

Gran-Park-Rollag Parish and Living Grace Lutheran Church
In ministry partnership since 2017

Gran-Park-Rollag Parish

*3 Churches – 1 Ministry: Energized by God
To celebrate, share & show God's love*
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Living Grace Lutheran Church

*A worshipping community of the ELCA focused on
making known God's love and grace by:
Welcoming Everyone, Sharing Jesus' story,
Growing in faith and Serving beyond ourselves.*
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Worships at The Garrick Theater,
509 Front Street, Hawley, MN 56549

Sunday, July 26, 2020 - Virtual Holy Communion Worship Service
Led by Pr. Hope Deutscher, Pr. Jim Greene, and Andrea Keene
Music Provided by: Pam Aakre, Piano; Kara Brager, Piano;
Greta Brager, Guitar & Voice; and Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute

Welcome/Announcements

- *CONNECT WITH US: We have a variety of ways we are connecting with people –
 - *We have Bible Studies and Book Studies on Zoom. Check out our Facebook page and Newsletter for details.**
- *Be a subscriber to the YouTube channel – Rollag Lutheran Church – when you do, you become one of the first people to know when a worship service is available for you to watch and it also helps boost our visibility with others who may be looking for a service to watch!*
- *Welcome to Living Grace by Pastor Hope Deutscher. Today's worship service is from Living Grace's worshipping space in the Garrick Theater in Hawley, MN.*
- *We have a "Smart Team" who met for the first time this past week. Leaders from the four congregations will be tasked with working through the state and synod's guidance and questions to be asked and answered prior to indoor worship. We will meet again in August. In the meantime, we will hold an outdoor worship service on August 16th. When the time is right, and we can safely and in healthy ways transition into indoor worship, we will do so.*
- *A word about our service today:
 - *You can follow along – bulletins are available on our websites!*
 - *Thanks to the children for being a part of the worship service. Andrea will have a children's sermon in a few minutes.*
 - *Today, we again invite you to participate in Virtual Communion.*
 - *A big thank-you to Pam Aakre, Pastor Hope and Kara and Greta Brager for providing the music today.**

Receiving of Offering (SLIDE)

Thank you for remembering the importance of continuing to Tithe your financial gifts. You can mail your offering to your church or give through Tithe.ly online (mobile and online option) or by mail. Visit livinggracehawley.org or gprparish.org for specific information.

Jesus said, The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

Let us offer our gifts this day, for the kingdom of heaven is near.

Song – Lord, Prepare Me to be a Sanctuary

Greta Brager, Voice; Kara Brager, Piano

CHORUS: *Lord, prepare me to be a sanctuary, pure and holy, tried and true
With thanksgiving, I'll be a living Sanctuary for You*

Verse 1: *It is you, Lord Who came to save The heart and soul of every man
It is you Lord who knows my weakness who gives me strength,
With thine own hand. CHORUS*

Verse 2: *Lead Me on Lord From temptation, purify me from within
Fill my heart with Your Holy Spirit, take away all my sin. CHORUS*

Children's Message

Andrea Keene, GPR Youth Director

Confession and Forgiveness

Gracious God, you come to give us wisdom and we chose to go our own way. Jesus came to give us the kingdom, describing it in ways which are visible and easy to see, and we turned away. The Holy Spirit prays for us and yet we fight against each other. Hear us now as we take a moment to confess our thoughts, words, and actions which harm us and each other.

Time of Silence for Private Confession

We confess to God and to each other how we have acted as though we're all alone on this journey-forgetting to help and care for each other. We confess how we ignore opportunities to be generous, helpful, and kind. We confess the times we needed to be right and we put down those who don't see things our way. We confess we've not been a helpful partner to God, to ourselves, and to others.

Forgive us we pray, gracious God.

Hear these words of forgiveness:

We are created in the image of God, and are loved by God. It is never God's desire that any of us suffer from greed, lust, aggression, or any thought, word, or action which causes pain and division. Forgiveness from God isn't to feel better, forgiveness is to help us be guided by Jesus to do what is helpful, kind and necessary for all.

People of God, receive God's full pardon and live fully in God's love.

Scripture: 1 Kings 3:5-12

⁵At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I should give you." ⁶And Solomon said, "You have shown great and steadfast love to your servant my father David, because he walked before you in faithfulness, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart toward you; and you have kept for him this great and steadfast love, and have given him a son to sit on his throne today. ⁷And now, O LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David, although I am only a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. ⁸And your servant is in the midst of the people whom you have chosen, a great people, so numerous they cannot be numbered or counted. ⁹Give your servant therefore an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil; for who can govern this your great people?"

¹⁰It pleased the Lord that Solomon had asked this. ¹¹God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches, or for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, ¹²I now do according to your word. Indeed I give

you a wise and discerning mind; no one like you has been before you and no one like you shall arise after you.”

Message

Pr. Jim Greene

Grace and peace to you all in the name of Jesus who died to set us free. Amen.

One of the most helpful questions I would ask as a Chaplain in the hospital was “How are you sleeping?” If I’d ask, “How are you doing?” people would often say . . . fine” whether they felt that way or not. Sleep is important on many levels. In the reading from 1 Kings, sleep was important as it gave Solomon a place to talk with God. (Ever thought about sleep like that?)

Solomon was struggling- he saw clearly the enormity of the job ahead of him and knew he needed help. Solomon’s father David had been a great warrior- Solomon was a book learner; David had expanded the kingdom- Solomon was just a young man who didn’t know exactly what to do. David was dead and Solomon was very much alive & all eyes were on him and he knew he needed really big help for him to be a good and faithful King.

What Solomon did was something most of us have either heard of and/or done ourselves- when faced with a big problem/decision: “Sleep on it!” The official term in the ancient times was to “incubate”, which meant you went to a holy place which was also probably on a high place- closer to God- and pray/be open to God. Where do we go to get closer to God? Special place in house, nature? I love going for a drive- helps me open up to God.

Solomon was open to God and God didn’t disappoint. God said simply: “Ask what I should give you?” We don’t know if Solomon even asked God a question, but we hear Solomons answer. Solomon started by giving thanks for his father; acknowledged how little he knew; reminded God how big the job he had before him; and then asked for an understanding mind which is actually an understanding heart. Solomon wanted to be able to connect with the people he was to lead in thoughtful, helpful, and necessary ways.

While we aren’t kings and queens we are all people called to help others and ourselves in thoughtful, helpful, and necessary ways. We are called by God to have an understanding mind and heart. We don’t have to anything amazing to get this wisdom. All we have to do is “sleep on it”. Getting enough good sleep helps us: be focused; to listen better, AND we’re better able to ask for help and to listen for God’s guidance. Sleep is an every day invitation to step back and let God lead. Let us practice: any time during the day- ask God questions for which you want answers- and before going to sleep, ask again. Practice asking and listening. God doesn’t disappoint.

Hymn of the Month: *His Name is Wonderful*

Pam Aakre, Piano

*His name is Won-der-ful, his name is Won-der-ful, his name is won-der-ful,
Je-sus, my Lord; he is the might-y King, Mas-ter of ev-ery-thing,
His name is Won-der-ful, Je-sus my Lord. He’s the great Shep-herd, the
Rock of all a-ges, Al-might-y God is he; bow down be-fore him,
Love and a-dore him, his name is Won-der-ful, Je-sus my Lord.*

Scripture: Matthew 13:31-33, 44-45

³¹[Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field;³²it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.”

³³He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and

mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened.”

⁴⁴“The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then in his joy he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.

⁴⁵“Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls; ⁴⁶on finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had and bought it.

Message - “Many Parables, One Kingdom”

Pr. Hope Deutscher

The past 4 months yeast has become a hot commodity. I don’t know about you – but I probably took it for granted before this spring. I used it to bake bread. But have you really ever paid attention to what yeast looks like? It’s this small.

(SHOW PICTURE)

The leavening agent – which causes the dough to expand or rise as gas forms pockets or bubbles. When the dough is baked, the yeast dies and the air pockets “set”, giving the baked product a soft and spongy texture - was obviously known in Jesus’ time. Although by the 1800s Fleischmann’s had created a product that had a longer shelf life and rose twice as fast.

Have you ever planted a mustard seed? Yea, me either...but I have gone to the Mustard Museum in Madison, Wisconsin. I saw all the hundreds of varieties of mustard over the years, a mustard vending machine. And while we had some good laughs – we also learned that there is more to mustard than the occasional pulling it out of the fridge to put on a hotdog or sandwich.

Did you know it has healing properties that have been recognized for centuries? It has properties that the Ancient Greeks said would bring relief to sore muscles, stimulate the heart, respiratory system and digestion. Some people even believed in taking mustard baths to It was invaluable to those in the ancient world who could not afford a doctor’s visit. This little seed can do so much.

As I think about the yeast and mustard seed – both small in size but powerful in what they can accomplish and people have used them in many helpful and imaginative ways. And as I am in awe of how we can imagine what the Kingdom of God could be.

This morning we hear 4 parables as Jesus continues to describe the **kingdom of God...**

- ***The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field.*** The church can be a place that, even though it may be relatively small and insignificant in its own setting, has grace and love large enough to welcome, feed, and house others, both physically and spiritually. Our church has expanded in ways we couldn’t imagine the past 4 months as we worshipped online!

- ***The kingdom of heaven is like yeast*** that helps dough rise...doubling in size...to become a beautiful loaf of bread that can be shared and eat by all. We come to the altar table and receive the bread of life. It sustains us...gives us life and promise to serve others.

- ***⁴⁴The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hidden in a field...***you find a great treasure and in joy you go and sell everything to buy that field! I always say a buried treasure is no good until you find it or dig it up. But imagine the joy and curiosity that comes with what that treasure is!

- ***the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls...***pearls are valuable – mostly because of their quality but also, I think because of who they belong to or belonged to...a pearl necklace comes with memories of who has held them or how they were acquired. The pearls remind us of the value of the kingdom of God...and all that it embodies in our lives...and in the mix of all things of this world and in heaven.

Kingdom of heaven...what is that? The kingdom is not gained by intention and strategy – it is sheer

gift. Matthew uses this customary kingdom of heaven language, not the kingdom of God, which was more familiar to people. The term kingdom of heaven in this context does not simply denote God's sovereignty, God's rule in creation and history. The term refers to the salvation promised to the faithful of Israel and the church...a realm that one enters. Therefore, the one who discovers it has joy and commits himself or herself to it. (Arland Hultgren, Parables Commentary; page 413.)

Jesus wants to stimulate the imagination. Our life with God is better than the most breath-taking thing we can imagine. We plant tiny seeds, we search the fields for it, we scour the marketplace and when we find the divine presence, nothing else can compare. It seems that the searchers in these brief parables were not quite expecting what they found. They didn't know their seeds would grow so well, they stumbled across the treasure while working in the field, while looking for find pearls they find one so incomparable. They were searching and working, but found more than their imagination.
(http://bloomingcactus.typepad.com/bloomingcactus/2005/11/matthew_133152_.html#sthash.sYv30E14.dpuf)

What would you compare the kingdom of heaven to? Maybe you don't need to imagine another image...maybe one of these images in the parables given to us, speaks to you.

The parable that resonates with me is the one about that small mustard seed. There are days when I feel like my faith is that small...and then I am suddenly reminded by some big event that ye, of little faith – God is great. I wonder “Am I praying for the right things? Am I looking for God? Will I even know how to recognize the divine when I see it? Will I lose my faith or will just as I could easily drop and lose a small mustard seed? Will I tend my faith enough, just like you weed a garden, so that it can flourish and grow?”

The kingdom of God is growing...the kingdom of God is a joyful discovery for Christians...the kingdom of God affirms and illumines God's activities – today and in the future. May we be as curious and creative in using yeast and mustard seeds, pearls and treasures to grow in our faith! Amen.

And now – may we be fed with the bread of life...as we join together in Virtual Holy Communion...

Virtual Communion

In the night in which he was betrayed,
our Lord Jesus took bread, and gave thanks;
broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.
Do this in the remembrance of me.

Again, after supper, he took the cup, gave thanks,
and gave it for all to drink, saying:
This cup is the new covenant in my blood,
shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin.
Do this in the remembrance of me.

Communion

The body of Christ, given for you.
The blood of Christ, shed for you.

Communion Blessing

May the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ strengthen you...as you are reminded that God loves you and despite the storms of our present life, we have a promise that is more than we could imagine.

Kingdom of God Litany – (Based on Matthew 13:31ff)

— © Katherine Hawker, on her *Outside the Box* website.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.

A mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.

Yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all was leavened.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.

Treasure hidden in a field, which someone found and hid; then joyfully sells all he has and buys the field.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.

A merchant in search of fine pearls; on finding one of great value, sells all of his possessions and buys the pearl.

The kingdom of God is here, and coming.

Let all who have ears, hear.

Let us pray... Almighty God, we come to you this day and are grateful for the creative ways we can think about our faith. May we not only grow in our faith but also find new ways to learn more about our faith.

We pray for your church all over the world, that we would be seed and yeast where life has grown barren and heavy. May the life we discover in you bind us to each other and to the world you love, for no need is beyond the strength of your call, and no child of yours is expendable.

Merciful God, give us wisdom and courage beyond our imagining.

We pray for friends and strangers in the grip of addiction. Make us able companions for each other, and bless us with hope that bears fruit. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for unsettled economies and those whose needs are overlooked in the choices of the powerful. May we, who know so much privilege, bear our responsibilities with open hearts and open hands. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

We pray for all who stand at the thresholds of life: for your children who are soon to be born and your children who are soon to go home. We give thanks for new faces to love, ideas to ponder, work to do—and we marvel at the sturdy friendships and persistent memories that sustain us when the way is hard. May each be a reminder of your love and your provision. Lord in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy One, keep calling us into the world—your world—as seed and yeast and treasure. Equip each of us for the challenges we will face until we learn to worship in the most unlikely places, for you are the source of our song and the well from which we pray, wherever we are planted. By the power of your Spirit, gathered this day, let us pray as Jesus taught us...

Lord's Prayer...

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread;
and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.**

Blessing:

Go—as seed and yeast, willing to grow and learn and see the larger purposes of God.
Go—as treasure seekers, pouring out your days in search of hidden grace. Amen.

**Hymn – *Be Thou My Vision* (ELW 793 / WOV 776)
Kara Brager, Piano and Pr. Hope Deutscher, Flute**

*Verse 1: Be thou my vi-sion, O Lord of my heart;
Naught be all else to me, save that thou art:
thou my best thought both by day and by night,
wak-ing or sleep-ing, thy pres-ence my light.*

*Verse 2: Be thou my wis-dom, and thou my true word;
I ev-er with thee and thou with me, Lord.
Thou my soul's shel-ter, and thou my high tow'r.
Raise thou me heav'n-ward, O Pow'r of my pow'r.*

*Verse 3: Rich-es I heed not, nor vain, emp-ty praise,
Thou mine in-her-i-tance, now and al-ways;
Thou and thou on-ly, the first in my heart,
Great God of heav-en, my trea-sure thou art.*

*Verse 4: Light of my soul, af-ter vic-to-ry won,
May I reach heav-en's joys, O heav-en's Sun!
Heart of my own heart, what-ev-er be-fall,
Still be my vi-sion, O Rul-er of all.*