

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

November 8, 2020
23rd Sunday after Pentecost

Coming Events

Nov 11 6:30 Council Meeting **Regent St**
Nov 15 10:00 Finnish worship service † **Voima Hall**
2:00 Worship service **Regent St**

In our prayers Fred, Pentti, Esme, Martha.

Funeral Norma Timmermans 81 yrs



Almighty God, we pray today for those who mourn the loss of loved ones in their lives. Today we especially remember before you the friends and families of Norma Timmermans as they struggle with their losses. Be with them in this time of sorrow, and may they know the presence of your holy comfort; we pray in Jesus name. Amen.

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

Prayer of the Day

O God of justice and love, you illumine our way through life with the words of your Son. Give us the light we need, and awaken us to the needs of others, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Psalm 70

- 1 Hasten, O God, to save me; **come quickly, Lord, to help me.**
2 May those who want to take my life be put to shame and confusion; **may all who desire my ruin be turned back in disgrace.**
3 May those who say to me, “Aha! Aha!” turn back because of their shame.
4 **But may all who seek you rejoice and be glad in you;** may those who long for your saving help always say, “The Lord is great!”
5 **But as for me, I am poor and needy; come quickly to me, O God. You are my help and my deliverer; Lord, do not delay**

First Reading Amos 5:18 – 24

18 Woe to you who long for the day of the LORD! Why do you long for the day of the LORD? That day will be darkness, not light. **19** It will be as though a man fled from a lion only to meet a bear, as though he entered his house and rested his hand on the wall only to have a snake bite him. **20** Will not the day of the LORD be darkness, not light— pitch-dark, without a ray of brightness? **21** “I hate, I despise your religious festivals; your assemblies are a stench to me. **22** Even though you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings, I will not accept them. Though you bring choice fellowship offerings, I will have no regard for them. **23** Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. **24** But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!

Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 18

13 Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. **14** For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. **15** According to the Lord’s word, we tell you that we who are still

alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. **16** For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. **17** After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. **18** Therefore encourage one another with these words.

Gospel according to Matthew 25:1 – 13 Glory to you, O Lord.

1 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. **2** Five of them were foolish and five were wise. **3** The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. **4** The wise ones, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. **5** The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. **6** “At midnight the cry rang out: ‘Here’s the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!’ **7** “Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. **8** The foolish ones said to the wise, ‘Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.’ **9** “ ‘No,’ they replied, ‘there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.’ **10** “But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. **11** “Later the others also came. ‘Lord, Lord,’ they said, ‘open the door for us!’ **12** “But he replied, ‘Truly I tell you, I don’t know you.’ **13** “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour.

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

Sermon

“Let Justice Flow”

The prophet Amos was not your ordinary type of prophet. Many Old Testament prophets had some sort of connection to the royal houses of their day, which was why they could tell off the royals and get away with it. Amos, on the other hand, was a commoner, not part of any prophetic organization (as many were), and didn’t even come from the area he preached against. He just showed up out of nowhere, having left behind

his ordinary job, and strongly felt the call from God to show up in the Northern kingdom and preach about God's displeasure with them.

Amos had a simple message. "*You've wandered off course and need to straighten up!*" Now, while other noted prophets of his time (such as Hosea and Isaiah) had a similar message, Amos stood out because he narrowed the message down to the basics: the people claimed to have faith, but they weren't practicing it. Injustice against those without power was rampant, and God was not pleased.

Strangely enough, the people claimed to want "*the day of the Lord*", the final coming of God in judgement. In Amos' estimation this was like wanting to be shot in the leg. You may think you want it, just for the experience, (and maybe bragging rights) but the reality is that you don't. People who are only partly religious, who refuse to struggle for justice in God's eyes, really aren't ready to be judged by God because they will fail, and fail badly.

The problem here is that so often we see the evil and injustice of others, but rarely take a close look at our own actions. We may want deliverance from God, but neglect to see where we ourselves have failed to deliver – and will be judged on that. In Amos' words; it's like fleeing a lion only to meet a bear.

In the days of Amos, the people of Israel thought that attending worship, following rituals, and giving sacrifice and praise was all that was required of them. Outside of those areas it didn't really matter how you behaved. It's kind of like a child who behaves in front of their parents, but bullies others at school and on the street. In essence, they were attempting to manipulate God, apparently thinking that God could be bought with their "religious" actions. The children of Israel had forgotten that God sees everything.

Amos' message was that God had had enough of such behavior. God wants the type of justice that ensures the rights and protection of all people. God wants righteousness that combines both a vertical and horizontal relationship, being right with God as well as being right with our fellow human beings.

Worship is a worthy standard to uphold, but of what use is it if we don't practice what's preached the rest of the week?

Our society has a lot of similarities with the people of Amos' day. A society that cares more for personal gain than honor and ethical considerations, or more about their own standard of living than their neighbors, is one that is going to have problems. In the past months it has been instructive to watch interviews regarding the recent election to the south. So many voters appear to be wanting to vote for whomever they feel will benefit them personally. What is good for the nation as a whole, not to mention positive effects across the world, appears to be rarely of consideration.

The lessons for today deal with living out our faith in the context of our ordinary, everyday lives. In the gospel lesson Jesus tells a story of how we are to live our lives until he returns. We are responsible for our spiritual condition. We are responsible for bringing enough oil for our lamps so that our well of faith does not dry out before Christ returns. Our relationship with God must be personal, and it must be real, not just one day a week, but every day of the year.

You might be wondering how we do that. Amos gives us a rather simple answer. "*Let Justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!*" While its obvious that everyone has their own set of circumstances in life, we need to be looking for injustices, which really isn't that difficult in these times. And I'm not simply talking about injustices we feel have befallen ourselves. We need to be looking for the injustices that hide behind our own selfish interests; the ones we normally can't be bothered with because they don't affect us directly. Why is it that there are communities that have gone for decades without safe drinking water? Why is it that homeless people are sleeping in the streets? And why do we act as if people have chosen to live that way? Nobody wants to live like that!

Those are just some examples of injustices in our own country. They are injustices that are in the news, so I don't see how they can be overlooked. But there are more. Last week I mentioned my study tour trip to Israel. As part of that, we interacted with people on the West Bank. Did you know that the city of

Bethlehem is on the West Bank? Did you know that parts of that city have 30 foot concrete walls to keep people in? And to get past the walls you need to go through what amounts to an international border crossing? Did you know that armed guards may enter the bus you are on to inspect passports so that you can get into the city of Ramallah? A farmer's tales of dealing with the military bulldozing an olive orchard without warning or reason, and an inability to get building permits, leading them to use caves for some of their needs. Just this past week, the Israeli military – without any prior warning - bulldozed a small community of 74 people, on the premise that the structures had been illegally constructed. The injustice there is still rampant, and part of me wonders what I can do, seeing as I don't live anywhere near there.

But one of the things we did see on our tour were the projects funded by Lutheran World Relief. Schools for children of a variety of backgrounds. Trades and technical schools for Palestinians so they can have some kind of future. A hospital that serves the Palestinian community, including a mobile unit which travels to the Gaza strip. And that fired me up to do more to financially support Lutheran World Relief.

If we are going to be true to God's word then, the words of Amos are a reminder that our being righteous depends on living lives that promote justice for all, wherever they may be. This is the extra oil we carry so that our lamps may be a light to the entire world. Amen.

Prayers

Longing for Christ's reign to come among us, we pray for the outpouring of God's power on the world, the church and all those in need.

Holy Lord; awaken your church to be ready to respond when Christ meets us in the cries of those in need. We lift up the church's mission of care through Lutheran World Relief and other agencies. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Holy peacemaker; answer the cries of your people in nations caught in war and destruction. Guide national and international leaders to seek out diplomatic solutions to strife in our world. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Holy judge; let justice roll down like waters over this world. Reign over the courtrooms of every land, in the hearts of those who guard the law and those who stand accused of crimes. Be present so that both justice and mercy may prevail. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Holy companion; console those who feel lonely or abandoned. Share the hours of those who live and eat alone. Comfort those who have few friends or who struggle with their identity and place in this world. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Holy healer; Be with all who are ill. Comfort those who live with pain and mental anguish. Guide those who attend to the sick. We especially remember before you those we now name in our hearts or aloud... Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Holy comforter; we pray for the congregations of our downtown churches. Today we pray especially for the parish of Ste Anne Des Pins and their Pastor, Fr. Jolicoeur. Look over them in all aspects of their ministry. Bless them with your vision of what you want them to be. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Holy protector; as we near Remembrance Day, we pray for military personnel. Look over the families of those who are on long-term deployment far away from home. Be with those whose lives are endangered. Guide the hearts and minds of commanding officers in their duties. Hear us O God, **Your mercy is great.**

Receive our prayers in the name of Jesus Christ our Savior, until that day when you gather all creation around your throne where you will reign forever and ever. Amen