

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

April 29, 2020

I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry. He lifted me out of the pit of despair, out of the mud and the mire. He set my feet on solid ground and steadied me as I walked along. Psalm 40:1-2 (NLT)

Well, I don't know about you, but "waiting patiently" is sometimes difficult as the pandemic continues. We hear seemingly conflicting reports as some point to good news, in some areas, of decreased number of patients in hospitals, plateaued and decreasing numbers of deaths. And yet, there is also talk of social distancing that may continue through the summer with continued "shelter in place" orders, who knows what to believe and is this good news?

Waiting patiently for the Lord is often much easier said than done. ***Each time he said, "My grace is all you need. My power works best in weakness." So now I am glad to boast about my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ can work through me. 2 Corinthians 9:12 (NLT)*** This is a wonderful opportunity to experience the power of Jesus working in and through each of us. Author and pastor Tim Keller offers, *God never promised to give you tomorrow's grace for today. He only promised today's grace for today – and that is all you need.*

Here's a question that I began asking myself each day and I would offer it to you too. ***"How are you spending the opportunity of this pandemic?"*** We can easily find things to lament and get frustrated with. I will spare you my detailed list...

But, this interruption is also a tremendous opportunity! Situations like this demand new ways of thinking. Now is the perfect time to create new habits. Where/how will you grow?

Our care callers have been busy checking in with our members. I would encourage all of us to continue checking in on each other. It is such a blessing to hear how our Mount Hope family is genuinely concerned for and calling/encouraging others. Keep on being a wonderful community of faith *Where guests become friends and friends become family.*

Finally, please continue to pray for Mount Hope, our country, the leadership, those on the frontlines battling during this pandemic and our world; COVID-19 will be conquered!

Serving together,
Pastor Fran Green

Resource you may want to check out:

Here is a wonderful Five-year Bible study that some of our members are using (Thru the Bible). I believe this is well worth your investment of time:

First, there is an on-demand app that can be found at TTB.org, open “listen on the go”. Also:

Thru the Bible, KKMS 980AM, 6:15 am Sundays, Sunday sermon; KKMS 980AM 2:00am and 6:00am, Monday – Friday, and WCTS 1030 AM at 12:00 pm Monday-Friday for Thru the Bible program.

The Message

Then the whole community began weeping aloud, and they cried all night. Their voices rose in a great chorus of protest against Moses and Aaron. “If only we had died in Egypt, or even here in the wilderness!” they complained. “Why is the Lord taking us to this country only to have us die in battle? Our wives and our little ones will be carried off as plunder! Wouldn’t it be better for us to return to Egypt? Then they plotted among themselves, “Let’s choose a new leader and go back to Egypt!”

Then Moses and Aaron fell face down on the ground before the whole community of Israel. Two of the men who had explored the land, Joshua son of Nun and Caleb son of Jephunneh, tore their clothing. They said to all the people of Israel, “The land we traveled through and explored is a wonderful land! And if the Lord is pleased with us, he will bring us safely into that land and give it to us. It is a rich land flowing with milk and honey. Do not rebel against the Lord, and don’t be afraid of the people of the land. They are only helpless prey to us! They have no protection, but the Lord is with us! Don’t be afraid of them! Number 14:1-9

What happened!? Their hearts were hardened. It was the children of Israel, who had come out of Egypt under Moses’ leadership, they had seen everything God had done at the Red Sea, not to mention the powerful signs of judgement on Egypt before they had left.

God had chosen them, He was leading them, providing for them. When they came close to the promised land, early on in their wanderings, the spies went to look over the land and told the people what a **dangerous and difficult** place it was, so they stopped believing in God’s promises. What happened? Their hearts became hardened.

The writer of Hebrews wants us to think of ourselves today like this generation of God’s people. Walking through the wilderness on the way to God’s promised future. Don’t make the same mistakes as the Israelites. It is not just a matter of

remembering this story and working to behave better or differently, although it certainly includes that. **It is placing all of us in The Story as well. The Journey began back in Egypt, it has continued and this is a new stage in the same story. Jesus is superior to Moses; He is leading His followers to the Promised-Land as well.**

That is why the author quotes **Psalm 95, which itself was a reminder to God's people of the rebellion of their past. Clearly the author of Hebrews sees Psalm 95 as the authoritative Word of God, v. 7 "That is why the Holy Spirit says" Then he quotes Psalm 95.** It is a summary of Israel's history under Moses' leadership and was used as a warning against unbelief and disobedience. Well, God has spoken! Again! He has not left us in our wanderings and grumblings to find our own way. NO! He has sent one greater than Moses. He has sent His One and Only Son. **PAY ATTENTION TO HIM – So you do not drift away.**

Hebrews 3:6, But Christ is faithful as a son over God's house. And we are his house, if we hold on to our courage and the hope which we boast.

In chapter three of Hebrews we hear an expanded exhortation, which began in chapter two. If we continue to drift...our hearts will become hardened.

Proverbs 4:23 tells us: Guard your heart above all else, for it determines the course of your life.

In Hebrews 3:12 then, we begin to hear application – how to live – how to pay attention – how to guard our hearts. "Be careful then, dear brothers and sisters. Make sure that your own hearts are not evil and unbelieving, turning you away from the living God."

A few weeks ago, I shared with you an experience I had at a memorial service for a friend from my Air Force days. In case you didn't see it and as a reminder; I went to a memorial service for a friend out in Colorado a while back. The ceremony was intentionally and very specifically "non-religious". The man who presided over the ceremony had lived with my friend Doug, the one who passed away, for 25 years or so. During the service he mentioned that they had had discussions on faith, death, etc. and that they were both in agreement, they were pretty certain that religion is made up and is humankind's attempt to answer the questions in life that are not answerable. Lizard (this is what we call him) said a couple of times during the memorial that I am not a religious man and Doug wasn't either.

This bothered me and I had to follow up. I asked Lizard, 'what does it mean to say I am not a religious man'. We exchanged some emails and finally we had a very long phone conversation.

It is interesting because he shared with me some fond childhood memories of church, Sunday School and such. As he got older, he was always forced to attend worship. He went off to college and for the first time he was able to be free, not go to church. I told him that I realize one cannot force anything on anyone; but I BELIEVE RIGHT HERE, HE STOPPED PAYING ATTENTION, HE STARTED TO DRIFT.

Next, he joined the Marine Corps. At this time, at least where he was serving, they were forced to march to chapel to go to worship services. Again, he was frustrated with this and became even angrier. As soon as he was able, he elected to completely disengage from all things "religious". He continued to drift. Listening to him talk, he becomes very angry even still about much of the "forced-fed" religion. His heart is hardened. I am keeping in touch with him...hoping and praying.

Where are you today in this journey of faith? Just like the Israelites standing on the edge of the Promised Land, we have the report from the 12. God has spoken! We have the report, not only from the 12, but the report of His Son. Follow Me!!

Hebrews 3:13-14, But encourage one another daily (some translations say exhort, warn), as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness. We have come to share in Christ if we hold firmly till the end the confidence we had at first.

Next we have sin's deceitfulness. How many of you are currently on an exercise routine? Very good! Can you relate to any of these thoughts/statements? 'I really don't have time to get in that workout today, but I'll certainly make it up tomorrow.' THERE'S THE DRIFTING! 'Well, I forgot all about my schedule today, there is no way I can workout today.' 'Oh man, my knees have been really giving me problems lately. I'm going to have to take a couple of days off.' DRIFTING! 'I KNOW I PROBABLY SHOULDN'T BE EATING THAT, BUT THAT'S ONE OF THE REASONS I WORK OUT IN THE FIRST PLACE.'

The reality is, there is always an excuse handy, we can always rationalize in some fashion. Pretty soon it is a habit. That's like hardening of the heart.

One can almost imagine the people of Israel after receiving the report of the spies. 'Oh, they're big and powerful, huh?' DRIFTING! 'Well, dog gone it, Moses why did you even bring us here in the first place, this is going to be hard?' 'I'm afraid.' 'Yeah, come on Moses.' Where is the trust in the Lord? Instead of encouraging and exhorting one another, one can imagine the negativity and fear spreading like wildfire. So much so, that the people's hearts are hardened and they want to return to Egypt! The land of slavery that they have cried out to the Lord for centuries for deliverance. WOW!

Ezekiel 11:19 God says, "I will give them singleness of heart and put a new spirit within them. I will take away their stony, stubborn heart and give them a tender, responsive heart."

We have singleness of heart because Jesus is greater than Moses. We pay attention to Him as He leads us, we do not drift so that our hearts are not hardened all so that we can Love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, and mind. We also love our neighbors as ourselves because of His Holy Spirit dwelling within us. We are empowered because of His presence. DO NOT HARDEN YOUR HEART!

Pay attention to the Lord, thinking about Jesus and who He is and what He has done for us. Hold firm to Him with complete trust so that we do not drift. Do not turn away from the Lord, encourage, exhort one another – DO NOT FEAR. We must continue to encourage one another, exhort one another. We are following Jesus on this journey and we need each other.

I will close with these awesome words of encouragement and exhortation from Mike Yaconelli, author, pastor, speaker.

I would like to suggest that the Church become a place of terror again; a place where God continually has to tell us, "Fear not"; a place where our relationship with God is not a simple belief or a doctrine or theology, it is God's burning presence in our lives. I am suggesting that the tame God of relevance be replaced by the God whose very presence shatters our egos into dust, burns our sin into ashes, and strips us naked to reveal the real person within. The Church needs to become a gloriously dangerous place where nothing is safe in God's presence except us. Nothing--including our plans, our agendas, our priorities, our politics, our money, our security, our comfort, our possessions, our needs. Amen.

Announcements

Church Communication

Thank you to the many people who have reached out with their email addresses. If you have an email address and are receiving this newsletter via postal mail, please contact the office. To save on the cost of postage, we would prefer to email the newsletter. Thank you. (church@mthopelutheran.org)

Office Hours

Kim W is currently in the office from 9:00am-3:00pm on weekdays. If you have a question, please call 952 888 5059 or email her at church@mthopelutheran.org.

Prayer Chain

If you would like to put out a prayer request or join the Prayer Chain, please contact the Marilyn N at conradmarilyn@usfamily.net.

Preparations

Mount Hope is preparing for your return. COVID-19 related items such as hand-held thermometers, hand sanitizer and disposable facemasks have been purchased, so we are ready to go whenever it is safe to gather together again.

Preschool and Childcare Update

With reduced staffing, the Center remains open from 7:00am-5:00pm daily. Between ten and fifteen children are in attendance daily. The children attending at this time all have a parent who is an essential worker. We are scheduled to care for a large group this summer, but those plans will definitely depend on how quickly parents return to their workplaces. Extra cleaning takes place daily, hand sanitizer is used by everyone who enters the building, and signage with a symptom checklist is posted. The staff and children were already washing their hands very frequently, so that's a healthy habit we continue now, with even more urgency. We are blessed to have very cautious parents who keep their children home if there is the slightest indication they may not be feeling well. We are very grateful for the teachers who continue to care for these children every day, putting themselves at risk by being out and about.

Sunday Worship Schedule

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

Phone: 952-888-5059

E-mail: church@mthopelutheran.org

Website: www.mthopelutheran.org

Mount Hope's Staff

Fran Green	Pastor
Candy Frein	Administrative Assistant
Christina Brantner	Music Director
Kathy Sundseth	Custodian
Kim Wuebke	Preschool and Childcare Director Administrative Assistant
Steve Sundseth	Custodian
Sam Killam	Custodian

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Address Service Requested

