

New Hope Lutheran Church

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March 12, 2023

The 2nd Sunday in Lent

Coming Events

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| Mar 14 | 2:00 | Kammari Impola |
| Mar 15 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| | 2:00 | Mission Circle Finlandia |
| | 5:30 | Souper-Time Regent St. |
| | 6:30 | English Lenten service Regent St.
upstairs |
| | 6:30 | Finnish Lenten service Regent St.
downstairs |
| Mar 16 | 6:30 | Finnish Bible Study Zoom |
| Mar 18 | 3:00 | Pr. Johanna's installation Voima |
| Mar 12 | 10:00 | Finnish Worship Service Voima Hall |
| | 11:30 | English Worship Service Regent St. |

In our prayers Eero, Ron, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

Merciful God, the fountain of living water, you quench our thirst and wash away our sin. Give us this water always. Bring us to drink from the well that flows with the beauty of your truth 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 “Exodus 17:1 – 7”

¹ From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the Lord commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink. ²The people quarreled with Moses, and said, “Give us water to drink.” Moses said to them, “Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?” ³But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, “Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?” ⁴So Moses cried out to the Lord, “What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me.” ⁵The Lord said to Moses, “Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink.” Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the Lord, saying, “Is the Lord among us or not?”

Second Reading “Romans 5:1 – 11”

¹ Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not

disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us. ⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us. ⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

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

Gospel “John 4:5 – 42”

Glory to you, O Lord.

⁵*[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. ⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.*

⁷*A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” ⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) ⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) ¹⁰Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” ¹¹The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” ¹³Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, ¹⁴but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will*

give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” ¹⁵The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

¹⁶Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come back.” ¹⁷The woman answered him, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “You are right in saying, ‘I have no husband’; ¹⁸for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!” ¹⁹The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. ²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” ²¹Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. ²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. ²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” ²⁵The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” ²⁶Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

²⁷Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” ²⁸Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, ²⁹“Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” ³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” ³²But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” ³³So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” ³⁴Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his

work. ³⁵Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. ³⁶The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. ³⁷For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ ³⁸I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

³⁹Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹And many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”
The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.

Sermon

By Rev. Charles Nolting

Shall We Gather At The River

What you will find in most of our lessons today, is a theme which has a lot to do with water. Our first lesson is about the Israelites moving to a new location, and discovering that there was no water, which isn’t a good thing in a dry and hot environment. Our psalm celebrated the result of that story, Moses bringing water from a rock. Then our gospel lesson is a lengthy story about Jesus wanting a drink from a well, and his encounter with a Samaritan woman.

Because of this, I felt that the hymns for today should also reflect a similar theme, which is why we began with the hymn, Shall We Gather at the River.

The hymn was written and composed by Robert Lowry in 1864. He was born in Philadelphia and a lover of

music from an early age, as he joined the First Baptist church at the age of 17, and became involved in the Sunday school and choir. By age 22 he had decided to become a pastor and, after graduation served in 5 congregations over the course of 26 years, congregations in the states of Pennsylvania and New York. After that, he decided he needed a break, so he took a 4 year sabbatical – in Europe.

While Pastor Lowry was known for being a brilliant and interesting speaker, his hobby was music. Over the course of his career he wrote over 500 hymns, although few are as well known as “Shall We Gather at the River”. There is one story of Pastor Lowry boarding a train car filled with half-drunken lumbermen, and suddenly they began to sing this hymn over and over and over. While he wasn’t overly impressed with their drunken rendition, he did hope that someday they would take the words to heart.

He was once asked by a reporter if he composed by first writing the words, or the music, and replied that he had no method, because sometimes the words came to him first, sometimes the music came first, and sometimes they all came at the same time. Regardless of how he did it, Robert Lowry blessed the church at large by taking a gift from God and sharing it with so many others. May we do the same with the gifts we have been bequeathed with. Amen.

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing

In that lesson we just heard, Jesus explains that the living water he gives: “*will be an artesian spring within, gushing fountains of endless life*”, as The Message puts it. If you ever had anything to do with an artesian well, you know that the water just comes out of the ground all on its own, without needing pumps or any apparatus to pull the water. You might also be aware that, from time to time, an artesian well may push out more or less water, depending on the season.

And that kind of sums up the life of the author of *Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing*, Robert Robinson. Life became rather difficult when, at the age of 8, his father died, and then, at age 14, his mother sent him off to London to become a barber's apprentice. Once in the city of London, he hung out with a gang of hoodlums and lived a rather debauched life. One night that gang decided to attend a Methodist service, not for religious purposes, but because they wanted to make fun of the Methodists and cause a bit of mayhem since their targets were, well, Methodists.

Lucky for Robert, the preacher that night was the powerful speaker George Whitfield, whose sermon touched Robert to the point that he became converted, and joined the Methodist church. After a few years with them, he decided to give up barbering (I don't think they called them "hair stylists" back in the 1750's), and become a pastor.

As it turned out, he wasn't all that keen on being a Methodist because several years later, he became a Baptist pastor, starting his own independent congregation where he stayed for almost 30 years. He wrote this hymn in 1755, which quickly became popular in England. Part of the appeal is the use of Biblical references. You might notice in verse 2 the line; "*Here I raise my Ebenezer*", a reference to 1 Samuel 7:12, which reads: "*Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Jeshanah, and named it Ebenezer; for he said, 'Thus far the Lord has helped us.'*" Ebenezer then, is to be taken as a sign of God's faithfulness, giving one hope that God will continue to provide on the life journey; assuming of course, that we continue to desire God's presence with us.

Prophetically in verse 3, Robinson notes how he was prone to wander, and prone to leave God, as apparently, he later in life lapsed from the faith. There is a story of him late in life, riding in a stagecoach, and he noticed a woman engrossed in a Hymn book from

which she was humming. She asked what he thought of the tune, and he replied; "*Madam, I am the poor unhappy man who wrote that hymn many years ago, and I would give a thousand worlds, if I had them, to enjoy the feelings I had then.*"

Unfortunately, I was unable to find out how Robinson's life wound down. We can only hope that he did return to the fountain of living water and continued spreading the gospel message with the vigor of a strong artisan well; the same as the Samaritan woman in our gospel. Amen.

Blessed Assurance

The hymn *Blessed Assurance* is one of those hymns that we might say fits into the music category of "gospel music". It moves along fairly quickly, it has a catchy tune, and it's fun to sing. People like it.

The person who wrote the words to this hymn, Fanny Crosby, had a huge influence on the original gospel music movement. She wrote more than 8000 gospel song texts in her life time, and many of her hymns are still popular favorites in a lot of places. It might be surprising to find out then - that Fanny Crosby was blind. In spite of her blindness though, she spent a good chunk of her life under contract to a music publisher, writing 3 new hymns every week. People didn't always realize how busy she was because she wrote using over 200 pen names beside her own.

A lot of times the ideas for hymns were suggested by visiting ministers who wanted to have a new song on a particular subject, and at other times musicians would have music for her to listen to and see what ideas came out. This was the case with *Blessed Assurance*. The music was composed by Mrs. Joseph Knapp, who was an amateur musician and the wife of the founder of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. She played the tune for Fanny, and then asked "*what does this tune say?*" Fanny didn't even hesitate. She replied "*Why,*

that says: Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine." And then she went to work on the rest of the words.

St. Augustine wrote "*Beware of despairing about yourself: you are commanded to put your trust in God, and not in yourself.*" Those seem to be words that Fanny Crosby lived by. Similar to the Israelites in our 1st lesson she had lots to complain about, yet she didn't. In spite of her blindness in a time when it was a really tough thing to be blind, Fanny kept on praising God all of her 95 years. When one lives in a world of darkness, that is trust. May we all come to that level of trust. Amen.

Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer

You may have heard of someone by the name of Isaac Watts. Hopefully you have, since Isaac Watts is known as the father of English hymnody, writing hundreds of hymns, many of which we still use. But if Isaac Watts is known as the father of English hymnody, William Williams (born in 1717) is considered by many to be the father of Welsh hymnody.

In 1738 Williams heard a sermon by the revivalist preacher Howell Harris, a fiery Welsh layman who had been influenced by the Methodist movement in England. It was through this sermon that Williams discerned his calling to go into the ministry.

Williams first pursued becoming an Anglican priest (in the Church of Wales) and began as a deacon in 1740 but, he soon came to discover that his heart was with Harris and his travelling work, and before long he left his small parish in the mountains to join with the nomadic Methodist preachers.

One of the things the revivalists realized was that the Welsh language was lacking in hymns—the church in Wales was still primarily singing psalms in their worship services. In order to promote the creation of hymns, Howell Harris put together a hymn-writing competition between the different preachers.

As Louis Benson relates, “the prize fell easily to William Williams, who had the poet’s passion and a gift of verse-writing. Therefore, it was not very long before he was recognized as poet laureate of the Welsh revival.”

Williams would go on to write many hymns in both Welsh and English. “*Guide Me, O Thou Great Jehovah*” (the original title for this hymn), appeared in Welsh in 1745. Twenty-six years later, in 1771, a Rev. Peter Williams translated the first verse into English, prompting William Williams to translate the rest of it into English as well.

It is fitting that Williams should be the author of a hymn about the Christian’s pilgrimage on earth since as a traveling Methodist preacher, he was a pilgrim in both the spiritual and physical sense.

Williams made an extraordinary record as a travelling evangelist. He took the whole of Wales for his parish. For forty-three years he made an average of 2230 miles a year, at a time when there were no railroads and few stage-coaches. In this way the greater part of Williams’ life was spent, not in a preacher’s study, but in the great world of out of doors.

It was a picturesque life, but it was not an easy one; for nature is not always kind. It involved much exposure and constant fatigue. It also meant that, from time to time, one had to face the menace of a mob, of which all these revival preachers were victims.

Such self-sacrificing years of evangelism and those weary thousands of miles sum up the remainder of Williams’ life. We are reminded that the gospel message is not something you tell one person and leave it at that, but spreading and living the faith are part of our continual lifelong journey. Amen.

Prayers

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

We pray for your church. Bless partnerships with other Christians and inter-religious dialogue. Guide the daily work of denominational and congregational leaders. Strengthen our combined witness for the sake of the gospel, that all experience your life-giving love. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the universe. All creation teems with life, from the depths of the earth and seas to the skies above. Fill us with awe and reverence for the diversity and preservation of life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for the nations of the world. Topple the dividing walls that separate us from our neighbors. Form us into your beloved community where diversity of gender, race, language, ability, and ethnic origin is celebrated and affirmed. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for those who suffer in mind, body, or spirit. Be present with all who are lonely, and give courage to all who are afraid. Comfort those who live with chronic illness or other sickness. Give them your living water always. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We pray for this congregation, especially those preparing for baptism (*at the Vigil of Easter/on Easter Day*). Nurture their faith and pour your love into their hearts. Inspire our community by their testimony to God’s grace in their lives. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

We give thanks for the lives of all your saints. Their hope in you sustained lives of faith and service. Encourage us with the hope they shared 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.**