



Twenty-second Sunday after Pentecost, Nov. 9, 2025

St. Luke's Episcopal Church, Coeur d'Alene

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Haggai 1:15b-2:9 Psalm 98 2 Thessalonians 2:1-5, 13-17 Luke 20:27-38

Sing to the Lord, a new song, for he has done marvelous things...Shout with joy to the Lord, all you lands; lift up your voice, rejoice, and sing. Alleluia!

Good morning. The predominant message in today's scriptures for me is one of hope. These scriptures encourage us to hope, trust, believe, and proclaim. Which is exactly what today's Psalm invites us to do. Sing to the Lord a new song!

As Deacon Glenda reflected on Hope in her presentation at our Advent retreat, she offered: Hope is a feeling you have in the moment for something you want to be reality in the future. We can't hope for what has already happened. Hope is referenced numerous times throughout the bible and is frequently spoken about when times might be difficult. Often our hopes become our prayers.

Let's dig into our scriptures and God's promise of hope.

The book of Haggai is about the second temple period, after the Israelites have returned from exile from Babylon with the blessing of King Darius of Persia. In the first chapter, the Lord chastised the people for not working on the house of the Lord and instead living in lavish.

In today's passage, the date in 520 BCE corresponds to our month of October. It is when the people would have been celebrating the feast of booths, also known as Sukkot or the Feast of Tabernacles, a week-long Jewish harvest festival that commemorates God's protection of the Israelites during their 40 years in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt.

As they repatriated to their homeland of Judah, their hope was to be able to return to the ways things were prior to the exile and before the temple of Solomon was destroyed. Instead, they find that their new situation is not living up to their dreams. Using supplies provided by King Darius, they began to rebuild the temple and became disheartened. This new temple they were building is nothing like the one of Solomon, and in fact in the book of Nehemia, it was ridiculed as being so unstable local wildlife could knock it over (Nehemia 4:3).

To these disheartened and disenchanted people, God spoke with a message of hope through Haggai:

One of the commentators I explored for today's scriptures, Wil Gafney, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible at Brite Divinity School noted that God was offering a vision of what is to come. He summarized: "How many of you remember the good old days? Does this new temple hold a candle to the previous one? Buck up, Z! Hold your head up, Josh! Everyone, keep working! You have nothing to fear; I am here, and I am with you all. And it won't always be like this. I will bring resources—treasure—from faraway lands, and in its final form, this holy house will be even better than the one Solomon built!"

When we look to the central story of the Old Testament, it is that God has been with his people throughout its entire history and continues to be so as we move through the New Testament, and even to today. And in the

days to come, God's presence will be marked not by mere **prosperity** as it is translated in the New Revised Standard Version, but by **shalom**—peace, well-being, security, wholeness, and restoration. A definite story of hope.

Our Thessalonians scriptures are a bit apocalyptic about when or how the world ends. We aren't completely sure that Paul wrote the second book of Thessalonians. However, the message here is one of hope. Don't be deceived by anyone. Certain things must happen before the end. We don't know when or how that will be, but we do know who wins in the end.

This author, most likely someone associated with Paul is offering reassurance that Christian hope is secure; we know in whose hands we are held—namely, those of the Lord Jesus Christ.

In our Luke scriptures, the Sadducees are taunting Jesus about a resurrected life. These elite Jerusalem gentry who ran the temple did not believe in resurrection and are trying to force Jesus to expose how ludicrous the idea of resurrection is. The Sadducees faith was based solely on what was in the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew bible, denying resurrection because they claimed it was not taught in those books.

When I read some of these outlandish questions posed to Jesus by the Sadducees and Pharisees throughout the gospels, it reminds me of scenes from Monty Python's *The Holy Grail*.

The soldiers chase the knights in what seems like a mad horserace. The reality is that the soldiers are clacking coconuts to give the illusion that a big chase is on. It's the same with these questions. The illusion is a desire to learn. The reality is they keep following Jesus around asking these peculiar questions in an attempt to stump and discredit Jesus.

Jesus debunks this question posed in today's gospel quickly. In his rebuke, Jesus demonstrates how it is, in fact, ludicrous to try to understand the resurrection in terms of this life. Human relations in marriage do not exist in the same way beyond death.

Jesus distinguishes two ages and kinds of existence. We are a part of this age simply by being born. Those who are considered worthy of a place in the next age get there by resurrection. He then sites the words of Moses from the Hebrew scriptures speaking about the God of Abraham, God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. And how God is the God of the living, not the dead.

We see this again in the story of Jesus' transfiguration earlier in Luke, when he appears with both Elijah and Moses. Again, these great prophets are not dead, but very much alive.

Jesus gives us great hope with this passage, removing the threat of death, and with it, the realities that signal death is close by: suffering, lack, fear, not having or being enough. We need a new language, a new imagination to grasp the meaning of resurrection.

In thinking about this and trying to come up with some examples of what this means, I was reflecting on the transformation or metamorphoses we have each experienced in our lives with so many things. Think about how our personal communication has changed from the late 1800s to now. First there was the advent of the telephone, then operated assisted calls, to each family or business having a phone to self-dial who we wanted to

reach, to now each of us carrying our phones with us almost always and using video to see who we are speaking with. Certainly, our kids can't imagine a time when personal phones didn't exist.

Or our current over-information age with just about anything we can think of accessible immediately vs. the encyclopedias we used to research topics when I went to school. And now the advent of artificial intelligence. These examples barely touch on what this new imagination might be to fully grasp the meaning of resurrection.

What Jesus offers us is a collective hope, with this glimpse into resurrection. We can see, even if it is dimly, a community where all are welcomed, and the value of every being is embraced. Another commentator I explored, Kendra Mohn, Lead Pastor at Trinity Lutheran in Fort Worth Texas summarized: "We are invited to imagine what it is like to live without the fear of death so that we can approach our lives now differently. If all of this is true, if through Jesus we are all children of the resurrection, then how does that free us? How do we spend our time? Our money? Our energy?" Resurrection life is here, right now!

And now we are invited to proclaim this hope that Jesus gives us. Our new diocesan theme for this year comes from a neighboring Psalm, number 96, verse 1: Sing to the Lord a new song, sing to the Lord, all the earth! Our psalm today continues this theme: Sing to the Lord a new song, for he has done marvelous things.

In this month's Diocesan News and Notes, Bishop Gretchen offers these thoughts on this call to sing to the Lord. She writes; this theme invites us to listen deeply for what God is doing among us. To 'sing a new song' means to let our hearts be tuned once again to God's rhythm – to praise, mercy, and justice – rather than the dissonant noise of fear, division, and despair that so often fills the world around us.

It is a call to devotion, transformation, and action, to lives that harmonize with God's ongoing melody of love. We sing as individuals, and we sing especially as choirs, bringing our unique voices together in a community of song where every person is needed for the harmony we sing.

We do not ignore the songs we have sung before. Our familiar hymns, our traditions, and our shared stories remain precious threads in the fabric of faith. We also know that God's Spirit is always composing — adding new verses to the ancient refrain. Singing a new song means joining God in that creative work, letting the Spirit breathe new life into our worship, our community, and our witness.

We are now singing Mary's song of gratitude and joy with our stewardship drive, as we invite you to share your time, treasure, talent and joy with St. Luke's in the coming year. God's love is immense, and we give out of our gratitude and join Mary as we sing, "Tell out my soul, the greatness of the Lord."

So, let us all sing to the Lord a new song! The music of God's love to proclaim our hope in resurrection, a melody to enliven our faith, and a song of praise to empower us to love our neighbors and to strive for mercy, justice and peace. Alleluia!

Resources:

- Working Preacher, including essays from Kendra A. Mohn, Lead Pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church, Fort Worth, Texas; Wil Gafney, Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible, Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, Texas; and Nijay Gupta, Julius R. Mantey Professor of New Testament, Northern Seminary, Lisle, Illinois.
- Diocesan News & Notes, November 2025
- The New Oxford Annotated Bible, New Revised Standard Version