

New Hope Lutheran Church

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October 4, 2020

18th 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*

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

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

IN OUR PRAYERS

Fred, Pentti, Esme, Martha.

Funeral Lempi Taskinen 94 yrs



Mighty, gracious, compassionate Lord, we pray today for the family of Lempi Taskinen, that you would comfort them in their grief, guide them in their sorrow, and give them your peace. We pray this in the name of Jesus our Lord and Savior. Amen.

First Reading Isaiah 5:1 – 7

1 I will sing for the one I love a song about his vineyard: My loved one had a vineyard on a fertile hillside. **2** He dug it up and cleared it of stones and planted it with the choicest vines. He built a watchtower in it and cut out a winepress as well. Then he looked for a crop of good grapes, but it yielded only bad fruit. **3** “Now you dwellers in Jerusalem and people of Judah, judge between me and my vineyard. **4** What more could have been done for my vineyard than I have done for it? When I looked for good grapes, why did it yield only bad? **5** Now I will tell you what I am going to do to my vineyard: I will take away its hedge, and it will be destroyed; I will break down its wall, and it will be trampled. **6** I will make it a wasteland, neither pruned nor cultivated, and briars and thorns will grow there. I will command the clouds not to rain on it.” **7** The vineyard of the LORD Almighty is the nation of Israel, and the people of Judah are the vines he delighted in. And he looked for justice, but saw bloodshed; for righteousness, but heard cries of distress.

Psalm 80:7 – 15

7 Restore us, God Almighty; make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. **8** You transplanted a vine from Egypt; you drove out the nations and planted it. **9** You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. **10** The mountains were covered with its shade, the mighty cedars with its branches. **11** Its branches reached as far as the Sea, its shoots as far as the River. **12** Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick its grapes? **13** Boars from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it. **14** Return to us, God Almighty! Look down from heaven and see! Watch over this vine, **15** the root your right hand has planted, the son you have raised up for yourself.

Second Reading Philippians 3:4 – 14

4 If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: **5** circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; **6** as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. **7** But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. **8** What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ **9** and be found in him, not having a

righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. **10** I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. **12** Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. **13** Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, **14** I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Gospel Matthew 21:33 – 46

33 “Listen to another parable: There was a landowner who planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a winepress in it and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and moved to another place. **34** When the harvest time approached, he sent his servants to the tenants to collect his fruit. **35** “The tenants seized his servants; they beat one, killed another, and stoned a third. **36** Then he sent other servants to them, more than the first time, and the tenants treated them the same way. **37** Last of all, he sent his son to them. ‘They will respect my son,’ he said. **38** “But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, ‘This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him and take his inheritance.’ **39** So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. **40** “Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” **41** “He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,” they replied, “and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time.” **42** Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the Scriptures: “ ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the cornerstone; the Lord has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes’? **43** “Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people who will produce its fruit. **44** Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed.” **45** When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. **46** They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet.

Prayer of the Day

Beloved God, from you come all things that are good. Lead us by the inspiration of your Spirit to know those things that are right, and by your merciful guidance, help us to do them, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

October 4, 2020 – 18th Sunday after Pentecost Stewards of Creation

I have looked at this gospel several times over the years and it seems like every time I study it, the same story has a whole new meaning for me, depending on current circumstances. Today we live in the midst of a long pandemic that covers the entire globe. For a while so much of what we considered “normal” came to a total standstill. And in the midst of fear, in the midst of job losses, in the midst of being isolated, some people began to notice good things happening as well. Families spent more time together. We began to realize the value of things we had taken for granted, like worshipping together as a community. And the earth – God’s creation – seemed to breathe again, having gotten a slight break from the immense use of fossil fuels.

How often do we think of the planet earth as God’s creation? If we own any property at all, or even if we regularly walk in a park, how often do we consider that as being part of God’s creation? How often do we acknowledge that a yard (however big or small) was created by God and therefore belongs to God? Probably not very often. I suspect that most of the time we consider it as being “ours”. We bought it. We look after it. We feel free to do whatever we want with it. So how often do we consult God about the best way to manage it on God’s behalf?

As a kid, one of the jobs I absolutely hated was mowing the lawn. That was because it wasn’t just any lawn, it was pretty much a park. It was huge, with numerous flower beds and trees to mow around, not to mention a number of flower pots and benches that needed to be moved and repositioned every time one mowed. In general, it was fenced, just to keep the cattle from enjoying too much, which was something else to mow around.

When first given the job, it took me 3 days to mow the grass with a push mower, and it was a weekly job. Even as a

young adult, it took most of a day. Needless to say, I longed for one of those newfangled “riding” mowers. I prayed for a riding mower. And when, in confirmation, I found out that God owned all creation, including our lawn, I wanted to tell God to take care of his yard himself. Or get me a riding mower. Naturally I didn’t tell any of this to my parents, who probably would have considered it some sort of blasphemy, and heaven knows what sort of punishment I would have endured. I could have been stoned, which at our farm meant picking stones out of a field, on top of cutting grass.

The thing is, I don’t think we thought too much about our farm as being part of God’s creation. We burned what little garbage we had in a burn pit and let the polluting smoke go wherever it went. Whatever didn’t burn, the glass and metal, was taken away to the back forty and dumped in a heap. I didn’t know what a landfill site was until I was a teenager – although that could be because we lived so far back in the sticks that we were fairly isolated. Recycling meant taking used baler twine and braiding it into rope to hold calves in the barn – or pulling nails out of old boards and straightening them for reuse.

Not that we weren’t also assisting creation back then. Vegetable waste went to the animals. We also had some wild meadows in the back forty and spent many a spring evening planting tree seedlings, enduring a savage mixture of dirt, water, and black flies. Ah, those were the days!

The thing is though, we did such things with the mindset that it would wind up being for our own benefit. We didn’t think of tree planting as a way of sucking carbon from the atmosphere to help others, but rather that it might benefit us alone in the future.

And perhaps such thinking is why we have difficulty with the idea of being stewards of creation, as well as difficulty with today’s lessons from Isaiah and Matthew. We think of land as being a commodity, something to only benefit ourselves. We fail to see it as part of the whole creation, chopping it into blocks reserved only for each individual owner’s use and benefit. When we fail to see the whole of the earth as one entity - where actions in one place can negatively affect another - we also fail to grasp the damage we do to it in our actions against the earth. We become like the tenants who wanted all the benefits of the vineyard without grasping that it wasn’t actually theirs.

I’ve heard stories of the Long Lake gold mine, an area decimated by arsenic in the soil and water. It appears that the

owners took what they wanted from the property and left the devastation to someone else. Essentially, they didn’t consider the true cost of what they were doing, but only their personal benefits. They were looking out for themselves alone. Kind of sounds like those tenants in our gospel parable, doesn’t it?

Hearing about the lessening of noxious wastes during the pandemic is an eye-opener to me. It tells me that while we were very comfortable with regular air travel, various forms of land transportation, and consuming fossil fuels at a massive level, we didn’t need it quite as much as we might have thought. It also opens up the possibility that we can actually make do with consuming less, even if some didn’t think it was possible just a year ago.

God has graced us with this beautiful earth, a place that can thrive and benefit each human if we allow it to. However, as today’s parable reminds us, we cannot treat it as if it belongs to us to do whatever we want with it. We are reminded that we are part of a wonderful deal: the caretakers of a creation that can sustain us if we remember whose it really is. It is still God’s creation, meaning the benefits are meant not for a select few, but to be shared out of love for the owner who blesses us with such great gifts, yet asks little in return. Amen.

Prayers

With confidence in God’s grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need.

Holy God, you call us to work for peace and justice in your vineyard. Refresh the church with your life, that we may bear fruit through work and service.

Thank you for the abundant harvest of the earth. Bless and care for those whose hands bring the fruits of the earth to the tables of all who hunger. May we be inspired by your servants who cared deeply for your creation.

Curb the impulses of greed and pride that lead us to take advantage of others. Grant that world leaders seek the fruits of the kingdom for the good and welfare of all people.

Sustain all who suffer with the promise of new life. Assured of your presence, heal our pain and suffering, and equip us to embrace all bodies aching for wholeness of mind, body, and soul. We call to mind those who are struggling today.

We pray for all managers in our community and for all who seek employment. Give hope and a future to those who lack meaningful work, those who have been marginalized or abused in the workplace, and those who desire new opportunities.

Thank you for the saints who teach us to live faithfully in your vineyard. May our chorus join theirs until our labor is complete.

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. **Amen.**