiar soothe us, they quiet us, and have the ability to bring us peace when the world is hectic. So, the hymns chosen today are not just well known, but well known in times of upheaval.

We began our service with the hymn “Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise”. The text of the hymn was written by Walter Chalmers Smith, (born in 1824), who entered the University of Aberdeen in Scotland at the age of 13 – which probably tells us something about his I.Q. His intention had been to study law, but at some point he changed his major to theology.

At the age of 22 he was ordained as a pastor of the Free Church of Scotland. He served in several parishes before being chosen as the head of the Free Church of Scotland at the age of 65.

The inspiration for this hymn came to him from 1 Timothy 1:17 which, in the King James Version reads: “*Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory forever and ever. Amen.*” Though writing poetry, he attempted to express how he felt about the invisible God mentioned in this verse.

We find a lot of adjectives and phrases used in the wording which can be comforting to us. In one verse, he described God as: “*Unresting, unhasting, and silent as light*”, a reminder that God is always there for us, both in light and in darkness.

The tune for this hymn is called St Denio, referring to St. Denis, the patron saint of France. It was based on a traditional Welsh folk tune by John Roberts, who paired the words of Walter Chalmers Smith to the tune.

This hymn is a reminder to us of God’s justice, God’s providing for us, and the splendor that awaits all believers at the end of time. Amen.

A Mighty Fortress

I know that *A Mighty Fortress* is what we might call “a Reformation Day” hymn, but I thought it was also appropriate today as a hymn that has the ability to bring hope and strength in times of chaos and worry.

As you may well be aware, this was a hymn written by the Reformer Martin Luther, who had his share of stress, chaos, and worry during the course of his lifetime. Luther – similar to Walter Chalmers Smith – began attending university on his father’s wishes for him to become a lawyer, but then later chose to enter a monastery.

In the late 1400’s when Luther was growing up, the church was all about how sinful people were and how

much they owed God. Because he took such attitudes seriously, Luther spent so much time at the monastery confessing his sins, fasting, and prayer; that his superior thought he needed something to distract him, and sent him to pursue a career in academics.

At the age of 24 Martin Luther was ordained and then the next year began to teach theology at the University of Wittenberg. The more he studied the Bible however, the more he became disturbed with how the church appeared to disregard what it said in the Bible. He became especially agitated with the sale of indulgences, the idea that one could purchase a faster journey into heaven.

The end result was the 95 Thesis’, famously posted on the Wittenberg castle church doors in 1517. While Luther wanted them to promote an academic discussion, the outcome was a furious condemnation by the church, and calls for Luther’s arrest. He did go to trial and was given 24 hours to consider his choice with the option of recanting all he had written, an option he refused, even though the possible penalty was death.

Luther was then put under arrest and was to be transported back to Wittenberg. On that journey however, the transport was halted by a group of masked horsemen who kidnapped Luther, and took him away. Fortunately, they were friends of Luther’s with some power and influence, and hid him away in a castle for many months where he took the time to translate the New Testament into the common language so that all would have the opportunity to read it for themselves.

In the meantime, the Reformation had begun with a large number of congregations and priests choosing to make changes to worship and church life, sometimes with an alarming level of enthusiasm. The level of protest was so high that the Catholic church deemed them “Pro-tes-tants” or Protestants. It also led to a bloody peasant’s revolt that was violently put down.

Luther had to come out of hiding in order to calm things down. His initial bid to quietly instill some changes to church doctrine had turned into a bloody catastrophe. It took years of work to establish just what Lutherans were about, which was difficult enough without all the other Protestant denominations and their differing ideas, that sprung up in the wake of the Reformation all over Europe.

So yes, Luther's time was stressful and chaotic, a time when hymns were needed to point out where one finds a sheltering fortress and a champion to be with us and bring us hope. As Luther came to discover, our hope is not in our purchasing power, but rather in the free gift of grace bestowed on us through Christ's sacrifice. Amen.

Abide With Me

Of all the hymns we make use of in this period of history, there are only a small number that remind us of a funeral service upon hearing the opening notes. Abide With Me is one of those hymns, and there is a reason why it is so popular at a service celebrating the end of one's life here on earth. Sure, the tune is pretty somber and reflects a sorrowful attitude, but that may only be because of its usage. It is the words that really convey the message of the hymn. Many people have found them comforting in times of sorrow and deep distress.

It's been said that only those who can face the prospect of death realistically are able to live this life with purpose and confidence. This was the conviction of Pastor Henry F. Lyte when he wrote the text for this hymn in 1847, shortly before he himself faced death. Henry Lyte was born in Scotland in 1793, educated at Trinity College, Dublin Ireland, and a member of the Church of England all his life. He was one of those people who throughout his entire life was frail in health, always threatened by asthma and tuberculosis. In spite of that, he was a tireless worker who gained a reputation as a poet, musician and minister, coining the

phrase; "*It is better to wear out than to rust out.*" I guess you could say it was his mission statement.

In his last 23 years, he pastored to a rather poor parish of fishing people, but finally his health became so bad that he decided that he needed to move to a warmer climate and made plans to move to Italy. He was in such poor health that for his last sermon he practically had to crawl his way up to the pulpit, and his message was one of a dying man. On his way to Rome, Italy, he did die at the age of 50, and his remains were returned for burial in England.

It is said that Pastor Lyte wrote the words for this hymn (along with his own tune) shortly before that last sermon. The idea came from Luke 24; the account of the 2 disciples on their way to the village of Emmaus who were joined by the risen Jesus. You may recall that when they reached the village, Jesus was going to continue onward, but the disciples encouraged him to stay with them saying; "*Abide with us; for it is toward evening the day is far spent.*" The hymn never gained much popularity until it was published in a book 3 years after Pastor Lyte's death. The tune we use today – named "Eventide"- was composed by a William Monk who was inspired by the beauty of a glorious sunset while experiencing a deep personal sorrow.

"*Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh*", is the beatitude that came to mind for this hymn. In spite of it being common funeral material, it also has the ability to speak to us in any times of sorrow, regardless of what the loss may be; however great or small it may be. The words remind us again of the Jeremiah passage; to put our trust in God regardless of the situation. "*Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass a way. I triumph still if thou abide with me!*"

In many ways all our hymns today speak to that message of putting our trust in God and not allowing the tempting voices of earthly reasoning to make us stray from the path. If people such as we hear about today – with all that they went through – if they could still

find joy through living a life pleasing to Christ; then surely we too can find joy whatever our circumstances are. Amen.

O God, Our Help in Ages Past

Our closing hymn for today is another reminder that while we will go through difficult times, God is our help in current times, as shown by God's faithfulness to believers in times past.

The words were written by Isaac Watts (born in 1647), who was the son of a Dissenter – someone at odds with the church of England. This put young Isaac's father in trouble with the law on more than one occasion, which was a rather intense sort of environment to grow up in.

While still rather young, Isaac expressed his low opinion of the Psalm tunes they sang in their Congregationalist tradition, and his father was said to have responded: "*Why don't you give us something better, young man!*" So, Isaac did - and wrote some 600 hymns during his lifetime.

"O God Our Help in Ages Past" is a paraphrase of Psalm 90:1-5 and written in 1714. While many of Isaac Watts earlier hymns focused on the Psalms, he also began to write hymns on a wider range of topics based on a variety of scripture passages.

The tune was composed by William Croft and named St. Anne, in honor of the church where he was the organist in London at the time. Croft was later to become the organist at Westminster Abbey.

It isn't hard to see why this hymn would be a popular one. It addresses the hardships of today by pointing us to God's faithfulness in the past, highlighting God's timeless grace and mercy. Amen.

Prayers

United with your saints across time and place, we pray for our shared world.

Reviving God, keep your church active in its mission and ministry. Encourage bishops, deacons, pastors, and lay leaders to risk boldly in their proclamation and fill them with wisdom and endurance for challenging times. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Renewing God, as the northern hemisphere prepares for winter, make us mindful of the ordered beauty of your creation. Teach us to treasure cycles of rest and new life. Help us care for what you have made. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Loving God, accompany all who make sacrifices for the sake of others. Safeguard first responders and active duty military personnel. Grant peace to veterans and heal any wounds in body, mind, or spirit. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Healing God, your people cry out to you. Sustain doctors, nurses, and hospital personnel in their tireless work. Uphold mental health professionals and those in their care. May the sun of righteousness rise on all who are sick (*especially*). Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Uniting God, unite this assembly in its shared mission and ministry for the sake of the gospel. Highlight ways we can better work together and give us patience to work through disagreement. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Consoling God, abide with all who grieve for loved ones who have died (*especially*). Comfort us with the promise of resurrection and new life with you. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

Accept these prayers, gracious God, and those known only to you; through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

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.**