

Spirit of Hope

Mount Hope Lutheran Church

Preschool and Childcare

July 29, 2020

Message from Pastor Fran Green

“Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart’s desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.”
Psalm 37:3-5 (NLT)

Included in this week’s newsletter is a short chapter from a book I wrote a few years ago titled *There is Still Time*. This selection seems to me to be applicable to these challenging times in which we are currently living. Essentially, it is a call to ALL IN living. The Lord is giving us many opportunities to boldly proclaim His Kingship and to live as His witnesses in this dark and weary land.

We have now had three in-person worship services since reopening. It continues to be a blessing to gather together and worship the Lord. Everyone has been cooperating with our guidelines for a safe space by wearing masks and practicing social distancing. Thank you. Also, we have decided that **reservations will not be required for now** as our numbers through these three weeks have been consistent and at this time, we are not in danger of going above 50% capacity in our attendance.

Thank you also to those who are electing to continue to worship at home via our online worship service. These numbers also remain strong and consistent each week. Feel free to let us know **if you have any suggestions** to improve. We are grateful for this technology and that you are worshiping with us. Neither God’s Word nor the Holy Spirit are hindered by coronavirus and social distancing.

This will be the last time I include this paragraph...for those who are participating in worship through our online worship service, would you be willing to please let us know the time/day you are viewing? This will be helpful for us in making our plans on the best time to record and then edit and post the service. Please let us know either by email, pastor@mthopelutheran.org, or you could simply put a comment in while you are watching such as Friday, 8:00 pm. Thank you.

Please contact the church office to **get your spot** to receive Holy Communion, Thursday, July 30. If Thursday does not work, please let Kim know what does and I will work you in.

We are making plans for fall. Much like schools we are thinking through various options for delivery of Sunday School, Bible Study, and other gatherings. We are only certain that we will have a virtual/online option for these events; beyond that, we will work to offer something in-person if it can be done safely and within the guidelines and restrictions of our state, which are supposed to be released this coming Thursday, July 30th.

Thank you for your prayers, God is faithful!

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

Pastor Fran Green

The Message

All-In

In the final poker scene in the James Bond movie *Casino Royale*, we see an intense battle of wills. Four players are engaged in a high stakes game that has the entire casino locked-in, watching in anticipation as the game unfolds, a game that is a metaphor for the true battle about to take place between James and the villain. The bets are ridiculously high, the pot climbing into the millions of dollars. The final hand, all four players possess decent cards that would win many games. Two of the players go All In during final bets, as James and the villain boldly raise, bringing the total over \$115 million. Tension mounts as each player, in turn, reveals their winning hand, only to be bested by the next. Finally, James, our hero, lays down the straight flush the highest hand in poker. The villain storms out of the room and the viewer is now prepared for the true climactic scene, which will soon take place between our two players. In essence, we see that both James and the villain are “All In” as well for what remains in the movie.

ALL IN! What a great statement. In poker, all in is the term used when a player desires to “call”, but do not have enough money to do so to match the amount of the current raise in the bet; yet they believe they have a winning hand and they want to remain in the game, they do not want to fold. All In, they give everything, the entire amount of money they have to keep playing; even when they do not have enough money to call.

What a great metaphor for faith and our relationship with the Lord! We do not have enough; there is absolutely nothing we can do to stay in the game. We cannot do anything; Jesus has the winning hand so to speak. He has paid our price, dying and rising from the dead to secure the ultimate Prize. We can never pay enough for this on our own. The only thing we are able to do, by the power of the Holy Spirit, is to live ALL IN. We give our entire heart, mind, and soul to the Lord by faith to join in this life with Jesus. How?

We see the people of the early church in Acts going ALL IN, as they sell their possessions and work together to live in a community of faith. It seems that their entire existence is lived out in response to the miraculous work of Jesus’ winning hand! They are consumed with living for Jesus because of all that He has done. Let’s take time today to reflect on our lives and prepare to go ALL IN.

In the book of Acts we see how events unfolded after Jesus’ resurrection and we see the birth and growth of the church. Peter and John appear to be the ones who were first teaching and speaking of what they had witnessed in Jesus’ death and resurrection. They used Scriptures to show that Jesus was the one predicted to come, the Messiah who would once and for all restore the Kingdom of Israel. They would later learn that the Kingdom of Israel was now defined by those who put their faith and trust in Jesus, it was no longer a national Kingdom.

Just prior to our reading for consideration, Peter and John were arrested for spreading the message of Jesus. The Holy Spirit was working powerfully through them as they were able to heal, but more importantly God used their message to *cut people to the heart*. Many recognized their sins and were told to repent and to turn to God for the forgiveness of sins. The number was already 5000. *Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John and realized that they were uneducated and ordinary men, they were amazed and recognized them as companions of Jesus. Acts 4:13*

Peter and John were warned to stop teaching about Jesus so that the spread of the message would stop, but they answered, *Which is right in God’s eyes: to listen to you, or to him? You be the judges! As for us, we cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard.* What boldness to the authorities, they are ALL IN!

After further threats they let them go. They returned to the people who pray for boldness, which we heard Lorrie read earlier. They prayed for boldness and the place shook by the power of the Lord and they became even more bold. The world's response to the message of Jesus is persecution and the early church models for us what should be the appropriate response; prayers. At this point we also get a glimpse how they lived ALL IN. *Acts 4:36:*

Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles feet.

Here we have an example of living ALL IN, a voluntary act given out of gratitude and thanksgiving for what Jesus had done. It is interesting that immediately following this positive example, we are given an example of hypocrisy. Instead of ALL IN giving and living, we are presented with a graphic picture of trying to deceive the Lord.

Acts Chapter 5:

Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. 2 With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. 3 Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? 4 Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God."

When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. 6 Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. 7 About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. 8 Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?"

"Yes," she said, "that is the price." 9 Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." 10 At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. 11 Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events.

The great deceiver loves to tell us lies about our relationship with the Lord. One can only imagine how the devil worked to deceive Ananias and Sapphira. "You do not need to go ALL IN, you can become great in the eyes of the world, you will gain a favorable reputation through being a part of this community of faith." They apparently loved material possessions more than the Lord.

It is important to note that the land was theirs, they did not have to give any of the money to the church. The sin was in deceiving and lying to God, not men. They wanted to be loved by the world and in its ways more than they wanted to completely surrender to God. God wants our whole heart. Remember when Jesus was asked what is the greatest commandment?

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind." This is the first and greatest commandment. Matthew 22:37

The threats and challenges to living ALL IN are both external, from the outside world telling us to stop proclaiming the message of Jesus and internal, the devil wooing us through the world challenging our faith, offering fame and fortune, happiness through things. The believers speak the Word of God, they pray and are empowered by the Holy Spirit to speak boldly. That is how we too answer the external and internal attacks through the Word of God and prayer. It reminds us of the description of ALL IN living earlier in *Acts 2:42*

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Yes, this is where they gained their power and ability to live ALL IN. This focus on the Lord and loving Him with their entire being is what gave them the power to love each other by selling their possessions sharing all that they had.

Psalm 37:3:5 says, Trust in the Lord and do good. Then you will live safely in the land and prosper. Take delight in the Lord, and he will give you your heart's desires. Commit everything you do to the Lord. Trust him, and he will help you.

Are you holding back and not going ALL IN in your walk with the Lord today?

Is God asking you to give Him complete control over the way you spend your time? Your treasures, and talents? What about your work? Perhaps it is your relationships; is God asking you to commit to Him fully and to entrust your family and relationships to his care? Where might Satan be lying to you and telling you to hold on and keep back instead of giving it all to the Lord?

We can live ALL IN, just as the early church. We have the same tools available, we need to commit fully to Him, all the time, in all areas of life.

Parable of the ducks

The great philosopher Søren Kierkegaard told a story about ducks that came from an imaginary country where only ducks live. One Sunday morning, all the mother and father ducks headed to church with their children waddling behind them. They entered the doors and sat in their duck pews, sang songs from their duck hymnals, and gave to underprivileged ducks at the offering time. When the duck preacher got up to proclaim the message, he was very dynamic. He opened his duck Bible and screamed, "Ducks, you can fly! You have wings and you can fly like eagles." The ducks all chanted, "We can fly, we can fly!" He asked, "Do you believe you can fly?" Again, they shouted back, "We can fly, we can fly." He screamed again, "We can soar through the skies!" They all shouted, "Amen." With that the pastor closed his duck Bible and dismissed his congregation of ducks. Then they all waddled back home.

So often we hear the Word of God and how His followers are bold and powerful and that through our commitment to Him by the power of the Holy Spirit, we should change our worlds. Living ALL IN is truly an all the time commitment. It involves every area of our lives. Let's be bold in our living! Let's commit/recommit to going ALL IN for the Lord. We mustn't simply waddle back to our "regular" routines.

But those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. They will run and not grow weary. They will walk and not faint. Isaiah 40:31 AMEN.

Announcements

Thursday - Communion

Pastor Fran will continue to offer in person communion at Mount Hope in the sanctuary. Make your appointment beginning at 11:00 am. 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 LWML Mites offerings 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.

LWML-Lutheran Women Missionaries

Give this summer to the purple MITE BOX on the East door entry table. July's focus for the National LWML is Women's Witness and Mercy Asia through Mission Central LCMS. National LWML will grant \$100,000 to help support these women missionaries in their unique mission setting in Asia. Asia is a harvest field ripe for the gospel. Women in Mission realize that our grants to missionaries in the field bring God's Word to a dying world. Asia is predominately secular with Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu and other false religions. Throughout Taiwan, Thailand, Hong Kong, Macau and Southeast Asia, ten women do various mission works such as teaching, acts of mercy and witnessing the gospel. Some have husbands and families working alongside of them while others work with a team or alone. One missionary teaches 242 students about Jesus in Taiwan while another has served for 10 years planting seeds of mercy and witnessing in Southeast Asia. Whether teaching English as a Second Language in Thailand or building relationships to open doors for sharing the gospel, each woman in the mission field helps in the growth God's Kingdom. LWML Mites collected here at our church will be sent to District and then sent on to National to help fund this mission grant.

Our dedicated missionaries in Asia.



Back to School Supplies

VEAP and SAMARITAN'S PURSE SHOE BOX MINISTRY Back to School Supplies are being collected in collection boxes place in the entry way to church and at the Thursday communion table entry. School items are on sale now. The Dollar stores have many items. You can ship to your home from Target and Walmart.

Thank you in advance, Carrie Newton, and Karen Mueller

Help Needed

Mt. Hope member, Ramona Duncan is looking to hire someone to do snow removal this coming winter. Her number is 952 888 7664 and she live on 1211 W 106th St in Bloomington.

Life Line Screening

Life Line Screening, a leading provider of community-based preventive health screenings, will offer their affordable, non-invasive and painless health screenings at Mount Hope Lutheran Church on 9/28/2020. Five screenings will be offered that scan for potential health problems related to: blocked arteries which is a leading cause of stroke; abdominal aortic aneurysms which can lead to a ruptured aorta; hardening of the arteries in the legs which is a strong predictor of heart disease; atrial fibrillation or irregular heart beat which is closely tied to stroke risk; and a bone density screening, for men and women, used to assess the risk of osteoporosis. Register for a Wellness Package which includes 4 vascular tests and osteoporosis screening from \$149 (\$139 with our member discount). All five screenings take 60-90 minutes to complete. *In order to register for this event and to receive a \$10 discount off any package priced above \$129, please call 1-888-653-6441 or visit www.lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle <<http://www.lifelinescreening.com/communitycircle>> or text the word circle to 797979*

Mount Hope's Staff

Sunday Worship Schedule

Services online during COVID19 shutdown

9:30am In-Person Worship

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