

New Hope Lutheran Church

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November 27, 2022

1st Sunday in Advent

Coming Events

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| Nov 28 | 6:30 | Luther Bells Regent St. |
| Nov 29 | 2:00 | Kammari Impola |
| | 7:00 | Eng Bible Study Zoom |
| Nov 30 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| Dec 1 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| Dec 4 | 10:00 | Finnish Worship Service † Voima Hall |
| | 2:00 | English Worship Service † Regent St. |

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

Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection save us from the threatening dangers of our sins, and enlighten our walk in the way of your salvation, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading “**Zechariah 9:9 – 10**”

Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and victorious, lowly and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will take away the chariots from Ephraim and the warhorses from Jerusalem, and the battle bow will be broken. He will proclaim peace to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth.

Second Reading “**Romans 13:11 – 14**”

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

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

Gospel “**Mark 11:1 – 10**”

Glory to you, O Lord.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage and Bethany at the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two of his disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and just as you enter it, you will find a colt tied there, which no one has ever ridden. Untie it and bring it here. If anyone asks you, ‘Why are you doing this?’ say, ‘The Lord needs it and will send it back here shortly.’” They went and found a colt outside in the street, tied at a doorway. As they untied it, some people

standing there asked, “What are you doing, untying that colt?” They answered as Jesus had told them to, and the people let them go. When they brought the colt to Jesus and threw their cloaks over it, he sat on it. Many people spread their cloaks on the road, while others spread branches they had cut in the fields. Those who went ahead and those who followed shouted, “Hosanna!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Blessed is the coming kingdom of our father David!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!”
The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
“What is God Like?”*

When looking at a Bible passage, a good question to ask is: What do these verses tell us about God’s character? Or, to put it another way: going by these verses, what is God like? And in these opening passages of today’s gospel, we are shown something of God’s character.

The gospel lesson begins with an odd request from Jesus: “*go into the next town and bring me a colt*”, which may at first sound like Jesus is instructing some disciples to go out and look for a car with the keys in it, and then drive it off for his personal use. We might also note that the disciples aren’t told why, they aren’t told the purpose, they aren’t given any reason at all for this kind of behavior.

And that brings me to the first thing we can learn about God’s character. **Sometimes God calls us to do something that might not make total sense** to us. And sometimes when we are presented with opportunities, we might wonder: what is going on, and where will this end up? How often do we feel a need to envision how things will end before we take a step in the direction God calls us, rather than just trusting – as the disciples did - in God’s long-term plan?

We should note here that the disciples had been around Jesus long enough to know better than to ask questions. While they might have been tempted to ask questions like; what colour the donkey was, or if it really was what Jesus wanted, since a colt is pretty small for riding, and what else would you do with it? And yet, according to our gospel, they just went. They did as they were instructed without asking questions because they had seen Jesus at work before and knew there was a higher purpose – even if they didn't know what it was.

The next thing we can learn about God's character is in considering Jesus request for something as insignificant as a donkey. Donkeys were pretty commonplace and plain. That may however, have been the whole point of that particular animal. It seems so insignificant for the Lord to ask to use a donkey, but it points us to something about God. In this lesson we find that God can use something we might think of as insignificant, and still use it to make a grand entrance into Jerusalem. That donkey wound up having an important purpose; to demonstrate how God comes to us and works in ways we could never imagine.

As we are beginning the season of Advent, we look forward to Jesus coming again, however that will happen and whenever that will be. And I'm sure we look forward to cheering Jesus on with our own Hosanna's, as the people in our gospel lesson did. Advent is a time to look forward, and to look forward with hope in our hearts.

So how do we go about looking forward in such a way? We look forward by trusting that God is going to present us with opportunities, such as we will be presented with later this morning. We look forward by trusting that even if we aren't certain how things might turn out, God has a plan for us as a congregation, a plan that may well turn out to be more than we might imagine.

We also look forward by remembering that due to age, or small numbers, or limited finances, God still uses the insignificant to do great things. The lesson here is that God can take our humble offerings and turn them into gold. God can use modest gifts in ways that we could never have anticipated. The issue isn't about how much value we have, but whether we will trust God and faithfully answer God's call. If we do, we can be assured that God will make something important of us and our faithful service. Amen.

Prayers

As we prepare for the fullness of Christ's presence, let us pray for a world that yearns for new hope.

God of all, your children everywhere cry out for mercy. Awaken the global church to the urgent needs of our time. Break down barriers of culture and custom and unite people of all faiths in your redemptive and healing work. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of wonder, the earth's beauty and abundance is your gift. Teach us your ways of sharing resources and caring for life. Guard fragile habitats, preserve the wild places, and protect endangered plants and animals. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of peace, you judge the nations. Beat our weapons into tools for serving the neighbor. Strengthen the resolve of all who work for an end to war. We pray for lasting peace in the land of Jesus' birth, as well as the Ukraine. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of lovingkindness, you desire fullness of life for everyone. Fill those who hunger. Comfort the grieving and attend to those near death. Bring help and hope to any who are sick or needing your care (*especially*). God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of community, you are present when we gather in your name. Guide congregations in transition or conflict.

Give wisdom to congregational councils, call committees, and ministry leaders. Keep us alert to unexpected opportunities for mission. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of promise, your goodness is everlasting. We give thanks for the lives of the faithful who now rest in you. We trust that you will bring us into the company of all the saints with rejoicing. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of our longing, you know our deepest needs. By your Spirit, gather our prayers and join them with the prayers of all your children. In Jesus' name we 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.**