

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

March 23, 2020

So don't be anxious about tomorrow. God will take care of your tomorrow too. Live one day at a time.

Matthew 6:34 TLB

Words like these from Jesus seem to take on an entirely new meaning depending on our circumstances, don't they? Our world is filled with anxiety right now, which seems to be increasing every day. COVID-19 has changed our world.

Yet our King, Jesus, never changes and He said, *"I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* John 16:33

We cling to words such as these and the many promises of hope in the Scriptures. To be sure, it is easier said than done sometimes, but we are the ones who waiver, our Lord doesn't change, He remains faithful! We will make it through!

Thank you for being there for each other in our Mount Hope family. I know that contact and connections are continuing through social media, phone calls, mail, and such. This may become even more important as the talk of stricter social distancing and self-quarantine are taking place. Please continue and let us know how we can help and serve you. The church office is staffed, and our contact information is on our website, mthopelutheran.org.

For this week, we have included material to continue to work through our Lenten study, *By His wounds, we are healed*. There is a children's message, sermon, and prayers provided. Also, there is a message for some time this week. Please work through this with your family or maybe even someone on the phone or online. Please remember to give, your offerings are needed for the mission of Mount Hope to continue. You may mail in or give through the "Giving" link. Now is also a wonderful time to utilize our access to Right Now media. There are wonderful videos for adults and children available. If you need access, please contact the church office.

Finally, our website includes a growing selection of sermons mthopelutheran.org/sermons. The worship service from yesterday, March 22 at St. Michael's is there as well as live worship from Mount Hope with Christina. I went back and watched the Christmas Eve service; it was such a blessing, especially Silent Night! We are currently thinking through the best option for online worship for this week. Quarantine and gathering restrictions will largely dictate what we do for this week. Please keep an eye on the website for updates and information.

Please continue to pray for Mount Hope, our country, the leadership, and our world that COVID-19 will be conquered.

Serving together,
Pastor Fran Green

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By His Wounds We Are Healed

A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

Week 4: The Wounds of Adultery

Children's Message

- The **Children's Message** is delivered by the parent or adult:

The children are invited to come forward to help proclaim the message of the day.

P Today we're going to play a little game. It's called, "Which one is the tallest?" Let's all stand up together in a row from the tallest to the shortest. (*Have the children line up in a row.*) Now what if God only liked the really tall people? That would make the short people feel bad, wouldn't it? Well, there was a time when some people thought that God liked them better than all the rest. And they frowned on the people they thought God didn't like at all. But Jesus had good news for all people. He joined them all together at his table. (*Have the children join in a circle; they could also join in a circle around the altar.*) Everyone is loved by God through Jesus' love. There are no distinctions, no classes, no better than someone else; but all are loved.

Let us pray. Lord, we thank you that you love us all and welcome us all as one to be at your table of fellowship and grace. Amen.

By His Wounds We Are Healed

A Series of Services for the Season of Lent

Week 4: The Wounds of Adultery - Sermon

The story of Jesus dining at table with tax collectors and sinners is shared in all of the first three gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They have some variations—and the variations are important for the message of each gospel writer—but the point and the context is the same: Jesus sits at table with outcasts and is unashamed. It is a powerful story at the very heart of the gospel about how we are all welcomed and embraced in spite of the truth of our sins.

Later in the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus will speak about how “tax collectors and prostitutes,” because of their faith in him, will enter the kingdom of heaven ahead of others who are self-righteous (21:28-32). In Luke’s Gospel, we hear of Jesus’ intimate encounter with a “sinful woman” at the home of a Pharisee. She washes his feet with her tears and wipes them with her hair. Needless to say, eyebrows are raised and criticisms abound. But Jesus sees it as an act of love and speaks words of endearing forgiveness to her (7:36-50). And in John’s Gospel, we hear the story of a woman who was caught in adultery. Jesus defended her over all her critics: “Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.” All of them left, and the woman was alone with Jesus. Jesus then said to her, “‘Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?’ She said, ‘No one, sir.’ And Jesus said, ‘Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again’” (8:1-11).

Tax collectors and sinners were despised socially and religiously. The impurity of Jesus’ association with them could not go unnoticed. But the legalism of those who criticized such association can still be found in the Church today—when the assembly is cold and uninviting to those who do not seem to “fit in.” Such behavior is counter to the truth of Jesus’ mercy, by which we all have been accepted and loved by grace even though we do not deserve it.

For even the religiously faithful who shun the sin of adultery, Jesus broadens the commandment to include lust in our hearts (Matthew 5:27-30). Such covetousness leads us away from the kingdom of heaven and down a path of being swamped in misguided attractions and sexual acts.

Consider David and Bathsheba as an illustration. The first sin of David was his covetous desire for Bathsheba. Everything else that followed—adultery, Bathsheba’s pregnancy, attempts to conceal what he had done, seeing to the death of her husband Uriah, and then taking her in as his own wife—was all rooted from the time he first spotted her bathing on the rooftop.

David would be confronted about his sin by the prophet Nathan. And David would repent deeply for his wrong; though sadly and tragically, the child that Bathsheba had conceived died. Later she would conceive and give birth to Solomon (2 Samuel 11-12). The opening of the Gospel of Matthew also notes this, but does not leave out the scandal of David’s adultery: “David was the father of Solomon by the wife of Uriah” (Matthew 1:6)

Lest we think we are still off the hook even after consideration of these sexual sins, there are other meanings of adultery in Scriptures that hold the people of God accountable. Hosea the prophet was instructed to marry a prostitute and woman of adultery in order to symbolize the depth of Israel's own chasing after other gods. How much we all have missed the mark when we have pursued other gods in our lives in both word and deed and have left the kingdom of heaven peripheral to our being. We cannot justify ourselves. Luther's last words, "We are all beggars" may just as well have said, "We are all adulterers."

Still it is not our own acts of repentance for our adulteries, however warranted such a response is, that finally overcomes the evil and scandal. Such repentance is but the fruit of the incredible grace of Christ who takes the sin of our offenses into himself. Luther noted this is in one of his most profound expositions of the gospel. Christ takes the sins of all humanity into himself, including those of "David the adulterer" (whom Luther explicitly mentions), and bears them to the cross and death; but we are purged from all sin, death, and every evil by Christ's "cleansing and righteousness." "And if any remnants of sin were to remain, still for the sake of Christ, the shining Sun, God would not notice them" (LW 26:280).

What we get to celebrate is that Jesus' association with the lowliest of outcasts means for us and for all people that there are no bounds to his grace. By his wounds on the cross there is the wholeness of healing that no one gets left out from the mercy of God; and no one is an outcast from God's love.

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The Wounds of Adultery - Prayers

- The **Prayers** are spoken responsively by family members:

P Let us pray for the Church, for all in need, and for the whole of God's creation. That throughout these forty days of Lent, you may give your people hope that it is Jesus, our Lord, who leads the way and takes into his body on the cross the sins of the whole world.

C Heal us, O God.

P That we come to the truth that all are favored in your grace and that we are all welcomed in your presence.

C Heal us, O God.

P That all who have been excluded in life, those who are in prisons, those who are alone, infirm, unloved, or bullied, that they may all know that your love is constant and will not abandon them.

C Heal us, O God.

P That people of differing ages, genders, classes or views may cast away all malice and work together for wholeness and healing in the world.

C Heal us, O God.

P For those who are dying, that they may trust in the banquet with all the saints at the final table in your kingdom with Christ, our Lord.

C Heal us, O God.

P Into your healing, wounded hands for our sake, we commend all for whom we pray.

C By Christ's wounds, we are healed. Amen.

Bible Study - Week of March 23-29

Author Donald Miller tells the story (*A Million Miles in a Thousand Years*) about his friend Jason. During a conversation the two were having, Jason lamented to Don that things weren't going so well for his family. His thirteen-year-old daughter had an older boyfriend and they had also recently discovered pot in her room. They were obviously frustrated, angry, discouraged.

Donald asked, well have you punished her, grounding and forbidden her from seeing this guy? Jason said, yes, we've tried all of that; however, things have only gotten worse. Don said, that's tough man. It sounds like your daughter is living a pretty terrible story.

Jason became intrigued by those words...*she's living a terrible story*. Donald and Jason met up again a couple of months later and of course Don asked how things were going in his family. Jason said, they're going much, much better. That's great, Donald exclaimed. "What happened?"

Jason said that Don's words really struck home with him and he realized that their entire family was living a poor story, so he began searching the internet for a better story to live. He came upon an organization that builds orphanages around the world for the poor and disadvantaged. The cost to build one was \$25,000. He called a family meeting and informed his wife and daughter of his plans to build an orphanage in Mexico.

Initially, they were both angry, but then Jason's wife realized the motivation and told Jason that she was proud of him. He said it had been years since she had said anything like that. And finally, after a few days the daughter came to her parents and said she wanted to be involved. She offered to help with the promotion in raising the money and convinced her parents that they needed to take a trip to Mexico to the area where their orphanage would be built.

It became a big story. Jason said that his daughter dumped the boyfriend, drugs and was engaged. They were all living a bigger story!

What is your story today? Are you satisfied with it and the role you are playing? Who is the main character? You see, if you or I are the main character in each of our own stories, we will not be satisfied.

We are currently living a story that we never dreamed would happen. Literally, the world is being turned upside down, everyone's way of life has changed.

Do you remember last Easter, right here, Mount Hope was full and we celebrated Jesus death and resurrection? This event changed the world! God sent His one and only Son into the world to rescue and save it. Anyone who believes this and is baptized becomes a member of God's family, His people, part of a much larger story. Think about that!

In chapter 4, Peter and John had essentially been sharing the Resurrection Story, the very same one that we celebrate and profess. Peter and John were arrested for sharing this Great Story. But many believed, and they were forever changed! They became part of The Story! **When one states, "I BELIEVE", everything must change.** *Acts 4* states,

32 All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had. (THEY WENT TO MEXICO TO BUILD AN ORPHANAGE!) With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and much grace was upon them all. (With great power – did you experience the great power last week? The grace?) There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need.

Isn't this amazing!? The power of the Resurrection of Jesus! Jesus is Lord! The world is changed, we are part of something so much bigger than ourselves! We are part of The Story! Yes, our current story seems overwhelmingly big, but God is bigger; we are part of His Grand Story.

Again: What is your story today? Are you satisfied with it and the role you are playing? Who is the main character? You see, if you or I are the main character in each of our own stories, we will not be satisfied.

In the book of 1 Corinthians we see the Apostle Paul addressing the people and exhorting them. Essentially, they were living too small of a story or stories. They were forgetting the Grand Story. He had to remind them of who they were and whose they were and the Story they were now a part of. . Listen to his writing to the church in Corinth: *1 Corinthians 15* (NIV)

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

Paul reminds us, "Remember The Story you are now a part of! Don't fall back into the small stories you used to live!"

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them – yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

Paul is stating that Jesus did in fact, die and was raised from the dead. This is a fact in history. It is a fact that changes everything. It is a story that he is now a part of; it has completely changed his life and his mission. It now consumes him. He can no longer, return to the way things were. He is reminding and calling the Corinthians back to the larger story of Jesus; death and resurrection.

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

58 Therefore, my dear brothers (and sisters), stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. STAND FIRM!

Jesus' resurrection changes everything! It is the story of which we are all a part. Paul, was forever changed as he gave his entire life in sharing this life-changing message with any and all who would listen. *Acts 20:24*, **“However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me – the task of testifying to the gospel of God’s grace.”**

Paul could no longer live in his own small story. He had to live in Jesus' Resurrection Story.

What is your story today? Are you satisfied with it and the role you are playing? Who is the main character? You see, if you or I are the main character in each of our own stories, we will not be satisfied.

Paul had told the people what this resurrection life meant to each of them in many places such as *1 Corinthians* chapter 12:

Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.

Immediately following this is the famous love chapter in *1 Corinthians 13*. Do all of this, serve with whatever your gifting may be, others out of love because of what Jesus has done. Live in The Story!

Do you need to begin raising \$25,000 today to build an orphanage in Mexico? Jesus died for you and for me, so that we would use and spend our lives in the Greatest Story ever told. We must live for others.

Therefore, my dear brothers (and sisters), stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. *1 Corinthians 15:58* AMEN.

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VEAP continues to be in need. If you would like to donate, you can send a check to the church office or directly to Karen Mueller. She will get it to VEAP for you.

Brighter, sunnier days will come and spending time outside sounds wonderful! If you are willing to help mow the church property this summer, please contact Bob Tolzin.

Sunday Worship Schedule

8:15am Traditional Worship Service
9:30am Connecting Hour
Bible Study / Sunday School
10:45am Praise Worship Service

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Mount Hope's Staff

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Candy Frein	Administrative Assistant
Christina Brantner	Music Director
Kathy Sundseth	Custodian
Kim Wuebke	Preschool and Childcare Director
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Steve Sundseth	Custodian
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