

# New Hope Lutheran Church

189 Regent St.  
Sudbury, Ontario  
P3C 4C4

705-673-2933  
email: [office@nhlc.ca](mailto:office@nhlc.ca)  
website: [nhlc.ca](http://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](mailto:pcn@nhlc.ca)

Rev. Johanna Porkola  
phone: 705-688-6284 email: [pjp@nhlc.ca](mailto:pjp@nhlc.ca)

*March 26, 2023*

*The 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Lent*

## Coming Events

- Mar 28 2:00 Kammari **Impola**
- Mar 29 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 30 6:30 Finnish Bible Study **Zoom**
- Apr 2 10:00 Finnish Worship Service **Voima Hall**  
11:30 English Worship Service **Regent St.**

**In our prayers** Eero, Ron, Marilyn.

**Remembering:** Anna Peura 96yrs



Mighty, gracious, compassionate Lord, we pray today for the family of Anna Peura, that you would comfort them in their grief, guide them in their sorrow, and give them your peace. We pray this in the name of Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.

## Prayer of the Day

Bend your ear to our prayers, Lord Christ, and come among us. By your gracious life and death for us, bring light into the darkness of our hearts, and anoint us with your Spirit, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## Psalm 130

- <sup>1</sup> Out of the depths I cry to you, Lord;  
<sup>2</sup> Lord, hear my voice. Let your ears be attentive to my cry for mercy.  
<sup>3</sup> If you, Lord, kept a record of sins, Lord, who could stand?  
<sup>4</sup> But with you there is forgiveness, so that we can, with reverence, serve you.  
<sup>5</sup> I wait for the Lord, my whole being waits, and in his word I put my hope.  
<sup>6</sup> I wait for the Lord more than watchmen wait for the morning, more than watchmen wait for the morning.  
<sup>7</sup> Israel, put your hope in the Lord, for with the Lord is unfailing love and with him is full redemption.  
<sup>8</sup> He himself will redeem Israel from all their sins.

## First Reading “**Ezekiel 37:1 – 14**”

<sup>1</sup> The hand of the Lord came upon me, and he brought me out by the spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of a valley; it was full of bones. <sup>2</sup> He led me all around them; there were very many lying in the valley, and they were very dry. <sup>3</sup> He said to me, “Mortal, can these bones live?” I answered, “O Lord God, you know.” <sup>4</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy to these bones, and say to them: O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. <sup>5</sup> Thus says the Lord God to these bones: I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. <sup>6</sup> I will lay sinews on you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord.” <sup>7</sup> So I prophesied as I had been commanded; and as I prophesied, suddenly there was a noise, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. <sup>8</sup> I looked, and there were sinews on them, and flesh had come

upon them, and skin had covered them; but there was no breath in them. <sup>9</sup> Then he said to me, “Prophecy to the breath, prophesy, mortal, and say to the breath: Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live.” <sup>10</sup> I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood on their feet, a vast multitude. <sup>11</sup> Then he said to me, “Mortal, these bones are the whole house of Israel. They say, ‘Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are cut off completely.’ <sup>12</sup> Therefore prophesy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: I am going to open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people; and I will bring you back to the land of Israel. <sup>13</sup> And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and bring you up from your graves, O my people. <sup>14</sup> I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord.”

## Second Reading “**Romans 8:6 – 11**”

<sup>6</sup> To set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. <sup>7</sup> For this reason the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law—indeed it cannot, <sup>8</sup> and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. <sup>9</sup> But you are not in the flesh; you are in the Spirit, since the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. <sup>10</sup> But if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. <sup>11</sup> If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

## Gospel “**John 11:1 – 45**”

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. Mary was the one*

who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill." But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was. Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, the Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?" Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him." The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep. Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." When Jesus arrived, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days. Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, some two miles away, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them about their brother. When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went and met him, while Mary stayed at home. Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. <sup>22</sup>But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again." Martha said to him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day." Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives

and believes in me will never die. Do you believe this?" She said to him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world." When she had said this, she went back and called her sister Mary, and told her privately, "The Teacher is here and is calling for you." And when she heard it, she got up quickly and went to him. Now Jesus had not yet come to the village, but was still at the place where Martha had met him. The Jews who were with her in the house, consoling her, saw Mary get up quickly and go out. They followed her because they thought that she was going to the tomb to weep there. When Mary came where Jesus was and saw him, she knelt at his feet and said to him, "Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died." When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was greatly disturbed in spirit and deeply moved. He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus began to weep. So the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" But some of them said, "Could not he who opened the eyes of the blind man have kept this man from dying?" Then Jesus, again greatly disturbed, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone was lying against it. Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of the dead man, said to him, "Lord, already there is a stench because he has been dead four days." Jesus said to her, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" So they took away the stone. And Jesus looked upward and said, "Father, I thank you for having heard me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me." When he had said this, he cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come out!" The dead man came out, his hands and feet bound with strips of cloth, and his face wrapped in a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go." Many of the Jews therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what Jesus did, believed in him. *The Gospel of the Lord. Praise to you, O Christ.*

## Sermon

By Rev. Charles Nolting  
"Unbind Them!"

You may have noticed that recently we've been spending a lot of time on the gospel of John, and John wasn't one to give us the Coles notes version of any story. They are sooooo long.

This could be because, in John's versions, people just don't seem to understand. Two weeks ago, the woman at the well didn't understand what Jesus meant by "living water". Last week the man previously blind could see things that the supposedly wise people couldn't see. In today's gospel, people think Jesus is about resurrection, when he is actually talking about resurrection. Those people had expected Jesus to show up in time to resuscitate Lazarus, before he was actually dead for certain.

There are many Biblical examples of people who were thought to be dead, but brought back to life shortly after. In 1 Kings 17, Elijah restored to life the widow's son at Zarephath – shortly after he died. In Acts 20, our bible study group looked at the case of Eutychus who, during a lengthy sermon of Paul's fell asleep in a window sill, then fell out the window and was thought dead, but Paul revived him. Those are only two out of many cases of people appearing to be dead but were brought back to life.

There are so many cases of this happening in history that a tradition began around waiting with the recently deceased, just in case they awoke before the funeral. Today this is known as a "wake".

The difference between that and the Lazarus story though, is quite pronounced. Even though both sisters complained about it, Jesus didn't appear on the scene until 4 days after the death. He didn't show up at the moment of death. He didn't show up half an hour after

death. He didn't show up until Lazarus was buried in a tomb; and that was on purpose.

So we may wonder; what was the purpose of putting the family through all that grief? Did Jesus just not care? Did he need a few days off before dealing with this stressful situation? Was Jesus in so much grief over his friend's death that he just couldn't face it right away?

Apparently, (according to our wordy author John), the true purpose was for Jesus to show just how powerful God is; being able to bring back people – not from near death – but from actual death. In many ways, it was a precursor to what would happen to Jesus in the days to come.

Something that is different though, is how both those people exited their respective tombs. If you recall the Easter story, it would seem that Jesus just walked out of there. In the Lazarus story however, Jesus calls Lazarus out, and then says something that may strike us as peculiar: “*unbind him and let him go*”.

Unbind him? Even though John's lengthy gospel tells us he was wrapped up, he still managed to come out somehow when Jesus called him, so his bandages didn't seem to affect his mobility. Why then unbind him? Why even mention it?

At this point we may have finally come to the reason why John is so long-winded. Its because John is always including hidden messages within the message. With the way he can include hidden meanings, John should have been a spy, or at least a cryptographer. The good thing is that such hidden messages are still very relevant for us today.

So, you are possibly saying to yourself: “*I don't see any hidden message.*” But think about the words “unbind him”. Yes, Lazarus was alive and Lazarus was out of the tomb, but was he really free? How far do you get with your legs tied together? Lazarus may be raised

from the dead, but how alive can he really be until he can properly walk and run?

To apply this to ourselves, think about how each of us has received the gift of new life from the gospel, yet we have not freed ourselves to really experience it in powerful ways. It seems like we are held back and somehow bound.

We may be bound by habits or beliefs that keep us from reaching out with deep love to others. We may be bound by fears; like the fear of not having enough if we become more charitable. We may be bound by guilt. We might even be bound by grief; like the woman who couldn't come to church anymore because, after her mother's funeral she just couldn't bear the memories that building brought her.

There are many ways we can be bound, and for each of them Jesus calls out; “*Unbind them and let them go!*” Let go of whatever holds you back from deeply experiencing the love of Christ to the point where you can't help sharing that love with anybody and everybody. Let go of pain, or fear, or frustration. Let go of bad memories, of bad vibes, and bad feelings toward others.

To do that, we need each other – the church – to help us find the abundant life Jesus promises. The church helps us grow in our faith if we allow it and be a part of it. Unbinding happens when we come for worship. Unbinding happens when we study scripture together. Unbinding happens every time we help someone by showing them how they can serve Christ using their own unique talents.

Today's lengthy gospel isn't just the story of someone returning from the dead. It is also a story of finding freedom; our finding freedom through the power Jesus demonstrated for us. May we unbind ourselves and others in order that we may find the fullness of the freedom of Christ. Amen.

## Prayers

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

You have breathed into us the breath of life. Enliven your church. Deepen our partnerships with our companion churches around the globe, and bless the work of missionaries who accompany them. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your spirit brings life to creation. Enliven the natural world and restore ecosystems in need of healing. Uplift prophetic voices that turn us to the needs of the soil beneath our feet and the air all around. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You redeem the world and its peoples. Free us from systems of oppression. Unbind nations and societies from the sins of racism, sexism, and homophobia. Raise up leaders at all levels of government who work to promote the dignity of every human life. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You weep when we weep. Be present with those who grieve or who are troubled by illness. You hear us when we call to you. Deliver us from the depths of our despair, and free us from the worries that bind us. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Your Spirit of life dwells in our assembly. Bless the music ministries of this congregation and all who lead us in hymns of praise and thanksgiving and in songs of lament and prayer. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

You are the resurrection and the life. Even though we die, we will live. With thanksgiving, we remember all your saints who now live in your eternal love. 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.**