



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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### **Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**September 6, 2020**

### **ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten**

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

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 but apart in the name of our Lord, who offers us life; our God, who teaches us, leads us, and turns us to ways of life, love, and reconciliation.

**Amen.**

And in our gathering we give thanks for the gift of baptism, that reminds us of the forgiveness of sin through the grace of Christ and the mercy of God by the power of the Spirit. The gift of baptism reminds us of the cleansing and healing work of Jesus in our midst, that when two or more are gathered be it in person or online, he promises to be right there with us... leading us, guiding us, and showing us the way to peace and love, that we might learn to live with one another in true community and abundant blessing.

So if you will, dip a finger in the water you have before you and make a sign of the cross on your forehead or on the forehead of whomever you are with, and be reminded once again that you are God's beloved, you are reconciled to God, and forgiven and made clean with a loving grace that surpasses all understanding, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING HYM:** The Church's One Foundation (#654)

#### GREETING

The reconciling grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the forgiving love of God, and the joining fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**KYRIE** (p. 203)

**CANTICLE OF PRAISE** (p. 204)

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving God, from the beginning of time we have been turning away from you and choosing to lead lesser lives than the one offered to us in Christ. Yet you do not abandon us. You call out, reach your hand out to us, and are present in our going out and coming in and in our community, teaching us to forgive and reconcile as you forgive and reconcile, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

#### FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11

A reading from Ezekiel.

*God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.*

<sup>7</sup>So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM: Psalm 119:33-40**

- <sup>33</sup>Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes,  
and I shall keep it to the end.
- <sup>34</sup>**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;  
I shall keep it with all my heart.**
- <sup>35</sup>Lead me in the path of your commandments,  
for that is my desire.
- <sup>36</sup>**Incline my heart to your decrees  
and not to unjust gain.**
- <sup>37</sup>Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;  
give me life in your way.
- <sup>38</sup>**Fulfill your promise to your servant,  
which is for those who fear you.**
- <sup>39</sup>Turn away the reproach that I dread,  
because your judgments are good.
- <sup>40</sup>**Behold, I long for your commandments;  
by your righteousness enliven me.**

### **SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14**

A reading from Romans.

*The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we "put on the Lord Jesus Christ" and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.*

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and

licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (p. 205)

**GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

<sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

O God, may our hearts and minds be awakened by your Word. By your Spirit, give us understanding of community and the will to forgive, through your living Word, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

When I started writing this sermon, my wife and I were still in the decision making process of what to do with our kids' schooling in the midst of this pandemic that we are obviously still in. It was worrisome before summer started, when the cases were going down but we were still learning about the coronavirus, and it is worrisome now that we're into September already and the cases have actually gone up although we know a bit more about the coronavirus. The schools gave us different options that we can choose for our kids and each had their pros and cons, but none of them were really ideal, if there even is such a thing. It made the choice really hard.

We flopped back and forth, back and forth. We talked with other parents at our schools, at other schools, our friends with school aged kids, and even people living in different cities. We read about what happened in other communities and countries that have already opened schools. And we of course kept a close eye to how the pandemic progressed throughout the Lower Mainland, which is of course the hot spot for the coronavirus in BC.

Now, you might think, why not just save the stress and keep the kids home? Isn't that one of the options? Better be more safe than sorry, instead of worrying so much. Well, that is one of the options of course, actually it was 3.5 of the 4 options that we had. But why even think about taking them to school if we are so worried? Well, in a word: community. As much as we'd like our kids to see our church as their community, I think we all know the kid population of our congregation, so that makes it a bit hard for them. And we're lucky enough to have 3 kids, and so they do have each other to be their "group of friends," but as any of you with siblings would know, it just isn't the same when you're talking about your siblings.

We feel that school not only provides them with the knowledge and tools to learn skills and talents that will help in their contribution in the world, but that it also helps to teach them relational skills, how to make friends especially here in the Greater Vancouver Area that is notorious for being super unfriendly, and also to teach them the harsh realities that... well... people out there can be jerks. They can hurt you emotionally, mentally, and of course physically. They can bully you, just be mean to you, and harm you in ways that of course don't seem fair. And so school teaches them how to make friends, but also how to lose friends, and above all, I hope, how to make amends with these friends.

So this is why our decision is so hard. On the one hand, we can control every surface they touch, every molecule they breathe in, and every person they interact with by keeping them at home, or we can take them to school to face the veritable cesspool of germs and creepy crawlies. We can shelter them in safety, or we can let them explore the world. We can rob them of their friends and human interaction, or we can let them learn the ways of community and relationship. It wasn't an easy choice, and in the end we decided to take them back to school. Community is just that important.

And to live in community, one must learn to navigate it. One must learn to relate, interact, and empathize. One must learn to forgive. Because as important as community is, we all know that conflict will always rear its ugly head and get in the way. Friction will happen between any individuals who are able to communicate on any kind of level. Disagreement will happen among any two or more people who aren't the same exact person with the same exact thoughts and opinions. It is a part of life. It's a part of being human. It's a part of living in a community.

Lucky for us though, Jesus anticipated this and gave us clear instruction on how to resolve such conflict. Notice that I didn't say it was clear instruction on how to kick someone out of the church, or a method how to prove that you're right and they're wrong, or worse yet a means to publicly humiliate a member of our community. No, it is a way to reconcile with those whom we have friction, to understand the differing viewpoints of those who aren't us, to ultimately forgive and love in the midst of difference.

Don't get me wrong though, just because we have these guidelines doesn't mean that it'll be easy. But it does mean that it is important. Imperative, even. It is the foundation of our relationships and community. It is the very backbone of who we are as people, as children of God. Dare I say that it is the essence of Jesus' ministry among us, as he even declares right after this that he'll be among any of us gathered in his name. Imagine that. Jesus among us, in our relationships, in our communities, in our interactions with each other, teaching us how to live together in spite of difference in culture and belief, showing us how to love even when the

world is against us, and being an example of a forgiveness so strong, that even the strongest conflict, the kind that leads to the death of an innocent person, cannot overcome it.

And that really is a tough thing. About a week or so ago we saw such conflict arise again in the States, where a young man killed two protestors and injured a volunteer medic in the name of self defense. How can you resolve a conflict like that? Here on our side of the border we hear of activists knocking down a statue of John A. Macdonald, our first Prime Minister, and the creator of the residential schools that still mar our Canadian history to this day. How do we resolve conflict like that? Both these events were fuelled by centuries of racial injustice leading our North American countries to what seems to be a civil war. How do we resolve conflict like that?

Practically? I don't know. But essentially, I know it needs to be done out of love and forgiveness. It needs to be done with understanding and empathy. It needs to be done by civil conversation and discussion. It isn't easy, but Jesus is there with us, strengthening us, empowering us, showing us the way to resolve our differences without the worry of losing face or respect, with only community and right relationship as the goal.

So not only does Jesus give us this gift of conflict resolution, we are also of course given the gift of relationship and community. We are placed among the gift of friends and colleagues to journey with, to learn with, and to eventually reconcile with. We are presented with the gift of God's kingdom, full of love, peace, and forgiveness, in which we can see more clearly the promises of God, glean more fully the understanding of God, and feel more wholly the welcome of God among God's people.

And above all, we are promised that Christ is there... *here* with us, where two or more are gathered, virtually or in person. Not to scare us or creep us out, but to help us in our relationship, in our community, and to remind us of how to understand, how to forgive, and how to reconcile with each other for the sake of and in the name of love.

So in this season after Pentecost, as we teeter on the edge between opening up the world and maybe not so much, may we actively pursue our relationships and community, looking for ways to reconcile and be reconciled, that we might see the love and forgiveness freely given to us and empowering us to reflect that love and forgiveness back out into the world, through the ministry and teaching of Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Will You Let Me Be Your Servant (#659)

### **CREED**

With all those living in the reconciliation of Jesus, 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**

Led into community and right relationship, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “forgiving God,” and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Forgiving God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, teach us the way of your statutes that we might keep them all the days of our lives. Strengthen us in our understanding of your ways, which leads our lives into joy and peace. Forgiving God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, it is our desire to keep your teaching with all our hearts, and we might live in your truth and community. Continue to guide our congregations in service and peace, that our worship and ministry be pleasing to you. 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 Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Penticton and their pastor Curtis Aguirre (ah-GEAR-ay); Trinity Anglican + Lutheran Church in Port Alberni and their pastor Brenda Nestegaard Paul; and for the ministry of hospital chaplains across our Synod and beyond. Forgiving God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, lead us in the path of your commandments to love you and each other and all of creation, that we might learn to live in harmony with all living things and care for them in a way that is responsible and life-giving. We pray for the future of this planet, that it might be healed of all the harm of sin and greed. Forgiving God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, may our hearts be inclined to your decrees and not to unjust gain and our eyes turned from beholding falsehood. May the governments of the world truly seek wisdom in their leadership, that the nations might be prepared for what is to come. We also remember in prayer Solyana Amanuel, that her journey into our country and safety be swift even in the midst of this pandemic. Forgiving God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you fulfill your promises of justice and healing, and we look to you for strength in faith and body. But we remember in prayer those among us who are ill, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your face not be lost to them but continue to be a source of hope and peace. In particular, we pray for Bev and family; Beulah; Diana; Paula; Ron, Tess, and Mineko (min-EE-ko); Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Linda; Cindy; 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...  
Forgiving God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your righteousness enlivens us as you welcome us into eternal life with you and all the saints, forever a part of your story throughout the history of the world. May we find rest and confidence in this promise, that we all might know true peace and joy in your name. Forgive God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your promises and truth, taught to us by Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## MEAL

### PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

### MUSICAL OFFERING

### DIALOGUE

The Lord be with you.

**And also with you.**

Lift up your hearts.

**We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

**It is right to give our thanks and praise.**

### PREFACE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O Holy and Almighty God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who teaches us the ways of truth and reconciliation, joining us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth to praise your name with this unending hymn:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY** (p. 207)

### THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord, you teach us your truth and your ways that we might follow them always. You give us understanding and the ability to loose and bind both here and in heaven. Lead us on the path of your commandments, incline our hearts to your decrees, and turn our eyes from beholding falsehood, that we be able to fully embrace your love and believe in your Word, Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to us to be one of us, fulfilling your promises of love, grace, and forgiveness.

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."

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 we have before us that we see God's judgements as good and God's righteousness enlivening us, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

For these promises, for these loving acts, for your unending grace, O God, we give you thanks. We praise you for feeding us, nourishing us, and empowering us to serve, to minister, and to live in community together even when we are apart. For your presence is not bound by walls or distance, but only by our openness to your will and truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into community 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.**

### **COMMUNION HYMNS**

Lamb of God (p. 208)

### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Taste, see, the goodness and reconciliation of God.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **COMMUNION**

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

Holy God, you have fed us with your Word, nourished us with your love, and empowered us with your grace. Be with us throughout our time apart, that we might always see your face shining in the midst of distance and separation but always in loving community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## SENDING

### **BLESSING**

May the love of God pursue you, the grace of Christ overtake you, and the Holy Spirit flow through you and fill you and the whole church until all things in heaven and on earth are reconciled and living together in endless love and community.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** Rise, Shine, You People! (#665)

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, love one another.

**Thanks be to God.**

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