

New Hope Lutheran Church

189 Regent St.
Sudbury, Ontario
P3C 4C4

705-673-2933
email: office@nhlc.ca
website: nhlc.ca

face book: New Hope Lutheran Church

Pastor:

Rev. Charles Nolting
phone: 705-920-3573 email: pcn@nhlc.ca

December 20, 2020
4th Sunday in Advent

Coming Events

Dec 24 1:00pm Candle light service **Regent St**
10:00pm Candle light service **Regent St**
Dec 25 10:00am Worship service **Voima Hall**
Dec 27 no service today

Finnish services have been paused,
until Christmas morning.

Finnish sermon emailed and on website nhlc.ca

In our prayers Fred, Esme, Martha.

Funeral Ellen Asunmaa 88yrs



Mighty, gracious, compassionate Lord, we pray today for the family of Ellen Asunmaa, 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

We now have a **donate button** on our web site nhlc.ca
Previous Sunday sermons and bible studies can be found on the website.

Psalm 89:1 – 4, 19 – 26

- ¹ I will sing of the Lord's great love forever; with my mouth I will make your faithfulness known through all generations.
- ² I will declare that your love stands firm forever, that you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.
- ³ You said, "I have made a covenant with my chosen one, I have sworn to David my servant,
- ⁴ 'I will establish your line forever and make your throne firm through all generations.'"
- ¹⁹ Once you spoke in a vision, to your faithful people you said: "I have bestowed strength on a warrior; I have raised up a young man from among the people.
- ²⁰ I have found David my servant; with my sacred oil I have anointed him.
- ²¹ My hand will sustain him; Surely my arm will strengthen him.
- ²² The enemy will not get the better of him; the wicked will not oppress him.
- ²³ I will crush his foes before him and strike down his adversaries.
- ²⁴ My faithful love will be with him, and through my name his horn will be exalted.
- ²⁵ I will set his hand over the sea, his right hand over the rivers.
- ²⁶ He will call out to me, 'You are my Father, my God, the Rock my Savior.'

First Reading "2 Samuel 7:1 – 11, 16"

1 After the king was settled in his palace and the LORD had given him rest from all his enemies around him, **2** he said to Nathan the prophet, "Here I am, living in a house of cedar, while the ark of God remains in a tent." **3** Nathan replied to the king, "Whatever you have in mind, go ahead and do it, for the LORD is with you." **4** But that night the word of the LORD came to Nathan, saying: **5** "Go and tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD says: Are you the one to build me a house to dwell in? **6** I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling. **7** Wherever I have moved with all the Israelites, did I ever say to any of their rulers whom I commanded to shepherd my people Israel, "Why have you not built me a house of cedar?"' **8** "Now then, tell my servant David, 'This is what the LORD Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock, and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. **9** I have been with you wherever you have gone, and I have cut off all your enemies from before you. Now I will make your name great, like the names of the greatest men on earth. **10** And I will provide a place for my people Israel

and will plant them so that they can have a home of their own and no longer be disturbed. Wicked people will not oppress them anymore, as they did at the beginning **11** and have done ever since the time I appointed leaders over my people Israel. I will also give you rest from all your enemies. " 'The LORD declares to you that the LORD himself will establish a house for you.

16 Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.' "

Second Reading "Romans 16:25 – 27"

25 Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, **26** but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith—**27** to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.

Gospel "Luke 1:26 – 38"

26 In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, **27** to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. **28** The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favored! The Lord is with you." **29** Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. **30** But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God. **31** You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. **32** He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, **33** and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end." **34** "How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?" **35** The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. **36** Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. **37** For no word from God will ever fail." **38** "I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.

Sermon

“When Life Interrupts”

There is a story of three men hiking through a forest when they came upon a large, raging, and rather violent river. Needing to get to the other side, the first man prayed; “God, please give me the strength to cross the river.” Poof! God gave him big arms and strong legs and he was able to swim across in about 2 hours, after having almost drowned twice.

After witnessing that, the second man prayed: “God, please give me strength and the tools to cross the river.” Poof! God gave him a rowboat and strong arms and strong legs, and he was able to row across in about an hour, but only after almost capsizing once.

Seeing what happened to the first two men, the third man prayed; “God please give me the strength, the tools, and the intelligence to cross the river.” Poof! He was turned into a woman, checked the map provided, hiked three hundred meters upstream, and walked across the bridge.

In this story, we are given a few different responses to how we react when life interrupts our well thought out plans. The first person made some minor changes. The second person, seeing how that had gone, made a few more minor changes. It was the third person who envisioned something totally different, and in the end, was the most successful. Sometimes, when life throws curve balls at us, we react in ways that may seem obvious, but are not necessarily what is called for.

Look at our Old Testament lesson as one example. King David appears to be feeling guilty that he has a nice home and the Lord apparently resides in a tent, so David becomes zealously intent on remedying that. The problem was that David read the Lord all wrong. Apparently, God has little interest in being housed in fine buildings, and would much rather be housed in people. Buildings do not forgive others, or provide food for the hungry, or even care for the sick. They are a way to get those things accomplished, but only by being used as a tool by those who actually do the work. So David’s vision of what God might want was inaccurate, meaning his plan had to be tossed out the window.

Mary from our gospel, on the other hand, didn’t appear to even have any thoughts about what God might want. She was an empty vessel, unlike so many of us who want to plan things out

like mad and follow a plan we ourselves have conceived. We like to plan our lives out in great detail, don’t we? It gives us a sense that we are in charge of every aspect of our being. Unfortunately that can be short sighted. Look at the first two people in that joke I told. They tried to figure out a problem all on their own, being very specific about what they wanted from God, and once they received that, they still had difficulties. Their plans weren’t all that great. But that was how they handled an interruption in their lives.

So how do we handle those times when life interrupts us? What happens when our plans go down the drain because of something like, say, a world-wide pandemic? While there have been a few who have been warning of such a thing for many years, how many paid any real attention to it? Who actually had made plans for such an epidemic?

What we are reminded of today in our lessons is that God’s ways are not always our ways, and that as much as we make plans, if they aren’t lining up with God’s plans, we may just as well stay in bed in the long run. David couldn’t envision that the Lord would want to be housed in his descendants, rather than a building. The early Jews were unable to envision that Gentiles would ever be acceptable to the Lord – as mentioned in our lesson from Romans. Mary... well Mary was another case altogether. As I said before, she appears to have been an empty vessel, just waiting for God to pour his plans into her. It’s not that she was an empty-headed country bumpkin without any plans whatsoever. If she was already engaged, she obviously had plans of some sort.

What makes Mary so unique though is that she was exceedingly willing to take God at God’s word, and just go with God’s plan. Yes, this would be an interruption in her life, but what if life’s interruptions are actually God pointing opportunities out to us? It’s pretty well documented that this pandemic has exposed cracks in our social system. If there ever was a time that food banks needed help, now is that time. If there ever was a time that the homeless need someone to stand up for them, now is that time. If there ever was a time that loneliness needed to be fought, and communities needed to be rallied together, now is that time. Have we considered that this massive disruption to our lives may actually be an opportunity?

I realize you may ask; what about the cost? Where are we going to get the funds and people to back us? And without even looking into it, don’t we instantly believe “it’s too much”? Why is it that we are so resistant to change? I suspect it’s

because we are afraid of getting into a difficult situation, and how much it may cost us.

Did you notice that Mary (the much revered Mary) never questioned the cost of serving God? While she did have some questions about the process, she never questioned where she was headed. And for that, Mary received some of the greatest honors a person can receive. She is revered by many. She has shrines all over the place. Her name is known and recognized beyond the Christian community. And that’s just the earthly honors!

There is a reason that Mary is held in such high esteem. When her life was interrupted by massive events, she knew that it wasn’t going to be easy, that there would be no easy way out once she consented to God’s vision, but Mary trusted that if God was putting wheels in motion, then God would look after her as she went about being God’s faithful servant. We too are called to be faithful servants, so let us take Mary’s example of humble servitude, and use it in the situation we find ourselves in today. May we assist others in these times of need, knowing that God will not let us down. Amen.

Prayers

God of power and might, fulfill your promise and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for all in need:

Loving God; you called out to Mary and she was blessed in her response. Be with us to also respond when you call out to us. Save us from any self-serving attitudes and fears of failure. Guide us to faithfully answer to your calling. Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Gracious God; all generations call you blessed. In this holy season we pray for our neighbors of other denominations. Inspire the faith of their people. Cultivate understanding among us and strengthen us in love and service to our community. Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Righteous God, you humble the powerful and lift up the lowly. We pray for the leaders of all nations, that they amplify the voices of people in need. Guide all people entrusted with leadership, to create societies in which everyone can flourish. Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Compassionate God; you fill the hungry with good things and send the rich away empty. Nourish those who lack access to adequate food and nutrition. Bless the work of advocates, community organizers, and food pantries. Encourage others to

provide for their neighbors in need. Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Healing God; you pour out mercy to all who cry out to you. Surround everyone in need of healing in body, mind, or spirit with your tender presence. We especially remember before you those we name in our hearts, or aloud... Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Mighty God, we ask you bless us in our efforts to speak your word to others. Be with us to guide our mouths and tongues in conversation with family, friends, neighbors, and strangers. When our efforts seem useless and unheard, remind us of the examples of your servants who went before us – to not be discouraged but continue onward. Lord, in your mercy... **hear our prayer.**

Draw near to us, O God, and receive our prayers for the sake of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer *(together)*

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.