

**Pastors Advent Challenge
to the people of the United Proclamation of the Gospel Parish and
St. John's Windish Lutheran Church!**

November 30 – December 6, 2020

First Week of Advent 2020

We are asking that all people within our community of faith intentionally share the gift of "HOPE" with the world in which we live.

1. For our facebook friends, or for people who utilize social media. Let's fill social media this week with messages focused on "Hope!" Every day of the week, let's each one of us post a message that shares "hope" for the world.
2. If you don't use social media, let's share messages of hope with our friends and family. Perhaps you can send a card to someone you know could use a bit of encouragement, perhaps you could call a friend to remind them to hold on to hope.

Some readings and prayers to inspire "hope."

Monday November 30, 2020

Psalm 33

- ¹ Let the godly sing for joy to the LORD;
it is fitting for the pure to praise him.
- ² Praise the LORD with melodies on the lyre;
make music for him on the ten-stringed harp.
- ³ Sing a new song of praise to him;
play skillfully on the harp, and sing with joy.
- ⁴ For the word of the LORD holds true,
and we can trust everything he does.
- ⁵ He loves whatever is just and good;
the unfailing love of the LORD fills the earth.
- ⁶ The LORD merely spoke,
and the heavens were created.
He breathed the word,
and all the stars were born.
- ⁷ He assigned the sea its boundaries
and locked the oceans in vast reservoirs.
- ⁸ Let the whole world fear the LORD,
and let everyone stand in awe of him.
- ⁹ For when he spoke, the world began!
It appeared at his command.
- ¹⁰ The LORD frustrates the plans of the nations
and thwarts all their schemes.
- ¹¹ But the LORD's plans stand firm forever;
his intentions can never be shaken.

¹² What joy for the nation whose God is the LORD,
 whose people he has chosen as his inheritance.
¹³ The LORD looks down from heaven
 and sees the whole human race.
¹⁴ From his throne he observes
 all who live on the earth.
¹⁵ He made their hearts,
 so he understands everything they do.
¹⁶ The best-equipped army cannot save a king,
 nor is great strength enough to save a warrior.
¹⁷ Don't count on your warhorse to give you victory—
 for all its strength, it cannot save you.
¹⁸ But the LORD watches over those who fear him,
 those who rely on his unfailing love.
¹⁹ He rescues them from death
 and keeps them alive in times of famine.
²⁰ We put our hope in the LORD.
 He is our help and our shield.
²¹ In him our hearts rejoice,
 for we trust in his holy name.
²² Let your unfailing love surround us, LORD,
 for our hope is in you alone.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, in Your abundant mercy and love, You chose to come among us and give us an example of how we are called to live. On this day Lord, we pray that You would inspire us to be inspirational to the world around us and bring a message of hope to all whom we meet. In Jesus' name we pray these things. Amen.

Tuesday December 1, 2020

Isaiah 51:1-12

"Listen to me, all who hope for deliverance—
 all who seek the LORD!
 Consider the rock from which you were cut,
 the quarry from which you were mined.
² Yes, think about Abraham, your ancestor,
 and Sarah, who gave birth to your nation.
 Abraham was only one man when I called him.
 But when I blessed him, he became a great nation."
³ The LORD will comfort Israel^[a] again
 and have pity on her ruins.
 Her desert will blossom like Eden,
 her barren wilderness like the garden of the LORD.
 Joy and gladness will be found there.
 Songs of thanksgiving will fill the air.
⁴ "Listen to me, my people.
 Hear me, Israel,
 for my law will be proclaimed,
 and my justice will become a light to the nations.
⁵ My mercy and justice are coming soon.

My salvation is on the way.
 My strong arm will bring justice to the nations.
 All distant lands will look to me
 and wait in hope for my powerful arm.
⁶ Look up to the skies above,
 and gaze down on the earth below.
 For the skies will disappear like smoke,
 and the earth will wear out like a piece of clothing.
 The people of the earth will die like flies,
 but my salvation lasts forever.
 My righteous rule will never end!
⁷ “Listen to me, you who know right from wrong,
 you who cherish my law in your hearts.
 Do not be afraid of people’s scorn,
 nor fear their insults.
⁸ For the moth will devour them as it devours clothing.
 The worm will eat at them as it eats wool.
 But my righteousness will last forever.
 My salvation will continue from generation to generation.”
⁹ Wake up, wake up, O LORD! Clothe yourself with strength!
 Flex your mighty right arm!
 Rouse yourself as in the days of old
 when you slew Egypt, the dragon of the Nile.^[b]
¹⁰ Are you not the same today,
 the one who dried up the sea,
 making a path of escape through the depths
 so that your people could cross over?
¹¹ Those who have been ransomed by the LORD will return.
 They will enter Jerusalem^[c] singing,
 crowned with everlasting joy.
 Sorrow and mourning will disappear,
 and they will be filled with joy and gladness.
¹² “I, yes I, am the one who comforts you.
 So why are you afraid of mere humans,
 who wither like the grass and disappear?

Prayer: Almighty God, in the world in which we inhabit there are many competing voices which call out to us. Open our ears to hear Your voice in this world, that we might find our true value, peace, and hope by living in obedience to Your calling for lives. We ask these things in the name of Your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Wednesday December 2, 2020

Galatians 5:1-15

So Christ has truly set us free. Now make sure that you stay free, and don’t get tied up again in slavery to the law.

² Listen! I, Paul, tell you this: If you are counting on circumcision to make you right with God, then Christ will be of no benefit to you. ³ I’ll say it again. If you are trying to find favor with God

by being circumcised, you must obey every regulation in the whole law of Moses. ⁴ For if you are trying to make yourselves right with God by keeping the law, you have been cut off from Christ! You have fallen away from God's grace.

⁵ But we who live by the Spirit eagerly wait to receive by faith the righteousness God has promised to us. ⁶ For when we place our faith in Christ Jesus, there is no benefit in being circumcised or being uncircumcised. What is important is faith expressing itself in love.

⁷ You were running the race so well. Who has held you back from following the truth? ⁸ It certainly isn't God, for he is the one who called you to freedom. ⁹ This false teaching is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough! ¹⁰ I am trusting the Lord to keep you from believing false teachings. God will judge that person, whoever he is, who has been confusing you.

¹¹ Dear brothers and sisters, ^[a] if I were still preaching that you must be circumcised—as some say I do—why am I still being persecuted? If I were no longer preaching salvation through the cross of Christ, no one would be offended. ¹² I just wish that those troublemakers who want to mutilate you by circumcision would mutilate themselves. ^[b]

¹³ For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. ¹⁴ For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." ^[c] ¹⁵ But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another

Prayer: God of the ages, As our brother Paul reminds us what is important about our faith, that we are all called to express our faith in love, we come to You for strength and wisdom. Attune our ears to the cries of those in need around us. Give us the wisdom to know how best we can lend a helping hand and grant us the strength to use the freedom which You provide to do what is right in this world to establish Your reign in this time and place. In Jesus' name we pray these things. Amen.

Thursday December 3, 2020

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now concerning how and when all this will happen, dear brothers and sisters, ^[a] we don't really need to write you. ² For you know quite well that the day of the Lord's return will come unexpectedly, like a thief in the night. ³ When people are saying, "Everything is peaceful and secure," then disaster will fall on them as suddenly as a pregnant woman's labor pains begin. And there will be no escape.

⁴ But you aren't in the dark about these things, dear brothers and sisters, and you won't be surprised when the day of the Lord comes like a thief. ^[b] ⁵ For you are all children of the light and of the day; we don't belong to darkness and night. ⁶ So be on your guard, not asleep like the others. Stay alert and be clearheaded. ⁷ Night is the time when people sleep and drinkers get drunk. ⁸ But let us who live in the light be clearheaded, protected by the armor of faith and love, and wearing as our helmet the confidence of our salvation.

⁹ For God chose to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ, not to pour out his anger on us. ¹⁰ Christ died for us so that, whether we are dead or alive when he returns, we can live with him forever. ¹¹ So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

Prayer: Gracious Lord, awaken our slumbering spirit, enliven our minds to know Your presence. You have chosen to save us through our Lord Jesus Christ! Allow our lives to be lived in thankfulness for this abundant gift and grant us the wisdom to encourage one another and build each other up, so that all would know of Your enduring and steadfast love. Through Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord we ask these things. Amen.

Friday December 4, 2020

Matthew 12: 15-21

¹⁵ But Jesus knew what they were planning. So he left that area, and many people followed him. He healed all the sick among them, ¹⁶ but he warned them not to reveal who he was. ¹⁷ This fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah concerning him:

¹⁸ “Look at my Servant, whom I have chosen.
He is my Beloved, who pleases me.
I will put my Spirit upon him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
¹⁹ He will not fight or shout
or raise his voice in public.
²⁰ He will not crush the weakest reed
or put out a flickering candle.
Finally he will cause justice to be victorious.
²¹ And his name will be the hope
of all the world.”

Prayer: Everlasting God, Jesus’ name is indeed the hope of all the world! As Christ proclaimed justice to the people, so lift our voices to proclaim justice. As Christ did not fight our shout or raise his voice in public, so tame our tongues and our lives that we would be known only as people of peace. For Your victory is achieved and we are blessed to be invited to participate in Your continuing reign. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

Saturday December 5, 2020

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
⁴ I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind—⁶ just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you—⁷ so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Prayer; Loving God, You have called us into fellowship and unity with Jesus Christ our Lord. As Christ came among Your people to share a message of hope, send us now into the world with the same commission. Grant us strength and the gifts that are necessary to share a renewed sense of hope among the people of this time and place. We ask these things through Your Son our Lord, Jesus the Christ. Amen.

Sunday December 6, 2020

Isaiah 40:1-11

¹Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

²Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the LORD's hand
double for all her sins.

³A voice cries out:
"In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,
and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

⁶A voice says, "Cry out!"
And I said, "What shall I cry?"
All people are grass,
their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷The grass withers, the flower fades,
when the breath of the LORD blows upon it;
surely the people are grass.

⁸The grass withers, the flower fades;
but the word of our God will stand forever.

⁹Get you up to a high mountain,
O Zion, herald of good tidings;
lift up your voice with strength,
O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,
lift it up, do not fear;
say to the cities of Judah,
"Here is your God!"

¹⁰See, the Lord GOD comes with might,
and his arm rules for him;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.

¹¹He will feed his flock like a shepherd;
he will gather the lambs in his arms,
and carry them in his bosom,
and gently lead the mother sheep.

Prayer: You Lord bring comfort and peace to Your people. You feed us like a shepherd and lead us in ways that are filled with hope. Now Lord, we beseech You to grant us the capacity to be Your lights shining in the world around us. That all whom we touch with a message of hope that comes from You would see Your great and abundant eternal light shining through our very lives. In Jesus' name we pray these things. Amen.