



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Eleventh Sunday after Pentecost

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ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

In Isaiah we hear that God's house shall be a house of prayer for all people and that God will gather the outcasts of Israel. The Canaanite woman in today's gospel is a Gentile, an outsider, who is unflinching in her request that Jesus heal her daughter. As Jesus commends her bold faith, how might our church extend its mission to those on the margins of society? In our gathering around word and meal we receive strength to be signs of comfort, healing, and justice for those in need.

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 in the name of the one God, who gives us life and calls us into being.

Amen.

We give thanks for this gift of baptism, around whose waters we gather, by whose water we feel its refreshing coolness, and with whose water we mark ourselves or each other with the sign of the cross. For it is in these waters that we are connected, we are made clean, and we are drawn together by the love of God, thus we can worship, pray, and serve alongside one another as one body. In God, we are all welcome. In God, we are all equal. In God, we are all loved, as shown to us through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Amen.

GATHERING HYM: One Bread, One Body (#496)

GREETING

The welcoming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the inclusive love of God, and the unifying fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, your compassion embraces us all as you gather the outcast and the lost, healing all our wounds of fear and distrust, and making us a community of reconciliation that we might embody your merciful love and rejoice in your astounding grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 56:1, 6-8

A reading from Isaiah.

The prophet calls upon Israel to do justice in view of God's imminent intervention to save. Righteousness and obedience define who belongs to the Israelite community—not race, nationality, or any other category.

¹Thus says the LORD:

Maintain justice, and do what is right,
for soon my salvation will come,
and my deliverance be revealed.

⁶And the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD,
to minister to him, to love the name of the LORD,
and to be his servants,
all who keep the sabbath, and do not profane it,
and hold fast my covenant—

⁷these I will bring to my holy mountain,
and make them joyful in my house of prayer;
their burnt offerings and their sacrifices
will be accepted on my altar;

for my house shall be called a house of prayer
for all peoples.

⁸Thus says the Lord GOD,
who gathers the outcasts of Israel,
I will gather others to them
besides those already gathered.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 67

¹May God be merciful to us and bless us;
may the light of God's face shine upon us.

²**Let your way be known upon earth,
your saving health among all nations.**

³Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

⁴**Let the nations be glad and sing for joy,
for you judge the peoples with equity and guide all the nations on earth.**

⁵Let the peoples praise you, O God;
let all the peoples praise you.

⁶**The earth has brought forth its increase;
God, our own God, has blessed us.**

⁷May God give us blessing,
and may all the ends of the earth stand in awe.

SECOND READING: Romans 11:1-2a, 29-32

A reading from Romans.

God has not rejected Israel. Rather, the call and gifts of God are irrevocable so that, while all have been disobedient, God has mercy upon all.

[Paul writes:] ¹I ask, then, has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin. ^{2a}God has not rejected his people whom he foreknew.

²⁹For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. ³⁰Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now received mercy because of their disobedience, ³¹so they have now been disobedient in order that, by the mercy shown to you, they too may now receive mercy. ³²For God has imprisoned all in disobedience so that he may be merciful to all.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Matthew 15:10-28

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus teaches his disciples that true purity is a matter of the heart rather than outward religious observances. Almost immediately, this teaching is tested when a woman considered to be a religious outsider approaches him for help.

¹⁰[Jesus] called the crowd to him and said to them, "Listen and understand: ¹¹it is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but it is what comes out of the mouth that defiles." ¹²Then the disciples approached and said to him, "Do you know that the Pharisees took offense when they heard what you said?" ¹³He answered, "Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. ¹⁴Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if one blind person guides another, both will fall into a pit." ¹⁵But Peter said to him, "Explain this parable to us." ¹⁶Then he said, "Are you also still without understanding? ¹⁷Do you not see that whatever goes into the mouth enters the stomach, and goes out into the sewer? ¹⁸But what comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this is what defiles. ¹⁹For out of the heart come evil intentions, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. ²⁰These are what defile a person, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile."

²¹Jesus left that place and went away to the district of Tyre and Sidon. ²²Just then a Canaanite woman from that region came out and started shouting, "Have mercy on me, Lord, Son of David; my daughter is tormented by a demon." ²³But he did not answer her at all. And his disciples came and urged him, saying, "Send her away, for she keeps shouting after us." ²⁴He answered, "I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." ²⁵But she came and knelt before him, saying, "Lord, help me." ²⁶He answered, "It is not fair to take the children's food and throw it to the dogs." ²⁷She said, "Yes, Lord, yet even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from their masters' table." ²⁸Then Jesus answered her, "Woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish." And her daughter was healed instantly.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O Lord, by the power of your Spirit give us your words of life, that our faith may increase and our hearts made whole, through the love shown to all people by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

I'm not going to sugar coat this, but what on earth is going on with this gospel text? Why is Jesus acting so standoffish, so privileged elite, so... racist against the Canaanite woman? I know, calling Jesus a racist is probably the most sacrilegious thing anyone, let alone a pastor, could do especially in times like these, but the words recorded coming out of his mouth here make it really hard to think otherwise. I mean, he ignores her cries for help, dismisses her plight, and then calls her a dog. And calling someone a dog in those days wasn't as endearing as it is now, calling someone a dog back then was an insult of the highest degree.

Jesus insulted this woman.

In her time of need, he kicked her down. In her time of pain, he shut her out. In her time of trust and faith, he disappointed her. Disappointed all of us, really.

And I've read people trying to explain away Jesus' attitude here. They say he's just reiterating what is on everyone else's mind, but not his own. Or he's testing the woman to see how she handles the situation. Or perhaps the least plausible to me, he is testing his disciples to see if they can point out the error in his words.

I don't buy any of those. They just don't seem to be in Jesus' character. But then, neither does this. So I've just conceded to not try to figure out what is going on in Jesus' head here, but rather, just look at what happened.

Jesus starts off talking about the heart being more important than custom and ritual, offending the Pharisees in the process. And Jesus, in a "matter of fact" kind of way, just says that they're like the blind leading the blind. Which, in my opinion is kind of offensive to blind people, so it looks like Jesus is on a bit of a roll here with his non-politically correct words. But then this Canaanite woman walks up to them, which makes sense as they're currently in Canaanite territory, and asks for healing for her daughter. Not a strange request, most parents want their children to be well. But Jesus says nothing, completely ignores her. The disciples try to shoo her away and Jesus' response was only that he's responsible for the Jewish nation, which of course the Canaanite woman isn't part of. But she persists and that is where Jesus drops the hammer and says that it won't be fair for him to take food from the children to throw to the dogs.

Ugh, makes me cringe every time. And I think this time around, in this day and age, in light of all that has been happening in the last few months, well, this just hits differently now.

And regardless of why Jesus said what he said, he is pointing out the systemic racism that existed even back in those days. This unfair treatment toward an outsider that someone of Jesus' time and culture had accepted to be just normal is systemic racism. The fact that this woman had to get on her knees, call out the name of King David, an oppressor of her culture, just to be turned away and ignored because she isn't seen as worthy is systemic racism. The fact that Jesus could openly call this woman, who by the way has done nothing wrong as far as we're concerned except for being a loving mother, such a derogatory term as "dog" and no one bats an eye, is systemic racism.

See, systemic racism is the racism is that is so built into our culture, into our paradigms and worldviews, into the very fabric of how we do things that we often fail to see how our actions have served to oppress people of other cultures, other faiths, and other genders than our own. And it seems like Jesus is part of it as well, with how he treats this woman. But we don't like seeing Jesus as racist, because we know racism is bad. So then, I ask, why is it that we as a society don't seem to mind when *we're* seen as racist?

I mentioned last week that the body cam video that recorded the events that led to George Floyd's death was released, and the internet went crazy. If you haven't seen it, it basically shows how the police officers calmly tried to arrest George Floyd, who was clearly impaired probably on the drugs they found in his system in his autopsy. Those who are against the Black Lives Matter movement have said that this video shows clearly how George Floyd died of an overdose and not at the hands of the police, and so they are completely blameless and the media has spun it out of control. But do you know what that argument and rationale is? You might have guessed it: systemic racism.

This idea that a black man who had to turn to drugs for various reasons, a man who has led a difficult and crime-riddled past, a man who isn't at all the model of decency and morality *deserved* to die at the hand of the authorities is a product of systemic racism. The very thought that the people who are just fed up with how unfairly they and their ancestors have been

treated for centuries and finally triggered to riot by this man's death are acting unjustly for knocking over statues of oppression is a result of systemic racism. And thinking that this Canaanite woman's daughter didn't deserve Jesus' healing or compassion is what systemic racism does to us all. It teaches us that there are classes of human. It teaches us that we can be judged because of the colour of our skin or the culture in which we were raised. It teaches us that it is ok for us to openly yell to the "foreigner" to "go back where they came from" even when... I was literally born in Vancouver and still am here, where I came from.

You know, the offended Pharisees in this passage were probably thinking all those things about Jesus as well. So much so that they did actually have him killed, and turned around and blamed it on his own actions and his insurrection.

So in this light I see that Jesus is just speaking out the injustices of the day and apparently our day, matter-of-factly. He speaks to the Jewish culture of the time and to our culture now that says anyone who doesn't look like us or didn't come from where we expect them to have come from is somehow of less value than we are. He speaks to the evils of inequality that aren't bound by time but are bound by sin, in thinking that the measure of one's worth is in their heritage, their upbringing, the colour of their skin, or anything other than the fact that we are all God's created and loved creatures.

And this woman, this foreigner in her own land, this outsider that by all definitions given to us by systemic racism has much less important or worthy than Jesus or his disciples, had enough. So she presses on with courage, with strength, and with faith. Faith in that God's grace and mercy are abundant. Faith that God's blessings are a gift to all, deserving or not. Faith that God's love is available to all people, regardless of which side of privilege they land on.

And she was right.

Jesus is impressed by her faith and resolve, and her daughter is healed instantly. Jesus honours her for rising above the oppression and racism and brings her to wholeness. Jesus blesses her for her belief in equality, not because she was asking for a special status or to be better than others or even for her enemies to be punished, but she only asks for the same love and mercy that has been offered to the privileged, knowing that she too is included in God's open and welcoming arms, and that God's abundance is enough for us all.

So in the light of systemic racism, this woman stood up and declared her God-given worth as a child of God. A child of God, mind you, that by all definitions of the time, wouldn't even have been seen as a child of God, but a mere dog. A child of God who didn't fit in, who wasn't born in the right place or of the right family, who shouldn't have been welcomed according to the customs of the time. A child of God who didn't deserve it or earn it, but still was destined to receive all of God's grace and mercy. A child of God who was dearly loved, cherished, and saved like all of God's children, regardless of ethnicity, gender, social class, or creed. A child of God, who in God's eyes looks and is regarded just like Jesus, a human being with feelings and emotions, dreams and aspirations, enemies and oppressors, who wants nothing but the best for the world but keeps getting dealt a bad hand.

We live in a difficult time. Not only is there this pandemic looming over us, but turmoil over what is fair, what is just, what is equal has been creeping up, threatening the privileged, oppressing the outcast, and forcing us all to rethink what it means to live as a child of God in

this day and age or at any time. And just as Jesus showed us with his naming of the injustices of his time, may we accurately and faithfully name the injustices of our time and in spite of it, act with grace and mercy and above all, the love that has been freely given to us by God in our communities through Jesus Christ by the power of the Spirit as we are reminded that we aren't by any means rejected by God, but that God's gifts and calling for us are irrevocable.

So in this time after Pentecost, may we see and feel the Spirit moving through us and through our hearts, teaching us how to live and how to love, that we might reflect God's kingdom of equality and community, now and always. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Healer of Our Every Ill (#612)

CREED

Welcomed into God's love with all people, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called to live in community and right relationship, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "welcoming God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Welcoming God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you are merciful and you bless us with the light of your face shining upon us. You teach us the ways of your community and kingdom, and may we live out these lessons of welcome and inclusiveness for the good of our diverse world. Welcoming God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you let your way be known to us all, saving us with your gospel of love and equality. May we serve all people in the light of your salvation, that all would know of your goodness and grace. 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 Hope Lutheran Church in Nanaimo and their pastor Terry Richardson; all the institutions of our church that help to care for the elderly; and a special prayer for our companion Synod, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Peru as they mourn the loss of their president, Rev. Adita Torres. For these and all bodies of worship, we lift up to you. Welcoming God, **hear our prayer.**

O God, may you be praised by all the peoples of the world, for you have made for us a planet full of wonder and beauty. Strengthen our stewardship of all that you have made, that this planet continue to bring forth its increase and be a reflection your providence and love. Welcoming God, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you judge the nations with equity and guide us to do the same. With gladness and joy, may we learn to live with each other in spite of difference, that all our lives be examples of your peace and welcome. We pray especially for Solyana Amanuel, that she might arrive in our country soon even in the midst of this pandemic. We also offer a special prayer for our brothers and sisters in Beirut, Lebanon who have suffered a great deal from the monstrous explosion a week and a half ago. May your peace reign in their country as they strive for healing and return to wholeness. Welcoming God, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you have continually blessed us with your saving health and wholeness. We pray for healing for those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love never be forgotten but relied on for life and community. We pray especially for Paula; Beulah; Bev and family; Diana; Paul and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Linda; Cindy; the family and friends of Fran; Chris; all who have contracted or been affected by COVID-19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... Welcoming God, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you give us blessing and we stand in awe of you for all time. Remind us of our eternal connection to you and all the saints, that we be reminded of the meaning in our lives and community and be able to spread your love to all whom we encounter. Welcoming God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your inclusive love shown to us through 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 God your mercy blesses us and the light of your face shines upon us, for your ways are known over the earth and your saving health has brought love, community, right relationship. So you are praised for all that you have done, the nations are glad and sing for joy for the equality

found in you, guiding us in our ministry and service and shown to us through the life and ministry of Jesus.

For on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it saying, "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 all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is by this food before us that we see how the earth has brought forth its increase and how God continues to bless us even in the midst of pandemic, as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

We stand in awe of you, O God, through your majesty and saving grace, and may you be praised forever 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 equal justice and blessing.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Holy God, we have again been fed by your goodness and grace, and empowered to love and serve all people by your grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ, who saved us from our own sinful selves. **Amen.**

SENDING**BLESSING**

May God be merciful on us and bless us, may the light of God's face shine upon us, and may God look upon us all with equity and justice, and give us peace.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Blest Be the Tie That Binds (#656)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, embody God's love and mercy.

Thanks be to God.