

New Hope Lutheran Church

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January 8, 2023

The Baptism of Our Lord

Coming Events

- | | | |
|--------|--------|---|
| Jan 10 | 2:00 | Kammari Impola |
| | 7:00 | Eng Bible Study Zoom |
| Jan 11 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| | 6:30 | Council meeting Regent St. |
| Jan 12 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| Jan 15 | 10:00 | Finnish Worship Service Voima Hall |
| | 11:30 | English Worship Service Regent St. |

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

Prayer of the Day

O God our Father, at the baptism of Jesus you proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit. Make all who are baptized into Christ faithful to their calling to be your daughters and sons, and empower us all with your Spirit, 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 42:1 – 9**”

¹ Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. ²He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; ³a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. ⁴He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. ⁵Thus says God, the Lord, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and what comes from it, who gives breath to the people upon it and spirit to those who walk in it: ⁶I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness, I have taken you by the hand and kept you; I have given you as a covenant to the people, a light to the nations, ⁷to open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness. ⁸I am the Lord, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to idols. ⁹See, the former things have come to pass, and new things I now declare; before they spring forth, I tell you of them.

Psalms 29

- ¹ Ascribe to the Lord, you gods, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength.
² Ascribe to the Lord the glory due God's name; worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.
³ The voice of the Lord is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is upon the mighty waters.
⁴ The voice of the Lord is a powerful voice; the voice of

the Lord is a voice of splendor.

- ⁵ The voice of the Lord breaks the cedar trees; the Lord breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
⁶ the Lord makes Lebanon skip like a calf, and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.
⁷ The voice of the Lord bursts forth in lightning flashes.
⁸ The voice of the Lord shakes the wilderness; the Lord shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
⁹ The voice of the Lord makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare. And in the temple of the Lord all are crying, “Glory!”
¹⁰ The Lord sits enthroned above the flood; the Lord sits enthroned as king forevermore.
¹¹ O Lord, give strength to your people; give them, O Lord, the blessings of peace.

Second Reading “**Acts 10:34 – 43**”

³⁴ Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

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

Gospel “Matthew 3:13 – 17”

Glory to you, O Lord.

¹³ Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from heaven said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”
*The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.***

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
“Jesus The Rebel”*

Many years ago, when our synod had regular youth events, a decision was made to have a youth event that consisted of a “traveling show” of sorts so that – rather than have youth travel long distances to a single event – the event would come to them in their area and be held at our synod camps at Edgewood, Lutherlyn, and Mush-a-Mush in Nova Scotia.

As I lived in the proximity of Lutherlyn at the time, I headed up the local committee for the first event entitled “Jesus the Rebel”. One of the requests from the organizing committee was for us to acquire a motorcycle and rider to be used at the event. Fortunately for our committee, both of those lived at my house at the time, as I still had an old Honda.

The idea was that I would ride in, circle the crowd making as much noise as I could, and then drive behind a building to shut it off. At that point I would toss my helmet to “the star” (or keynote speaker) who would then enter the public eye pushing my motorcycle and

hopefully being successful at getting it properly on the kickstand without letting it fall to the ground.

The idea behind the theme of that youth event was that Jesus was essentially a rebel. He didn’t follow the social norms of the time. He didn’t act like a carpenter or even a rabbi from some backwoods town. He cut through all the crap society promotes in order to justify the way things are. Jesus was more interested in justice for the oppressed than upholding the norms of his day. He was in many ways fulfilling the words of Isaiah as we heard in our first lesson, that he came to establish justice in the earth. That’s why Jesus sometimes comes across as a bit odd, a bit of a rebel.

We find some of this in our gospel message for today. Jesus comes to be baptized at the Jordan, and John - who knows Jesus real identity - seems to think it kind of ridiculous that he, a minor figure, should be the one to baptize Jesus the promised messiah. It should be the other way around! In John’s mind it would be kind of like me presenting our governor general Mary Simon with a governor general’s award. Yet, even though John doesn’t feel qualified, Jesus insists.

This is just one example of Jesus showing himself to be a rebel in human society. There were other things as well. He ate meals and hung around with people considered to be undesirable, he healed people whom others didn’t think deserved healing, and he spoke out against things like revenge and dealing with others unjustly.

But is Jesus really being rebellious? As the Son of God, wouldn’t Jesus simply be acting as God would act? Isn’t Jesus just mirroring the love, mercy, and forgiving nature of God? If this is how God acts, and the example Jesus showed us to follow, isn’t it possible that humans are the ones who act as rebels? If we support structures that reward the rich and punish the poor, are we not rebelling against God’s ways of justice? If we refuse to even consider the causes of

poverty and homelessness aren’t we rebelling against how God would want us to treat the poor? If we aren’t continuously working on our relationship with God, seeking to increase our trust and faith, how does that mirror all the times Jesus went away to quiet places in prayer for lengthy amounts of time?

It seems that Jesus didn’t come to earth to be a rebel, but rather to show how we are the ones who have rebelled. He came to show us that life is not about struggling to be above others, but rather that the meaning of life is about service to others, even if it does cost us in some way. It was for that reason that he insisted on being baptized by John at the Jordan river. Jesus was showing humility, a characteristic that demonstrates how we are to behave. In the eyes of the world, that’s rebellious. In the eyes of God, it’s blind faith.

Jesus does also call us to be rebels of sorts, not rebelling against God, but rather rebelling against the human tendency to go against God’s ways. We don’t need motorcycles and stunt people to look good in the eyes of the world, because what really counts in the end is how we look in the eyes of God who is merciful, just, and offers us a peace the world cannot. May you be rebellious against the ways of the world, and at peace with God. Amen.

Prayers

Called together to follow Jesus, we pray for the church, the world, and all in need.

Calling God, you speak with power to your church. Open our hearts and minds to the new things you are declaring. Strengthen bishops, pastors, deacons, lay leaders, and teachers of the faith. Equip the baptized for your reconciling and redeeming work. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Renewing God, you provide the waters of the earth and in Jesus' baptism you reveal the waters of life. Cleanse and protect oceans, rivers, and watersheds. Bring relief to parched lands and to communities without access to safe water. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Righteous God, you never weary of establishing justice. Increase cooperation and constructive dialogue between nations. Guide local, national, and international authorities to govern with equity, vision, and integrity. We pray for those in military service, for peacemakers, and for our enemies. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Abiding God, your mercy is steadfast. Give sanctuary to people who flee from oppression, war, poverty, and famine. Sustain health care workers, caregivers, first responders, counselors, and all who help and heal. Comfort those who are grieving or experiencing crisis. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Blessing God, in Christ you gather the beloved community. Kindle the gifts of your Spirit in your people. Accompany the newly baptized, those recently ordained, and any beginning a new ministry. Inspire synodical leaders and congregational councils to serve with imagination and wisdom. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Promising God, your faithfulness endures throughout all generations. We give thanks for those who have died in Christ, trusting that we will be united with them and all the saints in Christ's resurrection life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We bring to you our needs and hopes, O God, trusting your wisdom and power revealed in Christ crucified.

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.**