

# 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

face book: New Hope Lutheran Church

## Pastor:

Rev. Charles Nolting  
phone: 705-920-3573 email: [pcn@nhlc.ca](mailto:pcn@nhlc.ca)

*November 29, 2020*  
*1<sup>st</sup> Sunday in Advent*

## Coming Events

Dec 6 2:00 Worship service **Regent St**

Finnish services have been paused,  
until Christmas morning.

Finnish sermon emailed and on website nhlc.ca

**In our prayers** Fred, Pentti, Esme, Martha.

## Prayer of the Day

Stir up your power, Lord Christ, and come. By your merciful protection awaken us to the threatening dangers of our sins, and keep us blameless until the coming of your new day, for you live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

*We now have a **donate button** on our web site [nhlc.ca](http://nhlc.ca)  
Previous Sunday sermons and bible studies can be found on the website.*

- <sup>1</sup> Hear us, Shepherd of Israel, you who lead Joseph like a flock. You who sit enthroned between the cherubim, shine forth
- <sup>2</sup> before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. **Awaken your might; come and save us.**
- <sup>3</sup> Restore us, O God; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.
- <sup>4</sup> **How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people?**
- <sup>5</sup> You have fed them with the bread of tears; you have made them drink tears by the bowlful.
- <sup>6</sup> **You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us.**
- <sup>7</sup> Restore us, God Almighty; **make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.**
- <sup>17</sup> Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of Man you have raised up for yourself.
- <sup>18</sup> **Then we will not turn away from you; revive us, and we will call on your name.**
- <sup>19</sup> Restore us, Lord God Almighty; **make your face shine on us, that we may be saved.**

## First Reading Isaiah 64:1 – 9

**1** Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains would tremble before you! **2** As when fire sets twigs ablaze and causes water to boil, come down to make your name known to your enemies and cause the nations to quake before you! **3** For when you did awesome things that we did not expect, you came down, and the mountains trembled before you. **4** Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, who acts on behalf of those who wait for him. **5** You come to the help of those who gladly do right, who remember your ways. But when we continued to sin against them, you were angry. How then can we be saved? **6** All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away. **7** No one calls on your name or strives to lay hold of you; for you have hidden your face from us and have given us over to our sins. **8** Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand. **9** Do not be angry beyond measure, LORD; do not remember our sins forever. Oh, look on us, we pray, for we are all your people.

## Second Reading 1 Corinthians 1:3 – 9

**3** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. **4** I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. **5** For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— **6** God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. **7** Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus

Christ to be revealed. **8** He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

## Gospel Mark 13:24 – 37

**24** “But in those days, following that distress, “ ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; **25** the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’ **26** “At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in clouds with great power and glory. **27** And he will send his angels and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of the heavens. **28** “Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. **29** Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that it is near, right at the door. **30** Truly I tell you, this generation will certainly not pass away until all these things have happened. **31** Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away. **32** “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. **33** Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. **34** It’s like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with their assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. **35** “Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back—whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. **36** If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you

## Sermon

*“Keep Watch!”*

It may surprise you somewhat that, even though we’ve begun a new year in the church, our lessons are still about the end times. You may have been thinking that because we’ve finished the old year, we were also finished with those end times lessons. Now, I have to be honest here, in letting you know that I get somewhat exhausted with all the lessons we have regarding “the end times.” I know this is something we need to be aware of, but at this time of year, they just seem to go on and on! Why?

These lessons often have a similar theme, which is that we are to be aware of what is going on. We are warned to keep watch, and to be awake. I notice these days there is a similar expression tossed about, with people asking: “are you woke?” While I had a vague idea of what that meant, because I’m so out of the loop on modern expressions, I had to look it up. What does it mean to be “woke”?

The term is of African American origin and refers to perceived awareness of issues concerning social and racial justice. Being woke means being aware... knowing what’s going on in the

community as related to racism and social injustice. It's a term that refers to those who are self-aware, who question the dominant paradigm and strive for something better. You could think of it as the opposite of those who are so wrapped up in their own little world that one is asleep to what is actually going on around them.

Going by that definition, in a lot of ways Jesus is asking in today's gospel if we are "woke" to God. Are we awake to the possibility that God is acting in our lives in ways that encourage us to become even more aware of what God is up to in this world, at this time? Are we aware of injustices and doing something about it so that God's kingdom may be more fully experienced? Are we seeing God at work in our lives, and participating, or just dozing on the sidelines?

When I think back on my own life, I realize that I wasn't always as "woke" as I should have been. I grew up in church, attending pretty much every Sunday of my life. It would take a pretty miserable snow storm to keep our family away from church. Our parents saw to that. But church was more of a social event for me back then, a time I met up with my church friends and we played out in the huge yard while the adults were having coffee after worship.

It wasn't really until I hit my early teens that something changed. I recall a Christmas Eve service where I profoundly felt the presence of God; I don't know how else to explain it. I just knew that something was going on within me. Not that the event drastically changed my life at the time. I still did teenage things – sometimes stupid teenage things – but I may have become more aware that God was an actual presence, and – going by the way some silly stunts turned out – I was pretty sure that God was watching over me.

As a young adult I still wasn't all that woke to God's presence in my life though. Even when I moved from home to another city where construction jobs were a bit more plentiful, I kept on going to church, mostly because it really is a good idea to have a social circle outside of work, and church is always a good place to make friends. The pastor at that church was a younger guy who, for whatever reason, took me under his wing. He got me involved with youth ministry at that church, and I guess it woke me up a little more.

It was through that congregation I met the person who became my spouse, and when we got married, I was determined that we would have a good living because I'd been working at low paying construction jobs, but now I had taken the step to become self-employed. Let's just say that it didn't go as well as planned. During the earliest years half the time was spent looking for jobs, a quarter of the time waiting for jobs, and the other quarter of the time actually doing jobs. It was not an overnight success. I hadn't counted on clients who didn't want to pay their full bill, or jobs that

were cancelled after I'd booked time for them and found myself with empty space.

As the years went by, things got better, but they never met my expectations. All I wanted was to do a good job at a fair price, but it just felt like the market wasn't too interested. Worst of all, I had become bored with the work, and was finding the whole process was making me miserable. I began contemplating other options.

And at that time my pastor friend began to steer me in another direction. While I'd moved back to my home congregation, and even sat on council there, we still kept in touch. And one of the things he taught me is that anyone can feel God's pull to be a professional church worker. God isn't looking only for those with extreme intelligence, good looks, or heavy ambitions. Most importantly God wants people who have awoken to God working in their lives.

I guess it was about then that I began to really awaken not just to what I wanted out of life, but what God wanted for me in life. And I began to realize that God's plan and my longings were the same thing. With the blessing of my spouse we left the life we knew and began anew as a university family, complete with a 2 year old child. The years of financial struggle had been good training for living that close to absolute poverty. And yet, during those years in university and then seminary, we were always looked after in some way. We had been woken up to how God looks after us, even when you live on the financial edge.

And that woke feeling has continued through all my years of ministry. I've learned to quit worrying about how things are going according to your plans, and aim for where you feel God is leading you. This is at least part of what it means to keep watch, to be woke in God's eyes.

Something else I've learned is that the most miserable of experiences can lead us to being woken and keeping watch. If all is going smoothly for us, why would we want to change? It is when life gets miserable that we look for change, possibly changes God wanted for us all along.

The pandemic we're currently experiencing has been a miserable experience for everyone. So has it caused us to be "woke"? Has it opened our eyes to problems in our society that we didn't pay much attention to before? Has it given us a new perspective on how to reach out to the wider community, or even the world? If so, what are we going to do about it going forward.

Jesus words regarding keeping watch are not passive instructions. They are rather instructions to be proactive, to be doing something for the benefit of God's kingdom. It turns out that end time lessons aren't to be taken as a message of gloom and doom, but rather taken as instructions for moving forward and becoming the people God intends us to be. Amen.

## Prayers

God of power and might, tear open the heavens and come quickly to this weary world. Hear our prayers for all in need:

We pray for the ministry we share in Christ's name. Open our hearts to your call for justice, peace, and healing. Attune us to the needs of the world as you draw near. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for this planet in need of restoration; for devastated habitats, polluted waters, thawing ice, blazing fires, swelling floods, and long-lasting droughts. Renew the face of the earth and our relationship to it. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for all people who care for others in our community and around the world. Fill them with compassion and the power to respond with justice for those who are oppressed, with welcome for those who are excluded, and with relief for those who suffer. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for people who are in crisis as the seasons change; for those without homes facing severe weather, for those who are unemployed or underemployed, and for those in poverty or facing food insecurity. We especially remember before you today the Elgin Street Mission, and their administrator Pastor Amanda Robichaud. Relieve their burdens, sustain their bodies, and ease their minds. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, your blessed Son Jesus Christ went about doing good, **and healing** all manner of sickness and disease among the people: Continue this, his gracious work among us in regard to the spread of Covid-19 and other forms of illness. Cheer, heal, and sanctify the sick; especially those we now name in our hearts, or aloud... Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

We pray for those who long to come to you O Lord, but find the path too difficult. Be with all who seek you out, ease their way into your presence through the words and actions of us, your people. May we strive to serve you with a willingness to serve others, sharing your message of hope. 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... **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**