

New Hope Lutheran Church

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November 20, 2022

23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

- Nov 22 2:00 Kammari **Impola**
7:00 Eng Bible Study **Zoom**
- Nov 23 10 – 1 Kahvi Time **Regent St.**
- Nov 24 6:30 Finnish Bible Study **Zoom**
- 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, our true life, to serve you is freedom, and to know you is unending joy. We worship you, we glorify you, we give thanks to you for your great glory. Abide with us, reign in us, and make this world into a fit habitation for your divine majesty, we ask this through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Psalm 46

- ¹ God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.
- ² Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,
- ³ though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.^[a]
- ⁴ There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God, the holy place where the Most High dwells.
- ⁵ God is within her, she will not fall; God will help her at break of day.
- ⁶ Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.
- ⁷ The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.
- ⁸ Come and see what the Lord has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.
- ⁹ He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth. He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields^[a] with fire.
- ¹⁰ He says, “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.”
- ¹¹ The Lord Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.

First Reading “**Jeremiah 23:1 – 6**”

¹ Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture! says the Lord. ²Therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, concerning the shepherds who shepherd my people: It is you who have

scattered my flock, and have driven them away, and you have not attended to them. So I will attend to you for your evil doings, says the Lord. ³Then I myself will gather the remnant of my flock out of all the lands where I have driven them, and I will bring them back to their fold, and they shall be fruitful and multiply. ⁴I will raise up shepherds over them who will shepherd them, and they shall not fear any longer, or be dismayed, nor shall any be missing, says the Lord. ⁵The days are surely coming, says the Lord, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. And this is the name by which he will be called: “The Lord is our righteousness.”

Second Reading “**Colossians 1:11 – 20**”

¹¹ May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully ¹²giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. ¹³He has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, ¹⁴in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; ¹⁶for in him all things in heaven and on earth were created, things visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or powers—all things have been created through him and for him. ¹⁷He himself is before all things, and in him all things hold together. ¹⁸He is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that he might come to have first place in everything. ¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.

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

Gospel “**Luke 23:33 – 43**”

Glory to you, O Lord.

³³ *When they came to the place that is called The Skull, they crucified Jesus there with the criminals, one on his right and one on his left.* ³⁴ *Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”* ³⁵ *And they cast lots to divide his clothing.* ³⁶ *And the people stood by, watching; but the leaders scoffed at him, saying, “He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Messiah of God, his chosen one!”* ³⁷ *The soldiers also mocked him, coming up and offering him sour wine,* ³⁸ *and saying, “If you are the King of the Jews, save yourself!”* ³⁹ *There was also an inscription over him, “This is the King of the Jews.”* ⁴⁰ *One of the criminals who were hanged there kept deriding him and saying, “Are you not the Messiah? Save yourself and us!”* ⁴¹ *But the other rebuked him, saying, “Do you not fear God, since you are under the same sentence of condemnation?”* ⁴² *And we indeed have been condemned justly, for we are getting what we deserve for our deeds, but this man has done nothing wrong.”* ⁴³ *Then he said, “Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom.”* ⁴⁴ *He replied, “Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in Paradise.”*

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

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
“Royal Treatment”*

On the surface, our gospel lesson appears to be somehow misplaced. Isn't this, after all, Christ the King Sunday? The only way one could construe that Jesus was getting the “royal treatment” in that gospel lesson is if one is being sarcastic. Nailing someone's arms to a beam, having a raffle for their clothing, and then making fun of their misery, is pretty far-fetched from what we might seriously call royal treatment.

So, what is royal treatment? Generally, we might think of it as having utmost respect for a person, perhaps

even leaving a certain distance between us because we feel such awe. We might offer them something of immense value, as they are royalty. We would probably praise someone we considered royal; and offer them our loyalty. If we truly admire them, we might feel that they are somehow above us. But, we don't find any of this in our gospel lesson.

Of course, we can't only fault those disrespecting Jesus in this scene. Jesus' own disciples weren't really sure of what was going on with Jesus in all the time that they had spent with him. While they had been exposed to numerous examples of miracles, healings, and Godly wisdom; they still didn't appear to comprehend just how royal Jesus is. They kind of, sort of, have an idea, but who can be sure?

I would imagine we all have our own ideas of who Jesus is. I suspect that, for a lot of people, Jesus is put in the same category as a genie in a lamp. When you have major issues, when life is really falling apart, when you don't know where else to turn – well, then they might turn to Jesus to fix some life difficulty.

Of course, the problem with seeing Jesus in such a light is that one is tempted to use Jesus only in times of desperation. Humans have a tendency to prefer to live life on their own terms, doing things their own way, without any outside assistance. We often want Jesus to be a “fixer”, someone who follows our instructions as to how a difficulty should be resolved. We don't necessarily want Jesus answer to a problem, as that could mean we have to make a lot of changes.

Some people might see Jesus as some sort of good luck charm. Just put his photo somewhere so you can look at it regularly, and good things will happen to you. Don't forget to tap it three times every day, or your day will go horribly. Once again, this simply sidelines Jesus, and doesn't give Jesus any kind of royal treatment.

Some see Jesus as a good person who led by example, and that should be the example we live our lives by – as long as it doesn't interfere with our happiness and personal desires. We will follow this king as long as our wants and needs are met, but the moment he asks us to put aside our personal comfort, many would rather look for a king that tells them what they want to hear.

This is all in opposition to the man we meet beside Jesus in the gospel today. It would seem that this man may not have even known of Jesus until they were being crucified side by side. And as much as most people would behave as the first man did - responding with sarcasm and hatred – the second criminal is unique in that he spotted something in Jesus that made him request mercy in the world to come. This man knew true royalty when he saw it, and was one of the few who actually gave Jesus the royal treatment Jesus deserved. He asked to be (and was granted) a part of Jesus kingdom.

So, what sets this man apart? Could it be that we see Jesus as Jesus truly is, the king – in those times when we are at the end of our rope, as the second criminal was? Could it be that once we are out of our comfort zone, we begin to grasp just how royal Jesus is? It appears to have been that way for the disciples, who didn't see Jesus very royally until he rose from the dead. Once the shock of resurrection hit them, they began giving Jesus royal treatment in spades.

While this may not be the only way people come to truly see Jesus as king, I suspect that is why Christianity is growing in the southern hemisphere, where Christians are suffering through no fault of their own, and are in desperate need of a savior. In their poverty and misery they have long left any comfort zones they might have once had. They know Jesus deserves true royal treatment for all the ways they see themselves as blessed in the midst of rotten conditions.

Something we may want to be reminded of today is that this king we celebrate today, this king who suffered a horrific human death for us, this king is willing to also walk with us through our darkest valleys. Even when our own selfish sin gets in the way, this king is wanting to forgive us, love us, and be merciful to us. And we can best receive such blessings when we can truly acknowledge him as our king, giving royal treatment not only to this king, but to all we encounter in this life. Amen.

Prayers

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

We pray for your church. Embolden denominations and faith-based organizations in creative and collaborative ministries and increase our work for the sake of the gospel. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the earth. Protect waterways from pollution and animal habitats from destruction. Guide us in careful stewardship of waters, plant life, and animals. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world. Instill in every leader's heart a desire for justice and peace. Support the work of international collaborations that seek the goals of health and joy for all people. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for all who are undermined or oppressed. Amplify the voices of the unheard and break open stubborn systems of injustice. Bring about your righteousness and fill us all with your redeeming light. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for this assembly. Guide our pastors and council members in discernment, and nurture new leaders with fresh ideas. Give this congregation a spirit

of discipleship and service. Lord, in your mercy, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for all who have died in the faith. Console us who mourn and comfort us with the beautiful promise of life in your kingdom. 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.**