

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

July 9, 2020

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 1 Corinthians 1:18 (NIV)

I don't know about you, but I cannot believe we are now past July 4th! This summer is flying by. This is a big week for us here at Mount Hope. We will be offering an "In-Person" worship service this coming Sunday morning, July 12th at 9:30. March 15th was the last time that we held a "regular" worship service; it will be wonderful to gather and worship Almighty God together.

Having said that though, we do encourage everyone to please consider the very real concern that COVID-19 presents. We will be doing our best to prepare and present a safe environment, but the safest place is still simply staying home. We encourage all of you to prayerfully consider your own health prior to attending.

The specific instructions for attending the service on July 12 are included later in this newsletter and you should have also received them last week. Finally, we will continue to offer the worship service online through our website, mthopelutheran.org and our YouTube page.

Please contact the church office to get your spot to receive Holy Communion, Thursday, July 9. If Thursday does not work, please let Kim know what does and I will work you in.

On a somewhat different note, we understand that the pandemic has drastically changed our lives and the way we function as a church. We are all dealing with it in different ways. We have worked hard to keep the lines of communication open through this weekly newsletter, email, and our online worship service. We have tried to call, especially those who are alone or living in more confined situations, such as assisted-living facilities. But we know that this has not been perfect and undoubtedly some have been missed. Please know that this is NOT intentional. If you have been missed and/or you are missing your Mount Hope family, please call someone to connect. You could look through your directory and reach out, you could call the church office, and you could call me at any time. We are in this together!

Finally, as always, **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 July 12 and that we will be able to SAFELY worship together and for wisdom and discernment for all of us as we determine which worship option will be best for each individual and our families.

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

Pastor Fran Green

Message

“Pay Attention!!” “Why can’t you pay attention?” or “Come on. Pay Attention!” Have you heard those words before? Perhaps too many times. It’s hard isn’t it? Maybe harder for some than others, but truly it takes discipline and effort to ‘Pay Attention’.

I remember my grandpa telling the story of his two boys, my dad and my uncle Denny, and the marked difference in their ability to cultivate the corn and beans (I’m hoping most of you know what this is). My dad is very precise and would always work so very hard to make sure he was paying attention so that he didn’t drift over and take out some of the crops. My grandpa told the story many times about a time when he caught my dad with the tractor stopped and he was frantically trying to uncover spot over even repair the damage he had done when he didn’t pay attention. Apparently, he worked very hard to pay attention.

Contrast that to my uncle Denny. My grandpa used to laugh when telling the story, but my dad assures me that it wasn’t a laughing matter at the time, about Denny having a difficult time and that he would take out as much beans and corn as he would weeds when he was cultivating. Of course, he would lose his job making it fall to my dad. Possibly it was part of Denny’s overall plan? 😊 But my grandpa said that Denny was just not able to pay attention when he was cultivating.

Personally, I remember hearing the words, “Pay Attention!” quite frequently when I was younger. Maybe it was a throwback to the time of cultivating corn and beans, but my dad seemed to say those words a lot. My dad was my math teacher for all four years of high school. Now for the most

part it was a workable relationship, but I have to admit that I did find it fairly easy to not worry too much if I missed something in class. I knew that I could simply ask dad at home. Well, I heard “Were you paying attention in class” or “why weren’t you paying attention” more than just a few times. How about you? What comes to your mind when you hear the words, Pay Attention?

Well, God has spoken, and He tells us too-to Pay Attention! Let’s look at *Hebrews* chapter two:
We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away.
Hebrews 2:1

Not only is this an exclamation point, it is the first of five warnings contained in this letter, warnings to not fall away; warnings against apostasy or renouncing Christianity and going back to Judaism - today a warning against drifting away, which eventually will lead to renouncing Christianity. God’s people were to listen and follow the laws given through angels to Moses; how much more should people give their entire attention to the Word given by Jesus, God’s only Son? It’s kind of like the author is saying, “Pay attention here, do you know or you need to remember what is going on here!!”

V. 2-3 For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.

There’s an old, most likely familiar story of a devout Christian who is stuck on the ledge halfway down a cliff hundreds of feet above the water and jagged rocks. The wall of rocks is simply not climbable to try and go up. The man prays for God to help him, save him. Suddenly, a huge eagle appears to tell the man to jump on, he refuses. Then a helicopter flies by – the man waves it away, finally a small airplane circles and offers to throw a rope ladder. He refuses that too. He continues to pray – Lord, why don’t you rescue me? God answers, I sent you a bird, a helicopter, and a ladder why did you refuse them?

Yes, it’s a silly story of course, but it does serve to make a point. The point *Hebrews* wants to get across in this passage, we must not ignore the very things God is doing for us even if it isn’t what we had expected or perhaps even wanted.

And really, that is like what *Hebrews* is describing. God has sent the law through angels, look what happens if people ignore or reject it. What will happen if the people reject something even more important and powerful? God may conclude that they really aren’t interested in being rescued. But, make no mistake God has acted. He has sent Jesus to save us.

Or think about receiving a message through the mail from the President of the United States. The letter was dictated by the president and then sent to you. It’s pretty important, right? I imagine

most of us would pay very close attention to the message. Now imagine, if he simply came himself. Dropped right in on you in person. That would be a big deal wouldn't it? (All politics aside, this is simply an illustration) Certainly, we would respond to a personal visit.

That is what the author of *Hebrews* is telling us today. Yes, we have the law and the prophets; but Jesus, true man – true God came personally to save you. You need to pay extremely close attention to that.

This is probably a good time for us to pause though, and think about exactly what is going on here. The author is turning the reader's and those hearing this letter's world upside down. Imagine these people trying to reconcile their entire history back through Moses all the way back to Abraham. The old covenant, circumcision and the Temple system. Now, they are hearing and seeing it doesn't matter what you eat, it doesn't matter who you eat with-you do not need to be circumcised. You are in fact free. You have direct access to God because of Jesus and what He has done. Just as God used Moses to deliver your ancestors – Jesus has delivered and opened the way freedom from the fear of death. Freedom through death to resurrection – Jesus opens the way to LIFE!!

At the core of this entire letter is Jesus' Identity. This mystery of God and Man. Fully God – Fully Man. It is interesting that the ancients struggled with understanding Jesus as truly Man. Most understood, had either witnessed or heard of Jesus' divinity, all of the miracles and signs. We know many heresies and false teachings of Jesus stem from viewing Jesus as on seeming to be a man, not truly walking the earth and dying on the cross.

Modern day problems are more often having a difficult time believing in Jesus' divinity. We have clear evidence, archeology, etc. that Jesus, the man, did truly walk the earth, there is really no disputing the fact. The difficulty is in Jesus – True God. That's where we see false teaching arising in religions that deny Jesus' divinity.

The TWO NATURES OF JESUS and the necessity of them is at the heart of the book of *Hebrews*. We discuss it in confirmation and occasionally at other times in the church. Make no mistake this is a Divine Mystery. This is so important – This is God's plan. *Hebrews* and other places in Scripture as well, it is necessary for one who will reconcile and pay for humanity's sins to be perfect God and perfect man. He cannot make it unless He truly is God (nobody else can atone for sins) and He had to be fully human to make atonement, to pay the price for these sins.

Hebrews 2:17, That's why he had to be like his brothers and sisters in every way, so that he might become a merciful and trustworthy high priest in God's presence, to make atonement for the sins of the people.

Pay attention to these truths! That is what the author of Hebrews is telling us. This is a big deal. The King has come personally!! Paul says virtually the same thing in *Colossians* chapter 1:19-23 (NLT):

For God in all his fullness was pleased to live in Christ, and through him God reconciled everything to himself. He made peace with everything in heaven and on earth by means of Christ's blood on the cross. This includes you who were once far away from God. You were his enemies, separated from him by your evil thoughts and actions. Yet now he has reconciled you to himself through the death of Christ in his physical body. As a result, he has brought you into his own presence, and you are holy and blameless as you stand before him without a single fault.

But you must continue to believe this truth and stand firmly in it. Don't drift away (PAY ATTENTION) from the assurance you received when you heard the Good News.

ARE YOU PAYING ATTENTION TODAY? How are you living each and every moment in God's presence? It seems like it comes up frequently, but think about how you spend your time. What occupies your thoughts? What do you let in? What do you spend the majority of your time thinking about and doing?

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. Hebrews 2:1 Make no mistake our enemy is paying extremely close attention. He is more than willing to present us with all kinds of distractions and diversions to get us to drift.

There isn't a week that goes by where I don't hear something about the diminishing church, people walking away from the faith, etc. The growing of the NONES. I wonder how many of these people were paying close attention-spent time daily focusing on the Lord, reading His Word, praying, spending time with His people. I wonder how many of these people lived like that and simply said, "No, this isn't for me?"

Of course, I can't be sure, but I would say that most simply drifted away. Spending less and less time PAYING ATTENTION. That's how it works most of the time isn't it? We simply drift away, lose interest. I challenge each of us to PAY ATTENTION in God's Word and prayer.

Here's a great verse for us to chew on today:

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. Hebrews 2:1 AMEN!

Announcements

The church office will be closed the week of July 13. You are still able to call or email to make a reservation for either communion or the upcoming worship service. Please leave a voice mail if you are calling as messages will be checked during the work week.

At this time the responsibilities on Sunday mornings are covered by staff and leadership. The Greeter, Reader, Usher, etc. schedules will be used again at a later date.

Return to In-Person Worship

Sundays at 9:30 am beginning July 12

Reservations

The guidelines provided to Places of Worship require Mount Hope to limit the number of participants meeting for worship. Please call the office between 9:00am-3:00pm on weekdays or email Kim at church@mthopelutheran.org to reserve a seat. Fifty participants will be allowed at this time.

Precautions/Procedures

The doors will be opened fifteen minutes prior to the service. You will be ushered directly to a pew in the sanctuary. You will also be ushered from the sanctuary in order to maintain social distancing.

Masks will be required while in the building along with the following of social distancing guidelines. Hand sanitizing stations are located just inside the door. Please use on both your way in and out.

At this time, food and drink are not to be served in a communal setting such as our fellowship hour. We will need to wait a bit longer to enjoy fellowship time together with coffee and treats!

The building will be thoroughly cleaned and frequently-touched surfaces are sanitized regularly.

The bathrooms will be available for emergencies only. Maintain a six foot distance from others if you do need to use the restroom. The bathroom doors can be easily opened with the handicap accessibility buttons. No need to touch the door handles.

Offerings will be collected in a drop-box style cabinet. There will be no passing of the offering plates.

Mount Hope will continue to offer communion on Thursdays instead of during the service.

At this time, we will enjoy the singing of the music leaders only. You are welcome to hum along if you would like to participate.

Hymnals and Bibles have been removed from the pews. There will be no bulletins, but all the information you need will be available on the screens.

At this time, congregation members will be limited to the narthex and the sanctuary. Any spaces used by the childcare, including the kitchen and Fellowship Hall are for the childcare only. The nursery must also be closed. Thank you for understanding.

Exclusions

The guidelines state that any one experiencing COVID-19 symptoms or who has had recent exposure to a person with COVID-19 be excluded from participation. If a member of your household is experiencing symptoms, please stay home as well.

Symptoms of COVID-19

New onset of coughing or shortness of breath by themselves OR at least two of the following: fever (100.4F or higher), chills, muscle pain, sore throat, loss of sense of smell or taste, and gastrointestinal symptoms of diarrhea, vomiting or nausea. It is also recommended that you stay at home and consult a physician if you have a new symptom with no alternate diagnosis explaining it.

A Healthy Congregation

You are encouraged to continue worshipping from home/online if you are in a high-risk group or do not feel comfortable returning to in-person worship at this time. Our prayer is that everyone remains healthy.

Sunday Worship Schedule

Services online during COVID19 shutdown

9:30am Sunday Worship by reservation

Thursday Communion by reservation

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
Kim Woebke	Director of Preschool and Childcare Administrative Assistant
Steve Sundseth	Custodian
Sam Killam	Custodian

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Address Service Requested

