

# New Hope Lutheran Church

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## Pastor:

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*October 18, 2020*

*20<sup>th</sup> Sunday After Pentecost*

## Coming Events

Oct 25 10:00 Finnish worship service **Voima Hall**  
2:00 Worship service † **Regent St**

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

## Prayer of the Day

Sovereign God, raise your throne in our hearts. Created by you, let us live in your image; created for you, let us act for your glory; redeemed by you, let us give you what is yours. This we pray through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. 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.*

## First Reading Isaiah 45:1 – 7

**1** “This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut: **2** I will go before you and will level the mountains; I will break down gates of bronze and cut through bars of iron. **3** I will give you hidden treasures, riches stored in secret places, so that you may know that I am the LORD, the God of Israel, who summons you by name. **4** For the sake of Jacob my servant, of Israel my chosen, I summon you by name and bestow on you a title of honor, though you do not acknowledge me. **5** I am the LORD, and there is no other; apart from me there is no God. I will strengthen you, though you have not acknowledged me, **6** so that from the rising of the sun to the place of its setting people may know there is none besides me. I am the LORD, and there is no other. **7** I form the light and create darkness, I bring prosperity and create disaster; I, the LORD, do all these things.

## Psalm 96:1-9

<sup>1-2</sup> Sing God a brand-new song!  
Earth and everyone in it, sing! Sing to God—*worship* God!  
<sup>2-3</sup> Shout the news of his victory from sea to sea,  
Take the news of his glory to the lost, News of his wonders to one and all!  
<sup>4-5</sup> For God is great, and worth a thousand Hallelujahs.  
His terrible beauty makes the gods look cheap; Pagan gods are mere tatters and rags.  
<sup>5-6</sup> God made the heavens—  
Royal splendor radiates from him, A powerful beauty sets him apart.  
<sup>7</sup> Bravo, God, Bravo! Everyone join in the great shout: Encore!  
In awe before the beauty, in awe before the might.  
<sup>8-9</sup> Bring gifts and celebrate, Bow before the beauty of God,  
Then to your knees—everyone worship!

## Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 1:1 – 10

**1** Paul, Silas and Timothy, To the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace and peace to you. **2** We always thank God for all of you and continually mention you in our prayers. **3** We remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus

Christ. **4** For we know, brothers and sisters loved by God, that he has chosen you, **5** because our gospel came to you not simply with words but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. **6** You became imitators of us and of the Lord, for you welcomed the message in the midst of severe suffering with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. **7** And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. **8** The Lord’s message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore we do not need to say anything about it, **9** for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, **10** and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead—Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath.

## Gospel Matthew 22:15 – 22

**15** Then the Pharisees went out and laid plans to trap him in his words. **16** They sent their disciples to him along with the Herodians. “Teacher,” they said, “we know that you are a man of integrity and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by others, because you pay no attention to who they are. **17** Tell us then, what is your opinion? Is it right to pay the imperial tax to Caesar or not?” **18** But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, “You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? **19** Show me the coin used for paying the tax.” They brought him a denarius, **20** and he asked them, “Whose image is this? And whose inscription?” **21** “Caesar’s,” they replied. Then he said to them, “So give back to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” **22** When they heard this, they were amazed. So they left him and went away.

## October 18, 2020 – 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost Religious Bullies

When you read through the 4 gospels, it often it seems that Jesus is picked on by religious bullies with a consistently deep desire to take him down a notch. It’s no different in today’s gospel lesson. They corner him in the temple and present Jesus with a choice: will he speak in favor of the hated Romans (and turn the people against him), or will he speak in favor of the people (and turn the Romans against him)? Either way, his antagonists figured they were going to win big. It was so foolproof!

But what they didn't realize was that Jesus was miles ahead of them. He manages to evade them by replying with a request of his own; "*show me a coin used for paying the tax.*" Now, before we get too much further into the story, we need to be aware that in those times they commonly dealt with at least 2 kinds of money. The currency of Israel and the temple, and the currency of Rome. This is why they had money changers on the outskirts of the temple, to trade the pagan money for the temple coinage which was then offered as sacrifice.

The Roman currency wasn't even to be present in the temple itself because it was thought to break the rule against making false idols, since the emperor's likeness was engraved on it – which makes it kind of hypocritical that the bullies could produce one inside the temple. Weren't they breaking the rules they held so dear? Not that it should really surprise us, especially in this day and age when saying one thing and then saying another or doing something different has become rather standard practice in some circles.

All this might make one ask if hypocrisy is simply a part of the human condition. How often do we ourselves seek results that first and foremost benefit ourselves above others? Even when we've reasoned differently in the past?

But back to our lesson for today. The point of Jesus' request was to ask about the image on this coin. Whose image is it? If Caesar's image was on it, it then belonged to Caesar. Its kind of like children playing keep away. *How do we know its yours? Is your name on it?* Well, not only was Caesar's name on the coins, but also his likeness, his image, his photo. He could have used it for identification! Essentially it was considered loaned out to the people to use for making purchases and paying taxes, but it was understood that ultimately it belonged to the emperor. And this is why Jesus said; "*give back to Caesar what is Caesar's.*"

Jesus might have left it at that, but that would have left him open to the criticism that he was all for paying taxes that burdened the people. So Jesus takes it further: "*and give to God what is God's*". Now that may seem like a puzzling statement to us because, if we give all the tax money to government, what else is left?

Let's think for a moment about images. Roman coins bore the image and name of Caesar and therefore belonged to the emperor. So, what bears the image and name of God? According to Genesis 1:26, we are made in that image. According to our baptism, we bear the name of God. Are we not then the currency of God's realm? And if we are that currency, is it not ourselves we are to "give to God"?

You may be thinking that we don't really know what that looks like in real life, or how that could work. How can we possibly give ourselves away? And if we could figure that out, what would be left behind? Unfortunately, such thinking is one way of trying to wiggle out of who we really are and what we are to be about as followers of Christ.

You might even feel it's a bit hypocritical considering the promises made at our baptism, and reaffirmed at our confirmation. The promises:  
To live among God's faithful people,  
To be present for the word of God and the Holy Supper  
Learning the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, and the Ten Commandments,  
Being familiar with the holy scriptures,  
and nurturing a life of faith and prayer,  
so that we may learn to trust God, proclaim Christ through word and deed, care for others and the world God made, and work for justice and peace.

This, in a nutshell, is how we give to God what is God's. It isn't to be half-hearted, but a passionate giving of time, talents, and treasure. And we learn how to do this by following those promises made at baptism and confirmation.

One of the reasons the religious bullies failed so often when sent out to trap Jesus, was that they were so fully convinced of their "right-ness" that they failed to understand we can all learn new things about God and God's ways, and in the process we actually grow. They thought they knew all that there was to know, which is a trap we can fall into also. When we think we have all the answers, when we feel we know all there is to know on a topic, when we are super confident in our knowledge, that is when we fail to see our own flaws and when we can fall down.

If we are indeed going to "*give to God what is God's*", then we need an openness to move and flow with the challenges thrown at us, because the world does not stay the same, but is always changing. Our situation here, today, is just one example. How do we share the word of God during a pandemic? We can't count only on our past practices of just having a place to open and begging people to come. While we still need that, we need more than that these days. That is why we've had to move in a hurry to open up our website in the spring. And that website and our facebook page are actually reaching more people than we used to reach weekly!

Not that those tools are the perfect answer. They are a beginning. We are learning and have much more to learn as we now try to figure out worship with the restrictions being put on us. And it is in learning that we will grow even more, discovering new ways to reach out, and new ways of giving to God what is God's. So consider how you can help out, how you can give your ideas, your thoughts, your time, your talent, and your treasure. Renew your baptismal commitments so you too may find true delight in being in God's image. Amen.

## Prayers

With confidence in God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all in need:

Renew in us the commitment to use our gifts in the service of others, and especially those in need. Let us be your hands to feed the hungry, shelter the homeless, clothe the naked, comfort the weary and outcast, welcome the stranger, care for creation, and be loving neighbors to all people. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

In your love, you guide with justice. Inspire world leaders for truthful conversations and wise policies, that decisions are made for the good of all. Kindle hearts to understand common needs and seek the common good. Look over and bless leaders who care for those who are impoverished and the downtrodden. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Lord we pray for the congregations of our downtown churches. Today we pray especially for the congregation of Trinity Lutheran and their Pastor, Rev. Thomas Arth. We thank

you that they have blessed us with the sharing of their space. Look over them in all aspects of their ministry. Bless them with your vision of what you want them to be. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Almighty God, you have given us this good land as our heritage. Make us always remember your generosity and constantly do your will. Bless our land with honesty in the workplace, truth in education, and honor in daily life. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance; and from every evil course of action. When times are prosperous, let our hearts be thankful; and in troubled times, do not let our trust in you fail. 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 are unemployed, underemployed or facing unemployment. Be with them in their anxiety, guide those who provide jobs and those who make the decisions regarding our economy. We ask that you will help and guide all affected through difficult financial times. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Lord, you bless us with the ability to see you, and yet we do not always see. You bless us with the means to hear your word, and yet we do not always hear – or want to hear. Help us to overcome our self-serving attitudes so that we may joyfully see you at work in this world and not only hear, but also respond to your guidance so that our lives will be fully blessed with your love. Lord, in your mercy, **Hear our prayer.**

Listen as we call on you, O God, and enfold in your loving arms all for whom we pray, in the name of 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.**