

New Hope Lutheran Church

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February 26, 2023

The 1st Sunday in Lent

Coming Events

- | | | |
|---------|--------|--|
| Feb 28 | 2:00 | Kammari Impola |
| Mar 1 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| | 5:30 | Souper-Time Regent St. |
| | 6:30 | English Lenten service Regent St.
upstairs |
| | 6:30 | Finnish Lenten service Regent St.
downstairs |
| Mar 2 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| March 3 | 1:00 | World Day of Prayer
Ecumenical Worship Service
at Our Lady of Hope Parish
591 Brennan Road, Sudbury |
| Mar 5 | 9:00 | Bilingual Worship Service Voima Hall |
| | 10:15 | Annual Meeting Voima Hall |

In our prayers Eero, Ron, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

Lord God, our strength, the struggle between good and evil rages within and around us, and the devil and all the forces that defy you tempt us with empty promises. Keep us steadfast in your word, and when we fall, raise us again and restore us through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

First Reading “**Genesis 2:15 – 17, 3:1 – 7**”

¹⁵The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it. ¹⁶And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; ¹⁷but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

^{3:1}Now the serpent was more crafty than any other wild animal that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, “Did God say, ‘You shall not eat from any tree in the garden?’” ²The woman said to the serpent, “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; ³but God said, ‘You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the middle of the garden, nor shall you touch it, or you shall die.’” ⁴But the serpent said to the woman, “You will not die; ⁵for God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.” ⁶So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate. ⁷Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made loincloths for themselves.

Psalms 32

¹ Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered.

² Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

³ When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my

groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. ^b

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

⁶ Therefore let all the faithful pray to you while you may be found; surely the rising of the mighty waters will not reach them.

⁷ You are my hiding place; you will protect me from trouble and surround me with songs of deliverance.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.

⁹ Do not be like the horse or the mule, which have no understanding but must be controlled by bit and bridle or they will not come to you.

¹⁰ Many are the woes of the wicked, but the Lord’s unfailing love surrounds the one who trusts in him.

¹¹ Rejoice in the Lord and be glad, you righteous; sing, all you who are upright in heart!

Second Reading “**Romans 5:12 – 19**”

¹² Just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin, and so death spread to all because all have sinned—¹³sin was indeed in the world before the law, but sin is not reckoned when there is no law. ¹⁴Yet death exercised dominion from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgression of Adam, who is a type of the one who was to come. ¹⁵But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if the many died through the one man’s trespass, much more surely have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abounded for the many. ¹⁶And the free gift is not like the effect of the one man’s sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. ¹⁷If, because of the one man’s trespass, death exercised dominion through that one, much more surely will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of

righteousness exercise dominion in life through the one man, Jesus Christ. ¹⁸Therefore just as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all, so one man's act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all.

¹⁹For just as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

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

Gospel **“Matthew 4:1 – 11”**

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. The tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” But he answered, “It is written, ‘One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’” Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, saying to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and ‘On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.’” Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘Do not put the Lord your God to the test.’” Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; and he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” Jesus said to him, “Away with you, Satan! for it is written, ‘Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.’” Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.

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

Sermon

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
“Are You Resisting?”*

This morning, our lessons have to do with what is probably the greatest challenge Christians have to face,

and that is Temptation, something that's been ongoing for as long as humans have been on earth. In our 1st lesson we are given an account of the original sin committed by Adam and Eve. In a Garden that contained everything a person could ever need to survive, God put down one rule. Yes, one rule. One single rule. That's it. “*Don't eat anything that grows on that tree*”. And the unwritten message was; “*Otherwise do what you want.*”

So, they had this one rule. When one has everything needed for comfortable survival, one would think that must be the contented life. Your food and shelter is provided indefinitely. You lack for nothing. You have variety in your life with all the free time you want to enjoy that variety. What more do you need? All you have to do is follow one rule. How hard can it be?

Well, for Adam and Eve apparently it was very difficult. The lure was cast out. The bait was presented. The trap was set. And what kind of bait was it? According to our lesson, the tempter told Eve: “*You will be like God!*” That's all it took. From our perspective we might think that Adam and Eve were some of the biggest schmucks in the history of human kind. I mean, it appears that they had everything we dream of – and they threw it away so easily.

That is so unlike Jesus in our gospel today. We find him out in the wilderness where he has been on a spiritual fast, which means he hadn't been eating for quite some time. His needs were not being met. He was hungry for some real food. But when he is offered the opportunity to eat, he turns it down! And it seems like such a reasonable offer! You can do this. Turn the stones into bread!

It would appear that his time in the desert has been a time of self-discovery, contemplating who he is and what should he do now. And so, after the offer of bread, the tempter gives him the opportunity to show everyone who he is in one fell swoop, by jumping off the highest point of the temple so that all can see him

being softly and gently carried down by angels. Why prove who you are to the people the hard way? Here's an easy way out. It's a reasonable offer.

Then there is Jesus' problem of how to get people to recognize him as Lord of all. In response, the tempter offers him the office of supreme commander of the existing nations of the world. Why work so hard to be lord over all when it can just be handed to you? Again, it seems like such a reasonable offer.

But that is how temptation works. That's how the bait is cast, kind of like fishing, where the trick is to correctly present the bait. You can wait a long time for results with something that is limp and not really doing anything. Such bait has little or no appeal. So, to get results when fishing, you need to present bait that appears to be a reasonable offering to the victim. You make it move or flash, or provide some scent or noise. If it does that, at least the temptation appears to be a reasonable offering. And then, once the bite is taken, all one has to do is give the line a tug, hang on, and reel in.

That, in a nutshell, is how the powers of evil try to take us in. They first present the temptation. Here, look at this! Doesn't it look good? You should take it. It would be so easy! If we do take the bait, we will, in time, feel the hook digging in – causing us a great amount of misery. And although that is the point where one begins to fight back, if that hook is set, we should be aware it takes an immense amount of time and energy to get off it again. Sadly, most people will be reeled in. So, who is it that puts this temptation before us? While there are many names used, (such as devil, satan, powers of evil) one of the main ones in Greek is the term *diabalos* which is more of a job description than a name. It's a compound word, made up of the 2 words *dia* and *balos*. *Dia* means through, as to pierce something from one side all the way through to the other side. The word *balos* means *to throw*, as when a person throws a ball, a rock, or some other object.

When these two words are joined, it means *to repetitiously throw something – striking again and again and again until the object being struck has finally been completely penetrated.*

Now do you see why this word is a vivid job description for the devil? It tells us exactly how he operates. He comes to assault the mind – not once but many times. He strikes the mind and emotions again and again and again. He just keeps on striking until he wears down the resistance of the one being assaulted. Then as soon as the victim lets down his mental resistance, the devil gives one last firm punch that finally succeeds in penetrating the mind. Once the devil has gained access into that person's mind, he begins to flood them with lies on top of lies. If the person listens to those lies and believes them, the devil can then successfully build a stronghold in their life from which he can begin to control and manipulate that person.

Does this kind of mental attack sound familiar? Instead of giving the devil the pleasure of filling your head with a barrage of lies, why don't we start to resist him? That's right - just tell the devil to shut up and to stop dropping those dim-witted thoughts of nonsense into your head! Tell him to hit the road!

And yes, we can do that. Lent is a great time for you to resist the enemy of your soul. When it comes to the tempter, you have to let him know that you're not going to bite that bait anymore, so he may as well go fishing somewhere else.

As incredible as that may sound, we find evidence of this in the book of James is a little known letter stuck in the back forty of the New Testament. In James 4:7, it says that if you will resist the devil, he will "flee" from you. The word "flee" in Greek is from a word which was used to describe *a lawbreaker who flees in terror from a nation where he broke the law.* The reason he flees so quickly is that he wants to escape the prosecution

process; so rather than stay and face the consequences, the lawbreaker flees for his life.

This means the devil knows that he is a lawbreaker! He also knows that if a believer stands against him - in other words, if the believer resists the enemy by using his God-given authority in the name of Jesus and with the Word of God - it won't be long until that believer begins to rule and dominate the devil. Rather than allow this to happen, the devil begins to withdraw and look for a way to escape the prosecution process. Instead of sticking around and trying hopelessly to defend himself against the name of Jesus and the Word of God, the devil tucks his tail and runs! That is precisely what James means when he says that the devil will "flee."

We find this in our gospel lesson today as well. Three times the devil put bait before Jesus, and three times Jesus told him to shove off – using scripture to back himself up. As reasonable as the evil one can appear to be, we need to remember to resist such temptation also in this way. If it helps to imagine it as a lovely lure waiting for a fish, then use that image to remind yourself that falling for temptations will mean you will have to deal with a sharp hook in a painful place.

While it may be easy to just blame Adam and Eve for getting us into such a situation, in the first place, I'm not totally convinced that we would do any better. Who isn't tempted by that promise to be like God?

Whenever we are trying to be masters of our own destiny, we are trying to be like god. Whenever we look to improve our lot at the cost of others, we are trying to be like god. Whenever we even try to put ourselves first, in whatever manner, we are trying to be like god. That temptation takes many forms all around us. So resist the temptation, knowing God will give you the strength and courage to do it. And may you see how blessed you are that you didn't take the bait. Amen.

Prayers

Sustained by God's abundant mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all of creation.

You alone are God. Sustain your church in times of wilderness. Give vision and wisdom to bishops, their staff, and all entrusted with the ministry of administration. Counsel all who faithfully lead your people into the future. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You create verdant gardens and expansive deserts. Tend to the needs of every living creature. Bless those who work in fields and orchards, that the world is nourished by the fruits of their labor. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You know our temptations. Sustain those who govern and legislate. Instill in them a sense of your justice and righteousness, that equity and peace would pervade all the regions and nations of the world. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You are a hiding place for all in distress. Draw near to exiles, and accompany all refugees and immigrants, especially children who travel alone. In times of trouble, trauma, or illness, surround your people with your steadfast love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You offer abundance to all. Bless the ministries of hospitality in this place. Care for those who tend to the needs of others, especially worship greeters, coffee hour hosts, and worship assistants. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You alone are God. We praise you for the faithful departed in every age. Unite our prayers with theirs, until our wilderness journey is complete, and we rest in you. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We lift our prayers to you, O God, trusting in your steadfast love and your promise to renew your whole creation; through Jesus Christ our Savior.

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.**