

New Hope Lutheran Church

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April 2, 2023
Palm Sunday

Coming Events

- | | | |
|-------|--------|--|
| Apr 4 | 2:00 | Kammari Impola |
| Apr 5 | 10 – 1 | Kahvi Time Regent St. |
| Apr 6 | 5:30 | Souper-Time Regent St. |
| | 6:30 | English Maundy Thursday Service
Regent St. |
| | 6:30 | Finnish Maundy Thursday Service Voima |
| Apr 7 | 10:00 | Finnish Good Friday Service Voima Hall |
| | 11:30 | English Good Friday Service Regent St. |
| Apr 9 | 10:00 | Finnish Worship Service Voima Hall |
| | 11:30 | English Worship Service Regent St. |

In our prayers Eero, Ron, Marilyn.

Prayer of the Day

Sovereign God, you have established your rule in the human heart through the servanthood of Jesus Christ. By your Spirit, keep us in the joyful procession of those who with their tongues confess Jesus as Lord, and with their lives praise him as Savior, we pray in the name of he who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Psalm 31:9 – 16

- ⁹ Be merciful to me, Lord, for I am in distress; my eyes grow weak with sorrow, my soul and body with grief.
- ¹⁰ My life is consumed by anguish and my years by groaning; my strength fails because of my affliction,^[a] and my bones grow weak.
- ¹¹ Because of all my enemies, I am the utter contempt of my neighbors and an object of dread to my closest friends—those who see me on the street flee from me.
- ¹² I am forgotten as though I were dead; I have become like broken pottery.
- ¹³ For I hear many whispering, “Terror on every side!” They conspire against me and plot to take my life.
- ¹⁴ But I trust in you, Lord; I say, “You are my God.”
- ¹⁵ My times are in your hands; deliver me from the hands of my enemies, from those who pursue me.
- ¹⁶ Let your face shine on your servant; save me in your unfailing love.

First Reading “Isaiah 50:4 – 9a”

⁴ The Lord God has given me the tongue of a teacher, that I may know how to sustain the weary with a word. Morning by morning he awakens—awakens my ear to listen as those who are taught. ⁵The Lord God has opened my ear, and I was not rebellious, I did not turn backward. ⁶I gave my back to those who struck me, and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard; I did not hide my face from insult and spitting. ⁷The Lord God helps me; therefore I have not been disgraced; therefore I have set my face like flint, and I know that I shall not be put to shame; ⁸he who vindicates me is near. Who will contend with me? Let us stand up together. Who are my adversaries? Let them confront

me. ^{9a}It is the Lord God who helps me; who will declare me guilty?

Second Reading “Philippians 2:5 – 11”

² Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, ⁷but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, ⁸he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The Word of the Lord. **Thanks be to God.**

Gospel “Matthew 21:1 – 11”

Glory to you, O Lord.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.” This took place to fulfil what was spoken through the prophet: “Say to Daughter Zion, ‘See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.’” The disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on. A very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, “Hosanna to the Son of David!” “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!” “Hosanna in the highest heaven!” When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, “Who

is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

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

*By Rev. Charles Nolting
"Not What You'd Expect"*

You may have noticed that there are a lot of powerful people flexing their muscles in the world today.

The most obvious example is Russia's Vladimir Putin who has not only invaded Ukraine, but now he is also making noises to the average Russians about how using nuclear missiles really wouldn't be all that bad a thing; an obvious ploy to get the bulk of the population to back him up if he chooses to use them. In response to all this, Finland is on track to join NATO – just in case.

Then you have North Korea showing off what are purported to be nuclear war heads for missiles, along with all their missile tests in response to U.S. and Japanese navy drills in the area. While North Korea is in the midst of a food shortage, their latest plan appears to be a trade of weapons to Russia in return for food.

Taiwan isn't very impressed with China flexing their muscles, since China has been making numerous incursions into the South China Sea, and China in return isn't very impressed with Taiwan's President making a formal trip to the United States, which supposedly is neutral regarding Taiwan.

In Israel, the current government is flexing their muscles by attempting to lessen the power of the courts in a move that would ultimately strip their Supreme Court of crucial powers to strike down legislation that it saw as effectively unconstitutional. Essentially this would remove the checks and balances that democracies often hang on.

Those are just a few examples that reflect the world we currently live in. Today my question to you is: are you happy with the way things are going, or would you rather like to see a change?

I realize that such tense situations aren't new. You may be familiar with the Cold War, the Cuban missile crisis, and numerous other anxious situations that have come and gone, some making things better, some making things worse.

In Jesus' day similar things were happening as well. The Romans didn't just show up bringing peace and contentment automatically following their conquests. They conquered brutally, and then made the citizens of that place pay for the conquest through heavy taxation. You didn't think that wars cost nothing, did you? All this muscle flexing caused a lot of unrest and civil wars over a wide area as the Romans were also busy invading and claiming power in parts of Europe at that time as well.

Hearing about so much of this happening going back at least to the times of Jesus may cause us to throw up our hands, and just accept that such things happen, and there is absolutely nothing we can do about it. We will just have to live with the stress and tension and anxiety, and maybe it won't kill us.

It is too bad through.... It's too bad that there couldn't be another way, or at least some way to spread a ray of hope through a world of darkness.

Today's good news is that into all this chaos steps Jesus, also claiming power, but not the kind of power we have become used to seeing in this world. Jesus doesn't flex muscles by being threatening or bullying. Jesus doesn't come on to us like a tornado, knocking us down in order to overpower us. Jesus doesn't even attempt to smooth talk us into anything like a con man wanting us to hand over possessions, but rather is straight with us as to what is expected and what we get.

This is the image Jesus presents to us on Palm Sunday. Here is a leader, the leader, who actually wants to save us and bring us peace – not with threats and violence, but rather with a love that we can barely grasp or understand. Unlike the powerful of this world, Jesus isn't out to gain anything for himself, but rather approaches us peacefully offering any and all gains to us.

It could be argued that what Jesus offers isn't any kind of power at all, but rather weakness. That is often how the world has looked at the followers of Christ. What possible power is there in love? And yet, Christianity has outlasted the Roman empire, the Byzantine empire, the Ottoman empire, and so many others; and all without flexing muscles, threatening, or fraudulent means.

Of course, it is true that the history of the Christian faith has had its highs and lows. While it sometimes grew, it also waned at times. Sometimes it has been more evident in one part of the world than another. Sometimes the leadership resorted to tactics that have shamed Christians over the centuries. And yet, it continues to carry on because – surprise! – there is an immense power in the love of God when it is carried out by ordinary people like you and I.

In many ways, this is also what Jesus shows us today, riding into a major city on what is pretty much a pack animal. How plain and ordinary is that? Jesus never came to impress the powerful – that is a game they play amongst themselves. Jesus came instead to demonstrate to us that the love of God is a realistic and lasting power. Instead of overcoming by force, it uses weakness. Instead of tyranny, it uses kindness and compassion. Instead of anger and hatred, God's real power is found in love.

That makes it the most powerful force of all because that is what each of us is really wanting deep down; to love and to be loved. And, that power is best spread

when you and I – ordinary people – show that love and practice it on others each and every day. That is how we shine rays of hope into this world longing for peace. Amen.

Prayers

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

Save your church, O God. Enable us to boldly confess in every time and place that Jesus Christ is Lord. With the humility of a servant, equip congregations, synods, and other ministry settings to proclaim your extravagant love for all. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Save your creation, O God. Every living being you have made has purpose. Give us renewed appreciation of farm animals who labor in the fields, service animals who accompany their human companions, and beloved pets who live alongside us. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Save the peoples of the earth, O God. Restore dignity to those who are scorned and persecuted for their religious beliefs or political activism, and deliver them from the hand of their enemies. Bring peace to places where conflict runs deep. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Save those who cry to you in any need, O God. Watch over all who are incarcerated or awaiting trial, and stand with those who are unjustly accused. Be present with those feeling isolated, lonely, or fearful. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Save us in your love, O God. Guide the work of church musicians, pastors, choirs, readers, deacons, technicians, acolytes, and all who assist in worship. Sustain them in their leadership as they accompany congregations through this Holy Week. Merciful God, **receive our prayer.**

Save us at the last, O God. We give you thanks for your saints of old who embodied your servant love. As you

came to their aid, so deliver us in times of trial, that every knee would bend in praise to 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.**