

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

June 17, 2020

"But who do you say that I am?" Matthew 16:15 (NRSV)

This is such a great and centering question for all of us today. Jesus helps to get us focused on what (actually Who) is most important and Who is in charge. Jesus remains The Ruling and Reigning King. It is my hope and prayer that we spend much time this week pondering the question, *Who do you say that I am?* This is also the theme of the included message. Truly, nothing in life will ever make sense without first, establishing Jesus as Lord and King of the entirety of our lives.

We are excited for Virtual Vacation Bible School! *Rainforest Explorers, Jesus Leads the Way*, filled with Bible lessons, games, snacks, crafts, and more will be available for pick up this coming Sunday, June 21 11:30-1:30pm at Mount Hope. This is a joint venture with our sister congregation St. Michael's Lutheran Church, Bloomington. Please look for more information in this newsletter.

Our private Holy Communion offerings have been well-received. Please contact the church office to get your spot for this Thursday, June 18. We will not be offering the Lord's Supper next week, June 22-27, as I will be spending a few days away camping with my family.

Several members of our leadership team will be meeting again this week to discuss resuming in-person worship services. Many of you have been asking when this will occur. We have been in ongoing discussions and monitoring current COVID-19 statistics closely while also planning for our reopening. Thank you for your patience and understanding; we all want to get back to worshipping here at Mount Hope but want to be as safe as possible. We continue to trust the Lord to direct our plans and know that He will make it clear.

Please continue to pray for Mount Hope, our city, country, the leadership, those on the frontlines battling during these challenging times and our world!! We pray for the day we will be able to SAFELY worship together again.

We are Mount Hope, *Where Guests become Friends, Friends become Family.*

Pastor Fran Green

The Message

I heard two stories this past week that were great. I suppose each story on its own could be made into a movie, but that's not what makes them great. What makes them great is Jesus and His power.

The first I heard about Christopher a young man who grew up in a non-Christian home and he lived an identity and lifestyle that was far from God. All the details of Christopher's life are not important for us today, but suffice it to say that he reached rock bottom as he was kicked out of dental school, thrown in prison, and learned he was HIV positive. One day Christopher noticed he was standing near a garbage can overflowing with trash, disgusting with flies and so forth and he thought, that is my life...garbage!

He also noticed something else there though that day; and what he noticed and picked up was a Gideon New Testament. Christopher describes that for the first time he read through the entire book of Mark and realized that even though his life was a pile of garbage, Jesus loved him. It didn't happen all at once, but Jesus turned Chris' life around and today he is teaching at Moody Bible Institute in Chicago.

The second story is about Sara. Sara too made some poor decisions and went through some very dark times in her young life. One day she confessed her past and all of the things she had done to her mother-in-law. Instead of condemning her, Sara's mother-in-law invited her to join her Tuesday morning Bible Study Fellowship. Sara talks about how she came to love the Word of God, but how she struggled with believing it, but there was something about Jesus that kept her there and searching the Word. She describes her change as instantaneous! She said that one day she woke up and awoke. She saw Jesus and His true identity.

What amazing stories! Isn't it amazing what happened when Christopher saw Jesus? Isn't it amazing what happened when they read the Scriptures and saw Jesus for who is? Incredible! By the power of God's Holy Word and through the Holy Spirit, Christopher met Jesus and realized that He is God's Son and that He died to pay the price of his messed up and broken life. Yes, he was truly an outcast, but he was a loved and forgiven outcast, which made him a precious child of the living God, not a pile of garbage.

And what about Sara? She too met the Son of the living God in His holy word. God met them and revealed Himself to each of these people by the power of the Holy Spirit through His Word.

Seeing Jesus in the Scriptures was Christopher's and Sara's "Transfiguration" experience. Just like the disciples in the Scriptures, Christopher and Sara met and realized that Jesus is truly the Son of God.

What about you today? Do you wish Jesus would reveal Himself in a fresh way? The Transfiguration, our story today, will once again challenge us to look hard and deeply at "Who Jesus Is".

Who do you say I am?" (Matthew 16:15) This is a great question for us to keep in front of us today.

"But what about you?" He asked, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." (v. 16-17)

Blessed are you Peter! Then Jesus goes on to tell the disciples that He is the Christ, the promised Messiah spoke of by the prophets in the OT. He explains to them everything that must occur now to fulfill the prophecy. Peter goes from perhaps his most glorious moment to being rebuked by Jesus when he tells Him, *"No Lord, this will never happen!" "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men." (v. 22-23)*

I would imagine the disciples are confused at this point. They have seen Jesus do amazing things, they've watched Him heal and teach, there is no doubt that they know He is something special; however, they cannot comprehend everything that must take place as the Christ, the Messiah, fulfills the mission He was sent to complete.

Turning now to *Matthew 17:1-9* *After six days, (or six days after this discussion between Jesus and his disciples) Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them.*

The disciples are given the answer to the question Jesus had asked them, which we just read, *Who do you say I am? This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him! (v. 5)*

God provides the answer to the question by showing the disciples Jesus is God's Son, the one sent into the world to save the world. The one spoken of by the prophets, the one God Himself

promised would come. It was happening now. Put your complete faith and trust in Him, it will all make complete sense in time, for now I AM is confirming Jesus identity go in faith and confidence in My testimony!

This is the same thing that Christopher Yuan was shown when he picked up that Gideon New Testament. He was shown that Jesus is the Son of God. Yes, you come with questions and a desire to know why? But you can have faith in the Son of God, He is trustworthy. It is the same for all people who turn to God's Word in search of an answer to the question, "Who do you say I am?"

Do you remember what the *Small Catechism* says in the explanation of the 3rd Article of the Apostles Creed?

The Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the truth faith.

God uses His Holy Word to reveal who Jesus is for all of us, to those searching for the answers.

I have to be honest, sometimes when I am faced with speaking on a story so familiar like the Transfiguration, I struggle. I can't help but think, this will be a great challenge because we've heard it many times before; Yes, Jesus on the mountain with his three closest disciples Moses, Elijah, the voice of God revealing Jesus' identity. It's so familiar. But God is so awesome! As quickly as I get to feeling it is all about me and that I must do this or that, He reminds me that He is in control. Consider *2 Peter 1:12*:

So, I will remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me.

The Lord is answering this very question through Peter. Yes, we've heard this many times before, "Lord...why?" Why is it important to come back to it year after year?

Verse 15, And I make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

2 Peter, much like his first letter is filled with urgency. BEWARE...BE READY! The reminders, the command to remember, are there because he knows it is easy to forget. *Listen to Him!* So many things in our world are trying to get us to listen. We need to continually remember that Jesus is the Son of God. We must listen to Him. Peter knows there will be those who come and attack, deny that Jesus is who He said He was/is. People and even religious authorities will invent stories that are simply untrue. *2 Peter 2:2, Many will follow their shameful ways and will bring the way of truth into disrepute.*

Listen to Him! We need to remember the absolute authority of Jesus' teachings. His Words have final and complete authority over our lives. We must keep the question, "Who do you say I am?" before us at all times. But more importantly we need to keep God's answer to the question before us at all times, "This is my Son!" The Transfiguration was certainly a defining moment in Peter's life, he writes about it in this letter of urgency, *2 Peter 1:16-21*:

We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased." We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

So where are you at today? Do you desire to know Jesus intimately? It begins with asking the question, Who do you say Jesus is? What are you listening to? What is influencing you? Are you in a place like Christopher Yuan where you are struggling with your own identity, maybe even feeling like garbage listening to what the world is telling you about yourself? Are you confused like the disciples, "I just don't get it Lord" it doesn't make sense to me. Perhaps you're simply content and need an awakening of sorts to live for Jesus. No matter where you are, the answers are found through searching for the answer to this question, "Who do you say that I am?" Then, listen to Him! It is through wrestling with Jesus' identity that our own questions will be answered; our own identity will make sense. Jesus is God's Son, He came to this earth to pay the price of our sins, He gave us a new identity as His people. We live for Him and with Him forever.

Therefore, dear friends, since you already know this, be on your guard so that you may not be carried away by the error of lawless men and fall from your secure position. But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory now and forever! AMEN. (2 Peter 3:17-18)

Announcements

Women of Hope – Fall Bazaar Update

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Fall Bazaar, which is typically held in mid-October at Mount Hope, has been cancelled for 2020. It is difficult at this time to plan for an event that brings so many people into the building. The Women of Hope look forward to bringing the event back in 2021!

Thursday - Communion

Continuing this Thursday, June 18, Pastor will offer communion at Mount Hope. He will meet by appointment in the sanctuary with those who would like to participate. Appointments are offered beginning at 11:00am. Appointments are 20 minutes apart allowing for a visit of approximately 10 minutes. Please call the office at 952 888 5059 between 9:00-3:00 to set an appointment. You can also email your request to church@mthopelutheran.org.

For your safety and for the safety of the Center families and the staff, we will be using the East door. There will be hand sanitizer available at the entrance. We also ask that social distancing practices are followed and that masks are worn if at all possible. You will be able to drop off your offering and pick up a Portals of Prayer as well. You will not have access to the rest of the building at this time. Thank you for respecting these guidelines. Pastor will follow safety protocols when preparing the wine and wafer for communion.

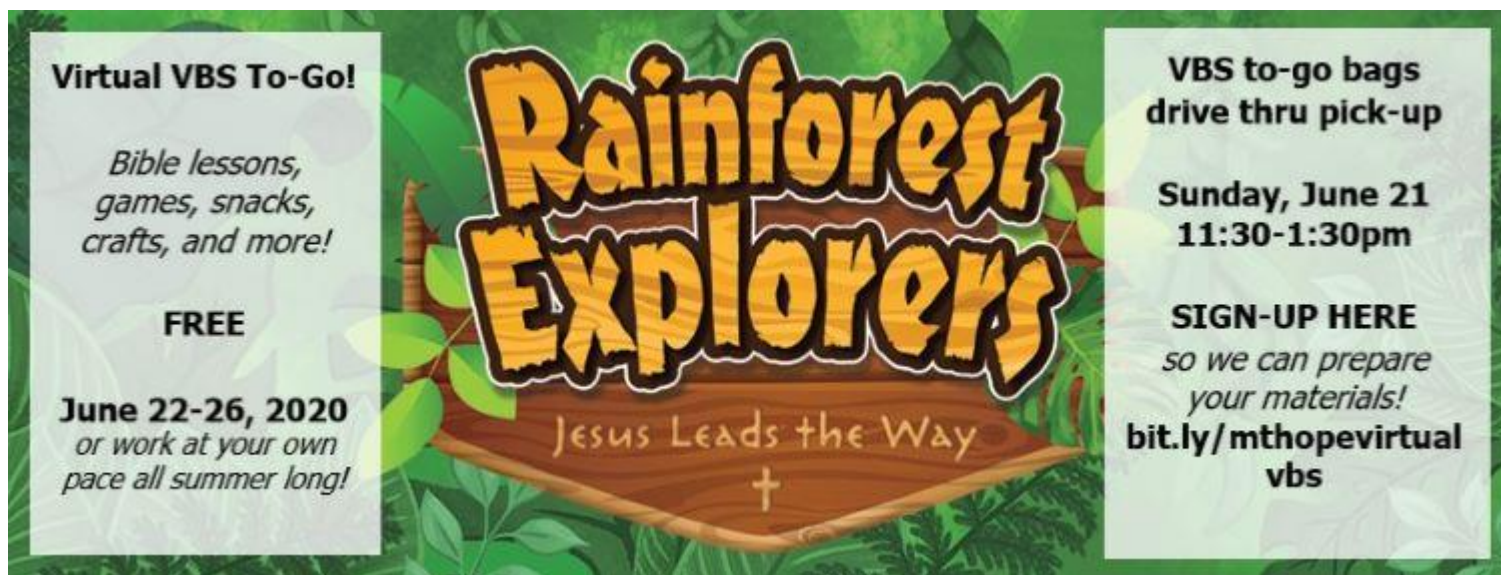
If you fall into a high-risk group, please make the best decision for yourself and your health. We care about you and look forward to a future when we are able to worship together again.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL – SUMMER 2020

Join us for a Virtual VBS to-go!

Mt Hope Lutheran Church is partnering with St Michael's Lutheran Church to bring you a virtual VBS experience in the rainforest! We have prepared online Bible lessons, instructions for games, recipe cards for snacks, materials for crafts, and more!

This is a FREE event!



The graphic features a central wooden sign with the text "Rainforest Explorers" in large, stylized orange letters with a black outline. Below the sign, it says "Jesus Leads the Way" and a small cross. The background is a lush green rainforest scene. On either side of the sign are white text boxes with black text.

Virtual VBS To-Go!
Bible lessons, games, snacks, crafts, and more!
FREE
June 22-26, 2020
or work at your own pace all summer long!

VBS to-go bags drive thru pick-up
Sunday, June 21
11:30-1:30pm
SIGN-UP HERE
so we can prepare your materials!
bit.ly/mthopevirtualvbs

Pick up everything you need for this virtual VBS experience, conveniently packaged, in a socially distant drive-thru at Mount Hope

on

Sunday, June 21st @11:30-1:30pm.

Register at bit.ly/mthopevirtualvbs.

Sunday Worship Schedule

Services online during COVID19 shutdown

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

Christina Brantner Music Director

Jennifer Adamek Administrative Assistant

Kathy Sundseth Custodian

Kim Woebke Director of Preschool and Childcare
Administrative Assistant

Steve Sundseth Custodian

Sam Killam Custodian

Mount Hope Lutheran Church
3601 W Old Shakopee Rd
Bloomington, MN 55431

Address Service Requested

