

New Hope Lutheran Church

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December 4, 2022

2nd Sunday in Advent

Coming Events

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| Dec 5 | 1:00 | Worship & Music Zoom |
| | 6:30 | Luther Bells Regent St. |
| Dec 6 | 7:00 | Eng Bible Study Zoom |
| Dec 7 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| | 6:30 | Council meeting Regent St. |
| Dec 8 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| Dec 11 | 10:00 | Kauneimmat Joululaulut Service
Voima Hall |
| | 2:00 | English Worship Service Regent St. |
| Dec 17 | 3:00 | Bilingual Christmas Carols
& rice pudding Regent St. |

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

Prayer of the Day

Stir up our hearts, Lord God, to prepare the way of your only Son. By his coming nurture our growth as people of repentance and peace; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading “**Isaiah 11:1 – 10**”

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots.²The spirit of the Lord shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. ³His delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. ⁶The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. ⁷The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. ⁸The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder’s den. ⁹They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. ¹⁰On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious.

Psalms 72:1 – 7, 18 – 19

- ¹ Give the king your justice, O God, and your righteousness to the king’s son;
- ² that he may rule your people righteously and the poor with justice;
- ³ that the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, and the hills, in righteousness.
- ⁴ Let him defend the needy among the people, rescue

the poor, and crush the oppressor.

- ⁵ May he live as long as the sun and moon endure, from one generation to another.
- ⁶ Let him come down like rain upon the mown field, like showers that water the earth.
- ⁷ In his time may the righteous flourish; and let there be an abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.
- ¹⁸ Blessed are you, Lord God, the God of Israel; you Alone. Do wondrous deeds!
- ¹⁹ And blessed be your glorious name forever, and may all the earth be filled with your glory. Amen. Amen.

Second Reading “**Romans 15:4 – 13**”

⁴ Whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, so that by steadfastness and by the encouragement of the scriptures we might have hope. ⁵May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus, ⁶so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁷Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God. ⁸For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the circumcised on behalf of the truth of God in order that he might confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, ⁹and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will confess you among the Gentiles, and sing praises to your name”; ¹⁰and again he says, “Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people”; ¹¹and again, “Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and let all the peoples praise him”; ¹²and again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse shall come, the one who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him the Gentiles shall hope.” ¹³May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel “Matthew 3:1 – 12”

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹ *In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming,* ² *“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near.”* ³ *This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, “The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’”* ⁴ *Now John wore clothing of camel’s hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey.* ⁵ *Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan,* ⁶ *and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.* ⁷ *But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, “You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?”* ⁸ *Bear fruit worthy of repentance.* ⁹ *Do not presume to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our ancestor’; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham.* ¹⁰ *Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.* ¹¹ *“I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.* ¹² *His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”*

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

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
“Moving Forward”*

Today John the Baptist speaks of change. “*Change your life! Change your ways!*” Why? Because God’s kingdom approaches, and if you want to be a part of that (and you do), then change is necessary. I suppose

a question that comes out of such a conversation is; how do we feel about change? For the most part, it seems that people don’t like change, especially if we are comfortable with the way things are. This is why John the Baptist exploded over the curious Pharisees and Sadducees that made the long haul through the wilderness to see what all the fuss was about. They were quite comfortable and didn’t really care for a lot of change.

It’s also the reason John the Baptist was popular with the regular folks. For the bulk of those who came to see him, they wanted change. Their lives were miserable, and they knew it. They wanted to see something different come about. They wanted a better life, they wanted independence, they wanted to keep more of their wages, they wanted justice, they wanted to live in hope rather than fear... The list of things they wanted changed went on and on. So a message of change was very popular with them.

That’s usually how it works for us too, isn’t it? When things are running smooth, when all is well, when we have no real longing for anything, we aren’t too concerned about change. We like things the way they are and feel they should stay that way. We’d like things to continue that way. No changes.

But life has a way of tossing change at us anyway, doesn’t it? And sometimes even the things that at one time brought us comfort are the very things that bring about uncomfortable change. In life, changes happen that make us miserable and we want it to change back. We want to move back in time.

And yet, in some ways, this is what John the Baptist was railing against. Regardless of your situation, God doesn’t want you making changes that move you back in time, because time always moves forward - so what is best for us are changes that take us to something new. The people in Jesus’ day wanted to go back to the glory days of King David, but God was saying; “*no,*

you must move ahead to this new thing I am preparing – so embrace such change”.

God seems to encourage us forward; in spite of how comfortable we are with the past, (and maybe the present) yet we must still move forward. This applies to our mental, physical, and spiritual health as well. For a number of people who suffer with various illnesses, we might wish that things hadn’t changed and our physical health could be reversed, so that our bodies could be like they were when we were 20 or 30 years old. We can’t go back though. Not in this lifetime. We must move ahead. But that doesn’t mean that healing can’t happen, it’s just that healing may look different than what we may expect.

It’s kind of like the New Testament folks view of what a messiah should look like. While John was powerfully foretelling his coming, when it came right down to it, Jesus often didn’t measure up in people’s eyes. Their idea of a messiah was something out of the past. But to really understand Jesus, you have to be looking forward. Something new was amongst them, not the old and comfortable, and people didn’t get that.

And that’s why some people felt that Jesus could prove himself by performing miracles, just like some of the Old Testament prophets from the past had done. They felt that if Jesus could just do more miracles then they would have faith in him. And yet, the gospels show that even numerous miracles just didn’t bring people to faith; which explains why there were times when Jesus was asked for a miracle and refused. There are several cases of miracles happening, and while a few people were very impressed and touched enough to change their lives, not much came out of it for the masses.

What impressed Jesus and often became miraculous healings, were those who came with faith first, believing already in Jesus power to heal. The Centurion who wanted his son healed, the 4 guys who lowered their paralyzed friend through the roof to get at Jesus though

the crowd, the woman who touched Jesus in another crowd. For those people, the miracle came because of their faith, rather than the other way around. It's a change from the way we might usually think. Rather than miracles inspiring faith, faith inspires miracles. While miracles may attract crowds and applause, they rarely encourage long term faith or even the repentance John the Baptist encouraged.

In today's gospel, John the Baptist proclaims the coming of God's kingdom, and Jesus came to give us a taste of what God's kingdom is like. So, the result of Jesus miracles are what is normal in God's kingdom, not what is unusual. The sin and pain of the world is what is out of place, which is why John calls each of us to be a part of change; change that will help bring God's kingdom to earth, as we pray in the Lord's Prayer.

Today we are reminded that what we are looking for is that our lives might be like God meant them to be - not necessarily moving backwards to when things were more comfortable, but rather looking forward to a positive change that will not only affect our lives or strengthen our faith, but change that will also allow us to bring and spread faith to others. When we do that, we too can become part of what could today be considered a miracle. Amen.

Prayers

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

God, you renew the church in every age. We give thanks for hymn writers and theologians. Inspire teachers, writers, and musicians to delight and instruct your people. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You give us a vision of creation in harmony, when hurting and destruction will be no more. Teach us to be stewards of the earth and companions to its creatures.

Restore to balance and wholeness what human greed has harmed. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You defend the cause of all who are poor and oppressed. Raise up leaders who will govern with equity and serve the common good. Guide judges, lawmakers, and public officials to protect the rights of those who cannot advocate for themselves. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You deliver those in need from suffering and fear. Come to the aid of any who are exploited or abused, especially children, elders, and victims of human trafficking. Provide safety and help to our neighbors without shelter, refugees, and those fleeing violence. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You urge your people to welcome one another as you have welcomed us. Nurture ministries of hospitality and care in this and every congregation. We pray for people who are homebound, hospitalized, or separated from loved ones. God, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

You embrace all who have died trusting in your promises, and we give thanks for their faithful witness. Sustain us in hope until we are united with them in the joy of your eternal presence. 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.**