



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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### Tenth Sunday after Pentecost

August 9, 2020

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

Elijah finds the presence of God not in earthquake, wind, or fire, but in the sound of sheer silence. When the disciples face a great storm on the sea, they cry out with fear. Jesus says: "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid." Amid the storms of life, we gather to seek the calm presence of Christ that soothes our fears. In comforting words of scripture and in the refreshing bread and cup of the eucharist, God grants us peace and sends us forth to be a sign of God's presence to others.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping on-line with us today! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

## GATHERING

### ANNOUNCEMENTS

#### THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

We gather together while we are apart, in the midst of life's stormy weathers, in the name of God Sovereign, Saviour, and Spirit.

**Amen.**

We give God thanks for the gift of these baptismal waters. We give thanks for the gift of something so volatile, yet so calming; so unbridled, yet so graceful; so dangerous, yet so life-giving. For such is the life of dichotomies with God, one that is broken but healed, unsure but faithful, distraught but full of peace. May this gift remind us of who holds the future, who brings comfort and peace, and how God is present in our lives both in the still and quiet as well as in the loud and frightening.

So I ask all of you to dip a finger in the water you have, and mark yourself, your foreheads with the sign of the cross or mark those with you in your homes... and feel the coolness of the water reacting with the warmth of your skin. Feel the clear, cleansing water roll on your face. Feel this physical manifestation of God's love on you, covering you, in and around you as we continue to navigate life and community with God and each other.

Baptism doesn't make life easier, but it does help to give life more meaning, as we are joined together through the waters, we are refreshed together by it, and we are empowered and called together because of it.

Thus in our thanksgiving of baptism, we give all honour and glory to God, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with God and the Spirit, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING HYM:** God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind (#400)

#### GREETING

The healing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the calming love of God, and the empowering fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, you speak to us in a voice unexpected and come to us in ways we don't always recognize. We are never left alone in our fears and troubles for you are ever-present and all-powerful, and you call us to step out in faith and be near to you and your steadfast love and peace, through the one who comes to us through troubled waters, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: 1 Kings 19:9-18

A reading from 1 Kings.

*On Mount Horeb, where God had appeared to Moses with typical signs of God's presence—earthquake, wind, and fire—Elijah now experienced God in "sheer silence." God assured Elijah that he is not the only faithful believer. Seven thousand Israelites are still loyal. God instructed Elijah to anoint two men as kings and to anoint Elisha as his own successor.*

<sup>9</sup>At [Horeb, the mount of God,][Elijah] came to a cave, and spent the night there.

Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>10</sup>He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away."

<sup>11</sup>He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by." Now there was a great wind, so strong that it was splitting mountains and breaking rocks in pieces before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake; <sup>12</sup>and after the earthquake a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire; and after the fire a sound of sheer silence. <sup>13</sup>When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. Then there came a voice to him that said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" <sup>14</sup>He answered, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the Israelites have forsaken your covenant, thrown down your altars, and killed your prophets with the sword. I alone am left, and they are seeking my life, to take it away." <sup>15</sup>Then the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king over Aram. <sup>16</sup>Also you shall anoint Jehu son of Nimshi as king over Israel; and you shall anoint Elisha son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah as prophet in your place. <sup>17</sup>Whoever escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall kill; and whoever escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall kill. <sup>18</sup>Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him."

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM: Psalm 85:8-13

<sup>8</sup>I will listen to what the LORD God is saying;  
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.

<sup>9</sup>**Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,  
that your glory may dwell in our land.**

<sup>10</sup>Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;  
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

<sup>11</sup>**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,  
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

<sup>12</sup>The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,  
and our land will yield its increase.

<sup>13</sup>**Righteousness shall go before the LORD  
and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

## **SECOND READING: Romans 10:5-15**

A reading from Romans.

*A right relationship with God is not something we achieve by heroic efforts. It is a gift received in the proclamation whose content is Jesus Christ. This proclaimed word creates our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Hence Christian proclamation is an indispensable component of God's saving actions.*

<sup>5</sup>Moses writes concerning the righteousness that comes from the law, that "the person who does these things will live by them." <sup>6</sup>But the righteousness that comes from faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) <sup>7</sup>"or 'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). <sup>8</sup>But what does it say?

"The word is near you,  
on your lips and in your heart"

(that is, the word of faith that we proclaim); <sup>9</sup>because if you confess with your lips that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. <sup>10</sup>For one believes with the heart and so is justified, and one confesses with the mouth and so is saved.

<sup>11</sup>The scripture says, "No one who believes in him will be put to shame." <sup>12</sup>For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; the same Lord is Lord of all and is generous to all who call on him. <sup>13</sup>For, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

<sup>14</sup>But how are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim him? <sup>15</sup>And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!"

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)**

### **GOSPEL: Matthew 14:22-33**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Matthew's gospel typically portrays Jesus' disciples as people of "little faith," who fail despite their best intentions. In this story, Matthew shows how Jesus comes to the disciples when they are in trouble and sustains them in their time of fear and doubt.*

<sup>22</sup>[Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side [of the Sea of Galilee], while he dismissed the crowds. <sup>23</sup>And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, <sup>24</sup>but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. <sup>25</sup>And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. <sup>26</sup>But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. <sup>27</sup>But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

<sup>28</sup>Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." <sup>29</sup>He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. <sup>30</sup>But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" <sup>31</sup>Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" <sup>32</sup>When they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

<sup>33</sup>And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, “Truly you are the Son of God.”

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

God of our present trouble and promised triumph, open our eyes to see you in the midst of our struggles. Open our ears to hear your words of invitation and assurance. Open our minds to recall your wonderful works and miracles. Open our hearts to glory in your name and seek strength in your Word, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

So let's recap how 2020 has been going so far. On second thought, let's not, because seriously that would be just so depressing. This year has been so bad that the internet has been watching the skies for the impending alien attack as that would just make sense considering how things have been going.

And I know I've talked about this a few times already during this pandemic. I've already talked about how much this year has sucked so far. I've talked about it and have said that it'll get better. Well, so far I've been wrong. It hasn't gotten better yet, maybe a little about a month or so ago. But now, especially this past week, it seems like things have gotten worse.

COVID cases are up in BC. The bodycam video that recorded the events that led to George Floyd's death was released and it just deepened the divide between the right and the left. And of course if you get my emails, you'll know that there have been a few deaths connected to our congregation this past week as well. So yeah, this year has been getting worse, and many fear that the worst is yet to come.

So what's the deal? Why haven't things gotten better yet? Weren't we promised green pastures and still waters? Well it's been more like lava fields and lava rivers than anything else.

Many of the themes we got in the past number of weeks talked about this too. Rest, blessing, healing, welcome. But when the going gets tough, and let's be honest, the going has been pretty tough for a while now, but when the going gets tough it's like we just want to curl up and cower in a corner. We didn't see any rest and looking ahead it doesn't look like we'll be getting any. We don't feel blessed with the way things are right now. There hasn't really been any healing as it is almost like we're being eaten alive, bite by excruciating bite. And it doesn't really feel all that welcoming when we aren't even allowed to worship in the church building. So what gives? Things are going from bad to worse, and from worse to unbelievably awful.

The thing is, I don't think we were promised that we'd be without problems. We weren't promised a worry-free life. We weren't promised a euphoric utopia where the fields were filled with fried chicken and the rivers flow with gravy. But we were promised that we wouldn't be alone in our problems, in our worries, in our lack of fried chicken and gravy. We aren't alone. It might not feel like it or seem like it, but it is true.

Today's gospel lesson had a very familiar story, Jesus was tired from all the feeding from last week and had his disciples cross the Sea of Galilee in a rinky dinky boat while he took his well-deserved rest that was so rudely interrupted by a bunch of hungry strangers. Well, I guess they didn't check their weather apps because a storm came out of nowhere, catching them off

guard, and made them fear for their lives. The text tells us that it was night, so they were going blind. So just imagine the dark of night, having your boat tossed back and forth without being able to see where you're going or even where land is. Just the thought sends chills up my spine.

So the disciples were scared. They were tired. They were getting beat up on all sides from this storm, this storm that was so unexpected, one that they didn't ask for, a situation that just got worse and worse and worse. And the cherry on top of this numbing fear was a ghost showing up, maybe even glowing because I don't know how else they'd see it, walking towards them.

Can you imagine? Things were bad enough with being sent to the other side of the water like they were rejects. Then it got dark and a storm threatened their life. And now a ghost? Talk about your bad times.

But we know what happens. It wasn't a ghost. It was Jesus, walking on the water toward them. Telling them not to be afraid. Bringing with him reassurance and peace in knowing that they aren't rejected, alone, or forgotten. But what really gets me here is Peter's reaction. Good ol' Peter always acting before thinking, says what off the bat seems like the dumbest thing to say, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." What? You know if that what the grim reaper, he's going to say, "\*snicker\* yeah Peter, it's me, come walk out on the water to where I am, I'll save you." And when Peter does, he'd be like "LOL, made you think I was Jesus". So it doesn't seem smart at all.

But if you think about it, where else would you want to be in the middle of a storm? Some might say, "uh, on the boat?" or "maybe on land?", but not Peter. Peter wanted to be with Jesus. He didn't say, "Lord, if it's you, calm the waves and still the storm" or "Lord, if it's you, magically teleport us back on land" or "Lord, if it's you, can you make sure that 2020 never happens?" No, he doesn't ask for proof, he doesn't ask for a miracle, he doesn't ask for anything but to be close to Jesus, safe and secure from all alarms.

And we know that doesn't work out for Peter, as he doesn't make it to Jesus. Instead, he does what any of us would do if we tried an asinine stunt like that, he sank into the water. Mind you, he didn't sink because he didn't believe that he could do it, or didn't believe that Jesus could do it, or anything of the sort. He sank because that is what the scientific properties of water are. Unless it's frozen or you're wearing some kind of personal floatation device, you'll sink. Peter sank. Peter succumbed to the storm around him. His mass was drawn to the center of the earth because that is how gravity works. Peter was merely being human.

It is human to be afraid. It is human to be caught in storms. It is human to sink in our problems.

But Jesus picks us up.

Jesus weathered that storm and grabbed Peter and brought him back to safety. Jesus walked through their fear and anxiety and gathered the disciples in the boat. Jesus approached them, called them near, and saved them.

And I believe Jesus does that still. I believe that Jesus to this day walks through what ails us and calls us near. Jesus lifts us up when we feel like we're sinking and brings us back to safety.

Jesus calms the storms of our lives and reveals to us and reminds us that we are not alone, but surrounded by the community of saints, the hosts of heaven, and every iota of God's love.

So in spite of how the world is going now, I do believe that things will get better. It might not be soon, it probably won't be tomorrow, but I do have hope that we will see God revealed. It might not be in the way we want or expect. It might not be in the grandiose or majestic. It might not even be in the end of this pandemic. But it could be just in the still, silent, quiet whispers of life where we find joy, peace, and love, knowing that we are not alone but welcomed into the secure arms of our Saviour and brought into the safety of community where the Lord is the Lord of all.

Then we can have confidence even when we are afraid. We can feel secure in God's presence even when we think we're alone. We can rest assured knowing that even when we're sinking, Jesus' hand is reaching out to us ready to grab on and bring us back into the safety of that boat.

In this season after Pentecost, may we see and recognise Jesus walking in the midst of the storms of our lives, calling us close, picking us up, and bringing us into peace. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** When Peace like a River (#785)

#### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Called to live in faith and love, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "by your peace, O Lord," and you are all invited to respond, **hear our prayer**. By your peace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Lord our God, you offer your salvation to all and you call us to be near you and your glory. Open our eyes to your providence and blessing, that even through this time of pandemic we might find joy in your presence in our lives and community. By your peace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Lord our God, you have shown us your steadfast love and faithfulness, and have showed us how to live by your righteousness and peace. May we as your church set the example of faithful living, that our ministry to all be effective and life giving. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities, our partner Anglican Church of Canada, our bishop Greg, assistant to the bishop Kathy, and national bishop Susan, and our companion churches of the BC Synod. In particular we pray for St Paul's Lutheran Church in Maple Ridge and their pastor Roland Ziprick, and for Matsqui Lutheran Church in Matsqui and their interim pastor Art McCaughan. By your peace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Lord our God, you have made the earth with faithfulness and the heavens with righteousness and everything in between with love. Increase our care and respect for all that you have created, that we might all live together in harmony. By your peace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Lord our God, the prosperity you grant is not of this world, but a reward that is immeasurable by our standards. May the world's nations learn that quality of life is beyond material gain, and true peace is found beyond the thirst for power. We offer a special prayer for Solyana Amanuel, that she be able to enter our country swiftly and without complication. By your peace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Lord our God, you speak peace to us in our trouble and we turn our hearts to you. Be with all those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that we all remember your love and presence in and around our lives. We pray especially for Paul and family; Diana; Bev and family; Paula; Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Linda; Cindy; Chris; the family and friends of Fran; all those who have contracted or have been affected by COVID-19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your peace, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Lord our God, the pathway to you is prepared by not our righteousness, but by your own. May your gracious blessing be evident in our lives, that we be reminded of our connection to you and all the saints as we live, love, and serve together as the one body of Christ for all eternity.

By your peace, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your strength and power, shown to us through the ministry of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

## **MEAL**

### **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 190)**

#### **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

O Lord our God, we listen to you as you speak peace and faith and life as we turn our hearts to you. For your salvation is near to us, and your glory dwells in our land with steadfast love, faithfulness, righteousness, and peace. And you have sent to us Jesus, to show us your ways of faithfulness and righteousness and grace.

For on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, and he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it and said, "take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate, he took the cup, gave thanks, and shared that saying, "this cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this food before us that we see the Lord's prosperity and increase, even as we proclaim this mystery of our faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

Righteousness shall go before you, O Lord, and prepare for you a pathway into our lives, our hearts, and our communities, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into faith by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

**Our Father in heaven,  
hallowed be your name,  
your kingdom come,  
your will be done,  
on earth as in heaven.  
Give us today our daily bread.  
Forgive us our sins  
as we forgive those  
who sin against us.  
Save us from the time of trial  
and deliver us from evil.  
For the kingdom, the power,  
and the glory are yours,  
now and forever. Amen.**

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Let us together taste and see God's faithfulness, righteousness, and peace.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **COMMUNION**

#### **POST-COMMUNION PRAYER**

Generous God, we give thanks for your call for our lives to be near you, that our faith might increase and our generosity enlarged. May our joy in believing encourage others as we serve and support them in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May the steadfast love and faithfulness of God surround you,  
the peace of Christ enfold you,  
and the Holy Spirit encourage you,  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** My Life Flows On in Endless Song (#763)

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, trust in God's calling for you.

**Thanks be to God.**