

New Hope Lutheran Church

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June 14, 2020

2nd 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*

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

Previous Sunday sermons can be found on the website.

IN OUR PRAYERS

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

Prayer of the Day

God of compassion, you have opened the way for us and brought us to yourself. Pour your love into our hearts, that, overflowing with joy, we may freely share the blessings of your realm, and faithfully proclaim the good news of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

First Reading Exodus 19:2 – 8

2 After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the Desert of Sinai, and Israel camped there in the desert in front of the mountain. **3** Then Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the descendants of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: **4** 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. **5** Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, **6** you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." **7** So Moses went back and summoned the elders of the people and set before them all the words the LORD had commanded him to speak. **8** The people all responded together, "We will do everything the LORD has said." So Moses brought their answer back to the LORD.

Psalm 100

1 Shout for joy to the LORD, all the earth. **2** Worship the LORD with gladness; come before him with joyful songs. **3** Know that the LORD is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. **4** Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. **5** For the LORD is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Second Reading Romans 5:1 – 8

1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **2** through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the hope of the glory of God. **3** Not only so, but we also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; **4** perseverance, character; and character, hope. **5** And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us. **6** You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. **7** Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. **8** But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Gospel Matthew 9:35 – 10:8

9:35 Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. **36** When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. **37** Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. **38** Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."

10:1 Jesus called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out impure spirits and to heal every disease and sickness. **2** These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; **3** Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; **4** Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. **5** These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. **6** Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. **7** As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' **8** Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give.

June 14, 2020 – 2nd Sunday after Pentecost "Disciple? Or Apostle?"

In our gospel lesson for today, you might notice something rather curious going on. Jesus noticed that the crowds appeared to be like sheep without a shepherd, in need of guidance. And so he calls to his disciples, gives them authority to heal and cure people of every illness, and sends them out.

I realize that, thus far, this sounds pretty straightforward - for Jesus anyway. But then, when Matthew lists the names of the twelve, he gives them new titles: they are now known as *apostles*.

For many of us the terms *disciple* and *apostle* may have been pretty much interchangeable all our lives because we've used these terms to describe the twelve closest to Jesus and rarely anywhere else. But should we?

There are actually some major differences between the terms disciple and apostle. A disciple is more of a student, involved in learning from a teacher or master, in order to follow their ways. One might say that a disciple is facing Christ, in order to become proficient in the teachings and live Jesus' way. They are someone who has faith in Jesus.

An apostle on the other hand, is a proxy, or a messenger for their teacher or master. They have been commissioned, with authority delegated to them for a certain mission. They face the world with this message, and are proactive agents acting on Jesus behalf. They are people who carry with them the faith of Jesus.

Do you see the difference now? In order to be an apostle, one must first become a disciple, learning and experiencing the love of Christ. Once that has passed a certain point, it is time to take this message to the world, just as the apostles were given that authority to do so in our gospel message. As Jesus noted, there is an immense hunger out there for this good news and a need for more apostles to bring it to them. He compares it to a huge harvest.

Some might argue that apostles were only those persons who learned directly from Jesus and saw the resurrected Jesus. While it is true that they are often referred to as the Apostles (note the capital "A"), there are many places in the epistles where Paul refers to others as apostles. So it is not a title only for the select twelve, but continues onward through time, taking in a variety of people.

It occurred to me that even though we don't use the terms, we too can fit into the category of disciples and apostles. If we had Sunday School and confirmation training, that could be viewed as the time we served as disciples, facing Jesus and gaining a faith in Jesus. And then we were commissioned at our confirmation, making vows *to live among God's faithful people, to hear the word of God and share in the Lord's supper, to proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed, to serve all people following the example of Jesus, and to strive for justice and peace in all the earth.* It sounds very much like an apostolic commissioning to me!

Of course that doesn't mean that we know everything there is to know. Even the apostles in the New Testament Epistles had to learn new things. Last Sunday was my anniversary of ordination, meaning that 24 years ago I completed what might be considered an advanced form of

discipleship training and was commissioned to do something. I suppose you could say I am an apostle, although I'm not overly comfortable with such a title because, like many of you, it seems to imply great things that I'm not always certain I can do. And yet, I have been sent to face the world in the capacity of an apostle. It doesn't mean I never face Christ for support and strength, but that I am an expert simply because I have experience in a certain category of Christianity.

In fact, in some areas I am also a disciple, still learning things. As an example, recent violence and unrest has brought to the forefront the injustice of racism, and it's being addressed far and wide, which it should be. Think about that last vow made at confirmation: *To strive for justice and peace in all the earth.* That means we are to be involved in the conversation, facing up to the systemic racism that exists in our country, in our province, and in our city. The first step is to admit it's existence, and to see the injustice we are to address. Hear the stories being told by those who have been victims their entire lives in order to understand how deep the injustice goes. Be a part of conversations. That's the disciple phase.

And then there is the apostle phase, which is to take action with humility rather than pride. Whenever we see such injustice, act against it. Speak out and address it, remembering that this isn't about racial tolerance, but about racial equality. As I learn more about this, I am more compelled to action.

In essence this is the way it works in all aspects of the Christian faith. We begin, we learn, and we grow as disciples. And once we have grown to the point where we feel compelled to act on Christ's behalf, we have been commissioned as apostles.

So are you a disciple or an apostle? Are you still learning basic things about Christianity, or have you come to a point where you are prepared, and perhaps even feel compelled to face the world and bring it the good news of hope found in God's loving grace?

Sometimes we feel that we don't have what it takes to make the leap, usually because we look at the lives of the Apostles and feel we don't have the qualifications. And yet, there is always a gap between our actual selves and our ideal selves. Does that sense of distance hold us back from believing that we are worthy of a calling, or have any ability to fulfill a calling? Remember though, that God does not call an idealized version of ourselves, but calls us as we are and where

we are. So consider how you might go into the world and reap the harvest we are called to, through words and deeds. Amen.

Prayers

Called into unity with one another and the whole creation, let us pray for our shared world.

Holy One, you bring us together and call us your own, making us disciples and apostles. May we know this bond fully so that – strengthened by this bond - we might have the courage and strength to call out to others in need of your word.

Holy One, we have created divisions among ourselves. Forgive us for our pride and insincerity. Guide us to seek justice for all. Raise up leaders who work to develop lasting peace and true reconciliation.

Holy One, the whole earth is yours. Where there is fire, bring cool air and new growth. Where there is flooding, bring abatement. Where there is drought, bring rain. Inspire us to care for what you have provided.

Holy One, we pray for those who are ill. Heal those who are sick. Protect health care providers and first responders. Guide us through this time of uncertainty due to pandemic, and ease the pain of those who are suffering.

Holy One, you provide a plentiful harvest of gifts and resources. Prepare us to labour and gather the fruits of this congregation, that we might discover new ways of living and being your people. Encourage us with new ideas and insights so that we may reach out to many.

Holy One, you bring all people to yourself. We give thanks for the holy people who have gone before us. Sustain us in your mission until the day you bear us up to join the saints in light.

Receive these prayers, O God, and those too deep for words; we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**