

New Hope Lutheran Church

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August 30, 2020

13th Sunday after Pentecost

**ALL EVENTS FOR THE COMING
WEEK HAVE BEEN CANCELLED**

Please remember to send in your offering.

*We now have a **donate button** on our web site nhlc.ca*

*Previous Sunday sermons and bible studies can be found
on the website.*

*The office is closed, but phone messages, email and mail
are being checked regularly.*

IN OUR PRAYERS

Fred, Pentti, Esme, Martha, Derek, Maria and Kai.

Prayer of the Day

O God, we thank you for your Son, who chose the path of suffering for the sake of the world. Humble us by his example, point us to the path of obedience, and give us strength to follow your commands, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading Jeremiah 15:15 – 21

15 LORD, you understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering—do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake. **16** When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight, for I bear your name, LORD God Almighty. **17** I never sat in the company of revelers, never made merry with them; I sat alone because your hand was on me and you had filled me with indignation. **18** Why is my pain unending and my wound grievous and incurable? You are to me like a deceptive brook, like a spring that fails. **19** Therefore this is what the LORD says: "If you repent, I will restore you that you may serve me; if you utter worthy, not worthless, words, you will be my spokesman. Let this people turn to you, but you must not turn to them. **20** I will make you a wall to this people, a fortified wall of bronze; they will fight against you but will not overcome you, for I am with you to rescue and save you," declares the LORD. **21** "I will save you from the hands of the wicked and deliver you from the grasp of the cruel."

Psalm 26:1 – 8

1 Vindicate me, LORD, for I have led a blameless life; I have trusted in the LORD and have not faltered. **2** Test me, LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; **3** for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness. **4** I do not sit with the deceitful, nor do I associate with hypocrites. **5** I abhor the assembly of evildoers and refuse to sit with the wicked. **6** I wash my hands in innocence, and go about your altar, LORD, **7** proclaiming aloud your praise and telling of all your wonderful deeds. **8** LORD, I love the house where you live, the place where your glory dwells.

Second Reading Romans 12:9 – 21

9 Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. **10** Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. **11** Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. **12** Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. **13** Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. **14** Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. **15** Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. **16** Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. **17** Do not repay

anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. **18** If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. **19** Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord. **20** On the contrary: "If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head." **21** Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Gospel Matthew 16:21 – 28

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life. **22** Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" **23** Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns." **24** Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. **25** For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it. **26** What good will it be for someone to gain the whole world, yet forfeit their soul? Or what can anyone give in exchange for their soul? **27** For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done. **28** "Truly I tell you, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

August 30, 2020 – 13th Sunday after Pentecost

From the Summer Sermon Series 2020

by Rev. Jerry Borkowski

Grace and Peace be unto you from God our Creator and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

So, what do you think it means to pick up the cross, or rather take up the cross. Maybe it's phrased carry the cross? If we were to ask that question to our church members, we would often get a very "churchy response" of some sort. People may respond that it means something about suffering or something about forgiveness of sins. It is something that we believe in. It's part of who we are as God's people.

People are often hesitant to answer the question because they are so sure it has to have a theological answer. It must be the right response because it is central to the faith. At least that how it seems, doesn't it?

The cross is a central symbol of our faith and to us as people of God. Most churches will have a cross on the outside of the building or right on the top of the roof. If there is a church sign, then it will be there. And when you go into the building you will see crosses everywhere, on the wall, behind the altar, on the hymnals, and anywhere else that you may look. Count the numbers of places and it will surprise you or maybe not, because, after all this is a church. Yes, the cross is an important symbol for the Christian community and so it should be.

Not only is the cross on the building it also is a item that we wear. Necklaces; clergy wear a cross as part of their liturgical garb; often it is a piece of jewelry that we wear to complement our clothing.

Here's our first question: what is the difference between carrying the cross and wearing the cross?

I suggest that there is a difference. If it is a reminder of Christ's death and resurrection, then that has meaning for me. If I wear it as a witness to my faith and it identifies me and says something about me, then it serves a purpose. It is a part of my life. But just saying something, is that is enough? Should there not be more? I think so, I will allude to it a little later.

Many of us have been part of a conversation where someone has concluded their comments with the phrase, "Well, I guess that is my cross to bear." What does that mean? What are they saying?

At times this kind of comment reflects how the person understands what it means to suffer, and the weight of their burden is a sign that they have an understanding of how Jesus must have felt. What is also noted is that their burden/cross is really about family annoyances that can easily trivialize the cross.

Clayton Schmidt in his commentary on this text says that most of us, when we hear that we should take up our cross, do it with some degree of gladness, because we know that's what we are called to do. Often it has to do with things that are not all that crucial to us, like serving on that boring church committee,

which we think is not that important, but someone has to do it, right? Or we help out the people who annoy us — because in our mind that is carrying our cross. To take up the cross is to deny oneself — it is not to safeguard our way of life by adding some action that will somehow fulfill what we think is our obligation of being a follower of Jesus..

The problem is, we are poor at cross bearing. To be fair, that might have been the same for the disciples. They had seen crosses — they knew what they were used for. They had witnessed the horrible pain and suffering that went with someone nailed to a cross.

Yes, for the disciples the thought of carrying a cross was a life and death matter — and many of the disciples died because they followed the Messiah.

For us to bear a cross is a figurative idea. No-one really expects to die in the process of carrying our cross and following Jesus. Even denying ourselves seems at times too much to ask. We are not much good at either one of these responses.

If we follow Jesus, we will be seriously called to bear certain crosses and lose our lifestyle if not our life. Yet in all our weakness, and human mindedness, it is Jesus' own death that enables us to do what we cannot.

Living in this time of such upheaval and uncertainty, how then does it play out for us to carry our cross and follow Jesus?

To take up our cross and follow can be difficult for people who are living in a culture that pressures people to be subordinate to others in a way that is not self-affirming.

Douglas Hare in the INTERPRETATION series on the book of Matthew says, "Properly understood, the saying does not call for self-effacement but for affirmation of one's self as a child of God." The weight of this statement does not exhort martyrdom but a fearless following of a crucified Lord. It means to truly walk the way of the cross in one's daily life. To think about how we live, what we say and what we do, that they are consistent.

David Lose says that "Faith is a full contact participation sport." You can't carry your cross from the sidelines — you need to get involved. You can't know God by sitting on the sidelines — you need to take a risk. You have to get off the couch. It means involvement to carrying the cross. It means it's a part of your daily life.

I appreciate the way Karoline Lewis puts it, that to carry one's cross is to carry the choices and burdens and realities of a life that has made a commitment. A commitment to a way of life that is committed to bring about the Kingdom of God here and now. When we make a commitment to live as people of God, carrying the cross, following, it is about a commitment that is important to us that makes a statement of our life.

I would like to suggest that to live a committed life like this, it is about continuing to grow in our faith and making a difference to grow where you are planted. That's the call for us as people of God. May that journey that you are on be mindful that that is how we make a difference for people of this world who need to know and need to see that the Good News is lived out in each of our lives.

Thanks be to God
AMEN.

Prayers

Confident of your care and helped by the Holy Spirit, we pray for the church, the world, and all who are in need.

God of faithfulness, you bid your people to follow Jesus. Set the mind of your church on divine things. Grant us trust in you, that we lose our lives for the sake of Christ and thereby discover joy in life through him.

God of wonder, the earth is yours and all that is in it. Heal your creation and give us eyes to see the world as you do. As the seasons change, pattern the rhythm of our lives in harmony with all creation.

God of all nations, you call us to live peaceably with all. Give us ears to hear one another, even those we name as enemies. Fill all leaders with mercy and understanding that they advocate and genuinely care for those who are poor and most vulnerable in their communities.

God of salvation, you promise to deliver us. Give those who suffer a strong sense of your presence and love. Be with all who have been affected by hurricanes and forest fires this past week. Look over them as they look for safe shelter, food and drink. Accompany those who are uncertain, raise the spirits of those who are despairing, and heal the sick.

God of community, you call us to rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, and persevere in prayer. Make our

congregation a workshop of your love. When we quarrel, bring reconciliation. Help us overcome evil with good.

God of all grace, you give us everlasting life. In love we recall your holy ones who now live in your undying light. In our remembering, give us a foretaste of the feast to come.

In the certain hope that nothing can separate us from your love, we offer these prayers to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**