



Sunday Morning Grow Groups

Week of December 2nd, 2018

Magnify Hope

Announcements (1-2 min)

- All Congregation Christmas Festival December 9th after the 11:00 service. Volunteers are needed and appreciated: pmlcyouth.org/christmasfestvolunteers
- Carols, Ales, and Connect at Nine Band Brewery on Dec. 16th from 4-7pm. All ages and people are welcome!
- Angel Tree tags are now available. Help a friend at Mosaic or family with Emanuel Lutheran Community Center enjoy the joy of Christmas.
- Parents Day Out- December 15th, 11:30-3:30. GET YOUR CHRISTMAS SHOPPING DONE KID FREE! We are offering 4 hours of babysitting by our youth and their parents at the church. We will accept children ages 3-12 and this event will be run by volunteers. All funds raised will be designated for our Youth Mission Trips this Summer

Connecting with Each Other (15 minutes)

- Welcome any new arrivals to the group by introducing yourselves.
- Catch up on your week by sharing a high/low.
- Spend a few moments on these questions:
 - As a kid, what was the most exciting thing you had to wait for?
 - What are some things that you hope for as an adult?
 - Where do you witness hope everyday?

Digging Deeper and Turning to the Texts (30 minutes)

This morning is the first Sunday of Advent and the start of the new church year.

Throughout the month of December we will be focusing on what it means to Magnify the Lord while we wait for the arrival of Jesus on Christmas. During Advent each year, we light a candle on our advent wreath as we anticipate the arrival of Christmas and the coming of Christ. Each candle stands for a gift we receive from God: Hope, Love, Peace, and Joy.

Advent is known as a time of waiting and praying. The season of advent forces us to take a step back and look at the ways that God has shown up in our lives as we await the birth of Jesus. Advent requires us to slow down and remember that a savior was born to save us from all that distracts us. We wait for Jesus, and while we wait, we remember that there is hope, love, peace and joy.

Today our focus is magnify hope. How do we magnify hope when we live in a world where we can often feel hopeless because of all of the darkness and tragedy we see every single day? We magnify hope by turning to the scripture, by turning hate into love, by forgiving instead of holding a grudge, and by showing up when it would be easier to stay at home. We magnify hope every time we say “It’s not suppose to be this way” and show people the way it should be. When we magnify hope, we spread the love of Jesus in a way that is extremely contagious and more than necessary.

Mary magnifies the Lord. Which means God is front and center in her life as she bears God’s son. Mary proclaims the gospel in way that is incredibly powerful and inspiring in our gospel lesson today. Everyone always says we should live more like Jesus- and we should. I also think we should live more like Mary in the sense that she seeks the Lord in everything she says and does. Mary in our gospel lesson today proclaims hope because she reminds us of what God does.

When we feel like we have nothing left, there is always hope. Scripture says this, and I believe it. Hope comforts us and reminds us that there is something bigger and better to believe in. It’s our belief in God that carries us through the moments. When we magnify hope, we are magnifying Jesus in our everyday lives.

Luke 1:46-55

⁴⁶ And Mary said,
“My soul magnifies the Lord,
⁴⁷ and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ for he has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant.
Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
⁴⁹ for the Mighty One has done great things for me,
and holy is his name.
⁵⁰ His mercy is for those who fear him
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ He has shown strength with his arm;
he has scattered the proud in the thoughts of their hearts.
⁵² He has brought down the powerful from their thrones,
and lifted up the lowly;
⁵³ he has filled the hungry with good things,
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ He has helped his servant Israel,
in remembrance of his mercy,
⁵⁵ according to the promise he made to our ancestors,
to Abraham and to his descendants forever.”

[Text background: This is one of the more famous songs in scripture. Mary is talking about her journey while carrying Jesus. Mary is talking about what God has done for her in her

life. She is also talking about humanity as a whole. God is for those who are outsiders. God is for the world. Mary proclaims this because she believes it to be true. Some scholars say this was written after the resurrection so it is more of a reflection of what Jesus did and what Mary witnessed.]

- What are some of the things in your life that you magnify?
- What verse sticks out to you in Mary's Magnificat?
- In your opinion, what are some ways that you can magnify the Lord during the season of advent and waiting?
- The word "blessed" has become a catch phrase on social media and in our everyday lives and a way to express that we are thankful for what we have. Mary doesn't fit our standards of blessed- she had nothing, but is still thankful. In what ways do you relate to this feeling of being blessed? Is it similar or different to Mary?
- In what ways do you see hope expressed in this song? Is it filled with hope or do you have to search for it?

Romans 5:1-5

Therefore, since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

[Text background: Paul is writing to the Romans who have been overcome by sin and suffering. He is telling them that God is more powerful than anything they have ever experienced. He is also telling them that we have peace, grace, hope, and endurance. Paul is reminding them that hope never runs out, that even though times may be hard- they still need to believe, and that there is a reason to rejoice in the Lord because of all that He has done.]

- Boasting and bragging are two different things in the text for today. Oftentimes bragging comes with shame towards another group of people, but boasting does not. How can you boast about all of the things that the Lord has done for you?
- Has hope ever disappointed you?
- Has there ever been a time in your life where it was hard to find the hope while you were suffering? Share if you feel comfortable.
- Suffering does produce endurance, and so does grace. How does hope encourage us and help us persevere?

- How can you pour love and hope into someone's heart this week? Is there a specific person or group of people that you feel especially called to love and pray for more?

Jeremiah 29:10-14

10 For thus says the Lord: Only when Babylon's seventy years are completed will I visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place. 11 For surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. 12 Then when you call upon me and come and pray to me, I will hear you. 13 When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart, 14 I will let you find me, says the Lord, and I will restore your fortunes and gather you from all the nations and all the places where I have driven you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back to the place from which I sent you into exile.

[Text background: This portion of Jeremiah is addressing a group of people who have lost everything- family, friends, shelter, religion, etc. They are traumatized and in need of hope and reassurance. They are looking for an answer to the question, "How can you carry on when you are faced with trauma and devastation? Jeremiah is a book of conflict, war, and devastation. It's also a story about hope and the power of God.]

- These verses are well known verses in Jeremiah. When have you heard them before? what kind of meaning do they hold for you?
- How does the text background shape your view of this passage?
- What are some things you hope for in the future?
- How do you see God fulfilling His plan for your life? Have you ever been redirected, and led to something better than you ever imagined?
- Do you find comfort and hope in knowing that God has a plan for you? Why?

Taking It Home (3 Minutes)

Mother Teresa (who always blows my mind with her wisdom, understanding, and strength) said this, "At this Christmas when Christ comes, will He find a warm heart? Mark the season of Advent by loving and serving the others with God's own love and concern."

- Make it a goal this week to live with a mindset full of hope and keep your eyes open to those who may need to be asked the question, "how are you?" Advent can be hard for some, but we can make it easier for each other.

Prayer (5 minutes)

Share any prayer concerns you may have with the group and then pray this prayer together:

Loving God, we await your coming,

We wait filled with hope,
Knowing your light will shine in the darkness.
We wait anticipating your peace,
Believing that one day it will fill our world.
We wait embracing your love,
May we reach out to share it with our neighbours.
Amen.