

New Hope Lutheran Church

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October 11, 2020 Thanksgiving Sunday

Coming Events

Oct 14 6:30 Council mtg **Regent St**
Oct 18 10:00 Finnish worship service † **Voima Hall**
2:00 Worship service **Regent St**

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

Baptism Kirian Otto Rautiainen
Tracy & Simo Rautiainen

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

Prayer of the Day

Eternal God, your loving presence has surrounded us throughout this challenging season of pandemic. As we, at long last, re-enter our church buildings and reunite with one another in worship, we pray for your continuing grace, guidance and comfort. Encourage and equip us, give us wisdom and insight, keep our hearts and minds peaceful. Teach us to recognize our safe spaces and liturgies as a powerful witness to our love for our neighbours and one another. As we once again physically gather in your name, however strange and unsettling our new practices may seem at first, help us remember our faithful worship will always be holy, always pleasing to you. All this, and whatever else you see that we need, we ask in the name of Jesus, Immanuel, 'God-with-us'. Amen.

First Reading Deuteronomy 8:7 – 18

7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; **8** a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; **9** a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills. **10** When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you. **11** Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day. **12** Otherwise, when you eat and are satisfied, when you build fine houses and settle down, **13** and when your herds and flocks grow large and your silver and gold increase and all you have is multiplied, **14** then your heart will become proud and you will forget the LORD your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. **15** He led you through the vast and dreadful wilderness, that thirsty and waterless land, with its venomous snakes and scorpions. He brought you water out of hard rock. **16** He gave you manna to eat in the wilderness, something your ancestors had never known, to humble and test you so that in the end it might go well with you. **17** You may say to yourself, "My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me." **18** But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today.

Psalm 65

1 Praise awaits you, our God, in Zion; to you our vows will be fulfilled. **2** You who answer prayer, to you all people will come. **3** When we were overwhelmed by sins, you forgave our transgressions. **4** Blessed are those you choose and bring near to live in your courts! We are filled with the good things of your house, of your holy temple. **5** You answer us with awesome and righteous deeds, God our Savior, the hope of all the ends of the earth and of the farthest seas, **6** who formed the mountains by your power, having armed yourself with strength, **7** who stilled the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the turmoil of the nations. **8** The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, you call forth songs of joy. **9** You care for the land and water it; you enrich it abundantly. The streams of God are filled with water to provide the people with grain, for so you have ordained it. **10** You drench its furrows and level its ridges; you soften it with showers and bless its crops. **11** You crown the year with your bounty, and your carts overflow with abundance. **12** The grasslands of the wilderness overflow; the hills are clothed with gladness. **13** The meadows are covered with flocks and the valleys are mantled with grain; they shout for joy and sing.

Second Reading 2 Corinthians 9:6 – 15

6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. **7** Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. **8** And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work. **9** As it is written: "They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures forever." **10** Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. **11** You will be enriched in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. **12** This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord's people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God. **13** Because of the service by which you have proved yourselves, others will praise God for the obedience that accompanies your confession of the gospel of Christ, and for your generosity in sharing with them and with everyone else. **14**

And in their prayers for you their hearts will go out to you, because of the surpassing grace God has given you. **15** Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

Gospel Luke 17:11 – 19

11 Now on his way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. **12** As he was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met him. They stood at a distance **13** and called out in a loud voice, “Jesus, Master, have pity on us!” **14** When he saw them, he said, “Go, show yourselves to the priests.” And as they went, they were cleansed. **15** One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. **16** He threw himself at Jesus’ feet and thanked him—and he was a Samaritan. **17** Jesus asked, “Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? **18** Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?” **19** Then he said to him, “Rise and go; your faith has made you well.”

October 11, 2020 - Thanksgiving Sunday Praise

In our gospel for today we heard how one of the men healed was “praising” God for the miracle that had happened to him. Now, praise can be a funny thing because it can go two different ways. As small children, most of us experienced people praising us for whatever we accomplished. We are praised for each step taken, each meal finished, each word that comes out for the first time, and even for washing our hands. *Good job!* Praise can be a way to encourage good behavior in children. They long to do things in order to gain our praise of them. But how far should that go? Did you ever think that we would get to the point where we expect praise for each and every thing we have done? In some ways, it seems that, in our society today, many adults are still seeking praise, and sometimes for simply doing what is expected of them. We seek praise for remembering someone’s birthday or an anniversary. We seek praise for being competent at work. We might even seek praise for successfully doing the dishes! Not that people shouldn’t be praised. Praise after all, is a way of telling someone we appreciate their efforts. It’s a way of saying thank you, when we appreciate a job well done. It encourages us to keep trying to do better.

But what happens when a person depends on praise alone for their well being? What happens when we so hunger for praise that we just start praising ourselves? Somehow the whole meaning of a pat on the back is lost. Its the dark side of praise. I’m thinking there is a fine line here between being encouraged to succeed, and just looking for praise, whether we earned it or not. Such thinking appears to be prevalent in our world today. And the problem with that is that praise begins to lose all meaning. Praise used to mean the act of approval or admiration for another. One had to earn it, which is fine when we are 3 years old. Unfortunately, if we expect a constant stream of praise right up into adulthood, it seems to actually hinder our mature capabilities. People who expect constant praise often come across as being childlike. It seems like they can’t grow up. And they often seem thankless compared to other adults, with little concept of what it is to show true gratitude.

So what might be a better way to examine praise? Have you ever noticed how much better praise sounds when it’s unexpected? This seems to be the situation in our gospel lesson today. 9 healed lepers didn’t bother to return to Jesus to give praise for their healing, and the one who did return and give lavish praise was the least likely of the bunch. He was the one who didn’t really belong since he wasn’t really considered a Jew. As a Samaritan, he wasn’t even liked by Jews. And he had been even less liked when he was infected with leprosy. Something tells me that he hadn’t gotten a lot of praise in the years leading to this event. And yet, he was the only one who returned to give praise. Why was that? Going by this event, it would appear that those who have the least to lose and the most to gain are the ones who are most likely to give thanks and praise. It is obvious to them when something good happens because they can’t take anything for granted. When one has little to be proud of, even small gains in life seem like giant steps. So giving thanks and praise is an act of humility. True praise is the act of a humble person. For those who have much in life then, giving thanks and praise can easily become meaningless. In our lesson from Deuteronomy, the Israelites were warned about this. They came out of years in a wilderness with only the possessions they could take with them, and they were about to come to a land with everything – even copper in the hills! For such an amazing step-up in life they would praise God. But they are

warned that they could easily become proud and haughty, in time believing that all they had was due to their own efforts, and slide into a position of praising themselves for their success – and forgetting all about God who had delivered them there. If they did slide, their trivial praise would be meaningless to God. So it was important for them to remember where they came from, according to the author of Deuteronomy. Remembering their humble origins was how they would remember to give thanks and praise to God in meaningful ways. Over the course of the Old Testament, we can find examples of how time and again the Israelites lost that sense of humility before God, and it never ended well. They took things for granted and got too comfortable. They praised themselves rather than God for their successes. And they wound up in many unfortunate situations as a result. We too have wound up in an unfortunate situation where we have not met for worship for 29 weeks! We missed most of Lent. We missed Easter. We missed summer services at Hannah Lake. Such a thing is unprecedented in our lifetimes. And, while this hasn’t been something of our own doing, I think we have learned just how important worship actually is to us. Can we give thanks and praise to God to have such a return? Even if it isn’t the way we have expected? Our return to in-person worship may not be how we might have hoped. Many are cautious to return, and that’s ok. It isn’t like our time together used to be, and that also is ok. And the reason its ok is that the opportunity to gather has returned! Being without worship, being without the community, being isolated has perhaps humbled us. When we go without for such a long time, we become well aware of what has been lost, and hopefully appreciate what has been given back to us. So today let us give genuine thanks and praise to God for what we have regained. Let us remember to give praise where it is due. Let us remember who our worship is directed to, and thank God for this, and for all our blessings, both large and small. Amen.

Prayers

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

God of all creation, we look in lament at the many losses tossed about us: missed opportunities, miscarried memories and the many deaths that leave us empty. And yet, we live in hope as we gather differently – believing that You are able to work all things for good. Bring healing to our world, to our bodies, to our church.

God in whom we believe, these days we find our faith sorely tested: we wonder how it can be that such illness and brokenness can rifle through the world You call good. And yet You call us to pick up the pieces of our shattered certainty. As we do so, we find in its place a humble faith, which looks to your promised presence in the midst of the events around us.

God who is closer to us than we are to ourselves: we hear your tongue in our prayers, and so listen for You now as we remember the names and needs of those whom we bring to You. We remember before you those who are suffering pain and illness; aloud, and in our hearts.

Bountiful God, you feed us through the richness of the land, water, sunlight, and ample crops. Bless all those who cultivate the land to bring forth its bounty, especially farmers and migrant workers.

Loving God, you open our hearts in compassion for one another. We give you thanks for the care and healing received through the hands and feet of your servants. Enable us to love those in need of assistance, especially those who have been facing natural disasters.

Hospitable God, you connect and strengthen us through meals and conversation with family and friends. In this time of thanksgiving, steer us from passive receiving to active response, from old quarrels to reconciliation, and from over consumption to true gratitude.

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.