

New Hope Lutheran Church

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February 12, 2023

The 6th Sunday after Epiphany

Coming Events

- | | | |
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| Feb 14 | 2:00 | Kammari Impola |
| | 7:00 | Eng Bible Study Zoom |
| Feb 15 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| | 2:00 | Mission Circle Finlandia |
| Feb 16 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| Feb 19 | 10:00 | Finnish Worship Service Voima Hall |
| | 11:30 | English Worship Service Regent St. |

In our prayers Eero, Ron, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

O God, the strength of all who hope in you, because we are weak mortals we accomplish nothing good without you. Help us to see and understand the things we ought to do, and give us grace and power to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. Amen.

First Reading “Deuteronomy 30:15 – 20”

[Moses said to the people:] ¹⁵See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. ¹⁶If you obey the commandments of the Lord your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the Lord your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. ¹⁷But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, ¹⁸I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. ¹⁹I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, ²⁰loving the Lord your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the Lord swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

Psalms 119:1 – 8

- ¹ Blessed are those whose ways are blameless, who walk according to the law of the Lord.
² Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart—
³ they do no wrong but follow his ways.
⁴ You have laid down precepts that are to be fully obeyed.
⁵ Oh, that my ways were steadfast in obeying your decrees!
⁶ Then I would not be put to shame when I consider all

your commands.

⁷ I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.

⁸ I will obey your decrees; do not utterly forsake me.

Second Reading “1 Corinthians 3:1 – 9”

¹ Brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people, but rather as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. ²I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for solid food. Even now you are still not ready, ³for you are still of the flesh. For as long as there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not of the flesh, and behaving according to human inclinations? ⁴For when one says, “I belong to Paul,” and another, “I belong to Apollos,” are you not merely human? ⁵What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. ⁶I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labor of each. ⁹For we are God’s servants, working together; you are God’s field, God’s building.

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

Gospel “Matthew 5:21 – 37”

Glory to you, O Lord.

²¹[Jesus said to the disciples:] “You have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not murder’; and ‘whoever murders shall be liable to judgment.’ ²²But I say to you that if you are angry with a brother or sister, you will be liable to judgment; and if you insult a brother or sister, you will be liable to the council; and if you say, ‘You fool,’ you will be liable to the hell of fire. ²³So when you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift. ²⁵Come to

terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. ²⁶Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.²⁷“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall not commit adultery.’ ²⁸But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart. ²⁹If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. ³⁰And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away; it is better for you to lose one of your members than for your whole body to go into hell.³¹“It was also said, ‘Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.’ ³²But I say to you that anyone who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.³³“Again, you have heard that it was said to those of ancient times, ‘You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord.’ ³⁴But I say to you, Do not swear at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, ³⁵or by the earth, for it is his footstool, or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the great King. ³⁶And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. ³⁷Let your word be ‘Yes, Yes’ or ‘No, No’; anything more than this comes from the evil one.”
*The Gospel of the Lord. **Praise to you, O Christ.***

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
“Wrinkles”*

People don't think they sin.

Something I find ironic in these times is that; while an incredible amount of time and money is spent making themselves look better on the outside, most people

appear to feel that on the inside they are perfect. The only place they need improvement is in their looks.

Depending on where you look, it appears that the cosmetics industry worldwide is worth almost 400 billion dollars a year. They make that kind of money by openly suggesting through advertising that we are all somewhat ugly, and they have the answer to that, answers that will cost us and profit themselves. Part of the way they get away with it is through exaggeration. “*That’s not a wrinkle on your face, it’s not a laugh line, it’s the Grand Canyon - and it’s such a huge disfiguration that it should qualify you for the special Olympics.*”

If people can be persuaded into supporting cosmetics firms through such a perspective, one would think that - by using a lesson like we have in our gospel - a service of forgiveness like we are having today should be packed full of people! Jesus is pointing out our sin, and not just outward 10 commandments sin, but even what goes on inside our heads – the stuff that no one else even knows about – that too can be sinful. His point is that our souls are not perfect.

But we do sin!

So, while we think it’s terrible to murder someone by physically killing their body, Jesus says it’s just as bad if you are so angry with someone that you insult them. Martin Luther highlighted this as well, pointing out that calling someone an unflattering name cuts away at people and has the ability to tear people down to the point that they feel unworthy of existence.

A multitude of small cuts can have the same result as a large gaping wound which means that while we may think that we have never committed murder, it turns out that we probably have.

If you want to take this a step further, what about murder by omission? Tens of thousands were killed this week in an earthquake (which I realize we had

nothing to do with), but how many more will die due to lack of aid in the coming weeks? We have an opportunity to do something by giving to CLWR, but will we? Or will we stand aside and allow more deaths from this huge disaster?

If that hasn’t made us feel guilty yet, Jesus goes on to point out that adultery is another sin. Well, obviously. It is one of the 10 commandments. We all know that if you have committed yourself to someone in a loving relationship, then you are not to break that trust with some physical act with another person.

If we leave it there, I’m sure we can all feel good about it. Jesus however, is like a dog with a bone in that he will not let it go at that. He points out that even looking at someone with lust is also committing adultery. While many may feel that such things are ok in our society, apparently God does not feel that such action is good for us. Jesus words to us today can really make us feel as though we are the worst kind of people who should be cutting off limbs in repentance.

Acknowledging our sin is the first part of repentance

Before any of you attempt that however, what we may want to realize here is that Jesus isn’t pointing all this out in order to condemn us, or make us throw up our hands and commit ourselves to lives of evil because we feel we can’t ever get to heaven anyway. No. What Jesus is attempting to do is bring us down from our high horses of feeling that we have somehow been above all sin, to acknowledge that we aren’t perfect, that sin does exist in ourselves, and that we are so far gone that we need outside help. We cannot do this on our own.

And that is the reason why – when we look for forgiveness – we first acknowledge our sin. We look at ourselves, deep into ourselves, the way some people will look deep into a mirror to see what the wrinkle situation is each morning. In this lesson Jesus isn’t just holding up a mirror, but a magnifying mirror so that we

can plainly see that we are deeply in need of heavenly assistance.

God is more than willing to forgive our sin

Once we have acknowledged our need, then we can come to God to request forgiveness. Scriptures are quite clear that God is more than willing to forgive us once we have acknowledged our sin. I don't think that this is only for God's peace of mind, but rather for our own peace of mind, as well as edging us away from sins we have difficulty leaving behind.

This is why a service such as we are having today is an important one. It gives us more of an opportunity to consider and think about all the ways we have let God and other humans down. And it gives us the opportunity to come forward, to have hands laid upon our heads, and forgiveness personally proclaimed.

While there are parts of this gospel that come across as rather harsh, the overall message is good news. God wants us to see the harm we cause in order that we might improve, and the way to do that is to acknowledge our wrongs, accept God's loving forgiveness, and move on to spreading this good news of what God has done for us. Amen

Prayers

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

Inspire your church that it may be a sign of life throughout the world. From the exploration of faith with children and new believers to missionaries and bishops, shape lives of faithfulness, so that all find abundant life in your ways. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Nourish your creation. Accompany all who plant and water. Bless the work of farmers; provide for subsistence farmers facing drought and climate change. Guide the work of agricultural scientists toward

sustainable ways to feed the world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Give growth where there seems to be no hope for life. In nations and regions where reconciliation seems impossible, empower peacemakers with your Spirit. Where death holds sway through violence, disease, and hunger, equip relief workers to bring hope. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Nurture all in need. Bring healing to all who experience trauma caused by systems of injustice and destructive relationships. Give courage to those struggling to repent and those seeking reconciliation. Sustain all who work for restoration. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Encourage this congregation. Call us to a common purpose and keep us from quarrelling. Turn our hearts toward you and guide our leaders, so that our choices may be lifegiving for all. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Thanks be to you for the lives of all who have died in Christ. Teach us to follow them in your ways and gather us with them into the promise of eternal life with you. 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.**