

New Hope Lutheran Church

189 Regent St.
Sudbury, Ontario
P3C 4C4

705-673-2933
email: office@nhlc.ca
website: nhlc.ca

face book: New Hope Lutheran Church
you tube: New Hope Lutheran Church Sudbury

Pastors:

Rev. Charles Nolting
phone: 705-920-3573 email: pcn@nhlc.ca

Rev. Johanna Porkola
phone: 705-688-6284 email: pjp@nhlc.ca

January 29, 2023

The 4th Sunday after Epiphany

Coming Events

Jan 31	2:00	Kammari Impola
	7:00	Eng Bible Study Zoom
Feb 1	10 – 1	Kahvi Time Regent St.
Feb 2	6:30	Finnish Bible Study Zoom
Feb 5	10:00	Finnish Worship Service Voima Hall
	11:30	English Worship Service Regent St.

In our prayers Eero, Ron, Ruth, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

Holy God, you confound the world's wisdom in giving your kingdom to the lowly and the pure in heart. Give us such a hunger and thirst for justice, and perseverance in striving for peace, that in our words and deeds the world may see the life of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading “Micah 6:1 – 8”

¹ Hear what the Lord says: Rise, plead your case before the mountains, and let the hills hear your voice. ² Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the Lord, and you enduring foundations of the earth; for the Lord has a controversy with his people, and he will contend with Israel. ³ “O my people, what have I done to you? In what have I wearied you? Answer me! ⁴ For I brought you up from the land of Egypt, and redeemed you from the house of slavery; and I sent before you Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. ⁵ O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised, what Balaam son of Beor answered him, and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal, that you may know the saving acts of the Lord.” ⁶ “With what shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before God on high? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? ⁷ Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” ⁸ He has told you, O mortal, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?

Psalm 15

¹ Lord, who may dwell in your sacred tent? Who may live on your holy mountain?
² The one whose walk is blameless, who does what is righteous, who speaks the truth from their heart;
³ whose tongue utters no slander, who does no wrong to a neighbor, and casts no slur on others;
⁴ who despises a vile person but honors those who fear the Lord; who keeps an oath even when it hurts, and

does not change their mind;

⁵ who lends money to the poor without interest; who does not accept a bribe against the innocent. Whoever does these things will never be shaken.

Second Reading “1 Corinthians 1:18 – 31”

¹⁸ The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹ For it is written, “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.” ²⁰ Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹ For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²² For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³ but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵ For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength. ²⁶ Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no one might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, ³¹ in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”
The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel “**Matthew 5:1 – 12**”

Glory to you, O Lord.

When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account.

Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

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

Sermon

By Rev. Charles Nolting

“Theology of the Cross”

When I was a kid, I was pretty sure that my father’s mission in life was to make sure I was a hard worker because, to me, it felt like I was always working. All summer long, along with farm chores, I had to mow the lawn every week, and that was a two-day job with a push mower because my mother liked having a huge lawn.

One summer my older brother Bernie and I also had the job of re-graveling the driveway which was pretty intense because not only was it a very long driveway, but we had to take the wagon back to the gravel pit, load it by hand, and then go home to unload it by hand. Another summer was spent trimming brush out of the spruce plantations.

In the winter we boys had to shovel that long driveway, in the early days with pointed dirt shovels; until my dad finally clued in and bought decent snow shovels. And that lasted until Bernie had enough money to buy a snowblower. It seemed like we were always working.

In actual fact, when I look back on those days, it wasn’t all that bad. We were left to our own devices for most of those jobs and dawdled around enough at them. I learned the difference the summer I was 14 when my dad dragged me off to construction sites to put in 8 actual hours of work a day, and that continued all through my high school summers. I was one of the few kids who actually looked forward to school in September!

And while this all helped the family, I think they also wanted to teach me the ways of the world. If you work, you get rewarded. The world seems to operate on that system of rewards for work, doesn’t it? We are all to strive for good grades, winning sports teams, and dream jobs. We are told that if you work for it, such rewards will be yours. Winners are those who work hard for their rewards and those without such rewards must therefore be losers, and maybe even deserve harshness in life. That’s what the world says.

Unfortunately, that attitude can also infiltrate the church as well. When we approach God with an attitude that says we have worked hard on God’s behalf, so we deserve salvation, (and all the best of things in life) we are also implying that all those unsuccessful people out there don’t deserve God’s salvation. This is what is called a *theology of glory*.

Theologies of glory are approaches to faith and life that try in various ways to minimize difficult and painful things, or try to move past them rather than looking them square in the face and accepting them. When Martin Luther wrote about it, he explained that those who believe this way “*do not know that God is hidden in suffering.*”

A theology of glory is kind of like a default setting for humans that are addicted to control and measurement, because it makes us feel like we are in the driver’s seat, and we are in total control of our salvation. If we aren’t in control, well then, God mustn’t love us.

I’ve seen the result of such thinking when some have told me that they were “bad” people, and they appeared to be wondering if God could ever accept them. They were musing how God can ever love them. Based on the performance theory, or a theology of glory, God can’t.

You see, the world sees life as a ladder that each of us is supposed to climb, always attempting to reach the top rung, which always remains out of sight and out of reach. If you are a millionaire, you want to be a billionaire. If you are a billionaire, you want to be famous on popular media. If you are famous on popular media, you want to become the president of the United States. It will never end. Being at peace with yourself is not an option.

The good news though, is that there is another option called the theology of the cross. It accepts that there is suffering, and in suffering, in our low points in life, and in our weakest moments – this is where we most powerfully find God. A theology of the cross, is best explained in the beatitudes we heard today, where God and God’s peace is found in the weakest, the most vulnerable, those who are seeking justice, the mourning – all people the world says don’t count for as much.

In our gospel lesson today, we find just one of the places in the Bible where a theology of glory is turned

on its ear. Success and a pain free life are not a sign of an extremely Godly person. A theology of the cross defines life in terms of giving rather than taking, self-sacrifice rather than self-protection, dying rather than killing. Like Christ's death on the cross, it shows us that we win when it appears we are losing, we triumph though defeat, and we become rich by giving ourselves away.

This is good news! God doesn't accept us based on worldly standards of climbing up a ladder, but on the standards of the kingdom of heaven where God comes to us in our pain, in our struggles, and at our weakest – down at the very bottom. Regardless of our past (or even in the present) the faithful are accepted into the family. Rejoice and be glad, for you that feel pain in life, are among the most blessed. Amen.

Prayers

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

Cultivate humility in your church. In gatherings of every size, teach us to boast only in the cross. Shape your church to be people of kindness, generosity, and justice. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

The foundations of the earth bear witness to your faithfulness; the mountains and hills echo with your holiness. When we mistreat your creation, show us the error of our ways. Inspire us with reverent awe to honor all you have made. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You make foolish the wisdom of the world. Raise up honorable leaders who seek justice, love mercy, and pursue peace. Frustrate plans that are corrupt, wicked, and self-seeking. Prosper the work of peacemakers. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Bless all whom the world rejects. Accompany those who are regarded as foolish, weak, low, and despised; reveal your power and presence at work where it is

least expected. Give your life, strength, and wisdom to all in need. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

As with your people Israel, remind this congregation of your saving acts. Remind us how your faithfulness brought us through difficulties and sustained us despite our weaknesses. Establish the cross as the center of our life together. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Praise to you for your blessed saints in every time and place. Trusting you accompanied them in poverty, persecution, and in every trial, we trust you will abide with your people always. 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.**