

Pastor's Message
October 25, 2020

Hi Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Hope you are all doing well!!

This weekend, the Northeastern Pennsylvania Synod elected a new bishop on the 5th ballot. Elected to be our next bishop is Rev. Christopher deForest. His term will begin on January 1, 2021 and his message to us was a message of resurrection for a new and exciting future. Here is a link to Bishop Elect deForest's message - <https://youtu.be/BqBfBDBVfAQ>. Thank you to Dale Nelson and Helenna Lutz for being our representatives to the assembly.

Harvest Home – Thank you for participating in the Harvest Home drive to support the Muhlenberg Churches Food Pantry. We have received \$950 to be donated to the Food Pantry. Thank you Jackie, Barb, Diane for organizing the event and staffing the table.

Good Shepherd Pre-School – We are planning to open the pre-school in early November. We are in need of a teacher's aide for our Monday, Wednesday and Friday class. We pay \$10 an hour and the workday is 7 hours. If you know anyone who is interested contact Becky Watson at 610-916-2533 for more information.

Invite Someone to Listen to worship with you – Here is an option for listening in to our Sunday Zoom services. If you know someone who is not able to participate in our Zoom worship services, call them and invite them to call you prior to worship and you can hold your phone up to the speaker on your computer and then they can listen in.

Our next communion Sundays will be October 25 (Reformation Sunday) and November 1 (All Saints Day).

God's Peace!

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2 Samuel 7:1-17

The reading for this morning is from the 7th chapter of 2 Samuel beginning at the 1st verse.

Before long, the king made himself at home and God gave him peace from all his enemies. Then one day King David said to Nathan the prophet, “Look at this: Here I am, comfortable in a luxurious house of cedar, and the Chest of God sits in a plain tent.”

Nathan told the king, “Whatever is on your heart, go and do it. God is with you.”

But that night, the word of God came to Nathan saying, “Go and tell my servant David: This is God’s word on the matter: You’re going to build a ‘house’ for me to live in?

Why, I haven’t lived in a ‘house’ from the time I brought the children of Israel up from Egypt till now. All that time I’ve moved about with nothing but a tent. And in all my travels with Israel, did I ever say to any of the leaders I commanded to

shepherd Israel, ‘Why haven’t you built me a house of cedar?’

“So here is what you are to tell my servant David: The God-of-the-Angel-Armies has this word for you: I took you from the pasture, tagging along after sheep, and made you prince over my people Israel. I was with you everywhere you went and mowed your enemies down before you.

Now I’m making you famous, to be ranked with the great names on earth. And I’m going to set aside a place for my people Israel and plant them there so they’ll have their own home and not be knocked around any more.

Nor will evil men afflict you as they always have, even during the days I set judges over my people Israel. Finally, I’m going to give you peace from all your enemies.

“Furthermore, God has this message for you: God himself will build you a house! When your life is complete and you’re buried with your ancestors, then I’ll raise up your child, your own flesh and blood, to succeed you, and I’ll firmly establish his rule. He will build a house to honor me, and I will guarantee his kingdom’s rule permanently. I’ll be a father to him, and he’ll be a son to me. When he does wrong, I’ll discipline him in the usual ways, the pitfalls and obstacles of this mortal life.

The Word of the Lord
Thanks be to God.

But I’ll never remove my gracious love from him, as I removed it from Saul, who preceded you and whom I most certainly did remove. Your family and your kingdom are permanently secured. I’m keeping my eye on them! And your royal throne will always be there, rock solid.”

¹⁷ Nathan gave David a complete and accurate account of everything he heard and saw in the vision.

Sermon

Grace and Peace to you from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior. AMEN

God of hope,
You promised to make David's household great among the nations. Then you sent your son, Jesus, to transform this world so that all people are one in the great household of God. Show us how to live as your children, as sisters and brothers in your holy and blessed realm, in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, who will one day welcome us all home. Amen.

Today we remember that 503 years ago, our brother Martin Luther found himself in unsettling and exasperating times. The Church of Rome ruled over every aspect of people's lives and those in authority had put into practice procedures, systems and processes that secured an elite life style for those in power.

Many of which took advantage of the poor and downtrodden of the community, of which there were many.

Luther, who had dedicated his life to the service of God as an Augustinian monk found himself quite distraught as he struggled with the question of how will he know that he has done enough to please God. This set him on a journey, which led him to delve into the Scriptures and resulted in his questioning many of the current practices of the church, which he believed were not in-line with the teachings of Jesus.

In an effort to both share what he had uncovered in his studying of the Scriptures, he pursued a discussion with the religious authorities to bring to light the current practices of the church that he found to be in

conflict with the teachings of Jesus. Inspired by the power of the Holy Spirit, Luther wrote and then posted 95 statements that he believed the church leaders and scholars needed to explore.

About 10 of them were about the churches practice of selling indulgences. One purchased an indulgence to either free or shorten the time that they or their loved ones would spend in purgatory. And of course, the more money they spent, that is the more indulgences they purchased the shorter their time spent in purgatory would be.

After his intensive study with the Scriptures, Luther believed that the church was falsely claiming that they had the divine power to provide forgiveness and salvation to the people in exchange for a monetary “donation”.

Luther argued, as we as Lutherans believe today that not only do those in position of authority within the church NOT have the divine power to

enact these acts of mercy, but more importantly that our God, who we have come to know through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus is a God of unconditional love and amazing grace.

And it is not our actions, but God’s actions through the unselfish gift of his Son Jesus, who came to live among us to teach us about the true character of God and the ways of the kingdom, and who for us died on the cross so that, for once and for always, our sins may be forgiven and therefore we may forever live in right relationship with God, our heavenly Father.

How often we, as church get our priorities messed up? How often we, as church are looking to please God with our actions that have nothing to do with discipleship and have nothing to do with loving one another.

In Luther’s day the Church leadership must have believed that God was calling them to build him an elaborate edifice

where God would reside. Their focus was on what they could accomplish that made them look good in the eyes of the people, regardless of who they scammed and swindled to increase their own status in the eyes of God.

We hear that same sentiment in this morning's text as David who now resides in a house fit for the King, decides he should build a house as nice if not nicer for God.

But God intervenes and speaks to David through the prophet Nathan telling David it is not about what David wants to do for God, but it is about what God will be doing through David and his descendants.

And there is a play on words in this text, where David is talking about building a physical "house" for God, while God is talking about building a house as in a dynasty, where the descendants of David will rule God's faithful community that

will forever live with a secure future forever.

This is God's promise to David.

Remember, God's promise to Abraham. God promised Abraham that his descendants would be numerous as the stars and they would live on the land flowing with milk and honey and that this great nation would be blessed, so that they could be a blessing to all nations.

And now God is promising David that a descendant of David will reign over the kingdom to be established by God.

Which will one day lead to a new and very different kind of King, who comes not to be served, but to be the servant of all. And through the faithfulness of this King, who never wore robes, never lived in a palace nor wore a crown of

crowns, but instead a crown of thorns. Through the life, death, and resurrection of this servant king, who shed his blood for us God has made another promise, the new covenant that we celebrate as we eat of the bread and drink of the wine. This new covenant made in Jesus' blood, that is shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.

This is who our God is: the one who blesses us so that we can bless others; the one who cares for us and watches over us and searches for us when we are lost; the one whose Son shed his blood for us and for all people

for the forgiveness of sin; the one who is steadfast, and gracious and merciful; the one who loves unconditional and commands us to do the same; the one who throughout the ages makes promises and works relentlessly to keep them.

So that, freed of our sins, we may engage in the work of building God's house, not out of brick and mortar, but with hard work of graciously doing the will of the Father to bring about God's kingdom here on Earth for all people.

AMEN

Blessing

May
God, our Guardian, protect you,
Christ, our Healer, restore you,
and the Holy Spirit, sustain you,
this day and forever more.

Amen