



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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### **Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**October 4, 2020**

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

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

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 are gathered in the name of Christ, the rejected stone who became the very foundation of our community and faith.

**Amen.**

In Christ we are given the gift of baptism...

and not just the mode of baptism and the water that comes with it, but all that it does and represents. For the waters of baptism, the waters that surround the world, the waters that gives us life connects us to each other, cleanses us from impurities, and heals us of our ailments. So it is appropriate that water is used to remind us of how God graciously welcomes us into God's kingdom and community, how God mercifully forgives us of our sin and shame, and lovingly guides us into wholeness in spirit.

Thus we give thanks for this gift of baptism. We give thanks for the gift of water. We give thanks for the gift of God's grace and love bestowed upon all people in spite of their sin.

And so let's use some of that water and make a sign of the cross on our foreheads or on the foreheads of those in your homes. Let's tangibly feel God's gift on our bodies, on our skin, and be reminded that we are loved, we are forgiven, we are welcomed into God's family.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING HYM:** My Shepherd, You Supply My Need (#782)

#### GREETING

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

**And also with you.**

**KYRIE** (p. 203)

#### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, out of your great love for the world you sent to us your beloved Son to show us the way of your truth and grace. However, he was rejected by the evil already in the world, and his message of love fell on ears that couldn't hear. Yet you forgive us, you renew us, and in your mercy you restore us that we might be the people of your vineyard, bearing good fruit for your holy realm, through Jesus Christ, our chief cornerstone.

**Amen.**

## WORD

#### FIRST READING: Isaiah 5:1-7

A reading from Isaiah.

*The prophet sings a sad, parable-like love song about the relationship between God and Israel. In this song Israel is compared to a promising vineyard. Despite God's loving care, the vineyard that is Israel has brought forth "wild grapes" of injustice and distress, when fine grapes of justice and righteousness were expected.*

<sup>1</sup>Let me sing for my beloved  
my love-song concerning his vineyard:  
My beloved had a vineyard  
on a very fertile hill.

<sup>2</sup>He dug it and cleared it of stones,  
and planted it with choice vines;  
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,  
and hewed out a wine vat in it;  
he expected it to yield grapes,  
but it yielded wild grapes.

<sup>3</sup>And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem  
and people of Judah,  
judge between me  
and my vineyard.

<sup>4</sup>What more was there to do for my vineyard  
that I have not done in it?  
When I expected it to yield grapes,  
why did it yield wild grapes?

<sup>5</sup>And now I will tell you  
what I will do to my vineyard.  
I will remove its hedge,  
and it shall be devoured;  
I will break down its wall,  
and it shall be trampled down.

<sup>6</sup>I will make it a waste;  
it shall not be pruned or hoed,  
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;  
I will also command the clouds  
that they rain no rain upon it.

<sup>7</sup>For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts  
is the house of Israel,  
and the people of Judah  
are his pleasant planting;  
he expected justice,  
but saw bloodshed;  
righteousness,  
but heard a cry!

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 80:7-15**

<sup>7</sup>Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.

<sup>8</sup>**You have brought a vine out of Egypt;  
you cast out the nations and planted it.**

<sup>9</sup>You cleared the ground for it;  
it took root and filled the land.

<sup>10</sup>**The mountains were covered by its shadow  
and the towering cedar trees by its boughs.**

<sup>11</sup>You stretched out its tendrils to the sea  
and its branches to the river.

<sup>12</sup>**Why have you broken down its wall,  
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?**

<sup>13</sup>The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it,  
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.

<sup>14</sup>**Turn now, O God of hosts,  
look down from heaven;**

<sup>15</sup>behold and tend this vine;  
preserve what your right hand has planted.

### **SECOND READING: Philippians 3:4b-14**

A reading from Philippians.

*Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.*

[Paul writes:] <sup>4b</sup>If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

<sup>7</sup>Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup>More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. <sup>10</sup>I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)**

#### **GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-46**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.*

[Jesus said to the people:] <sup>33</sup>“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup>But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup>Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup>Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>38</sup>But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup>So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup>Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” <sup>41</sup>They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
this was the Lord’s doing,  
and it is amazing in our eyes’?

<sup>43</sup>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup>The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

<sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was speaking about them. <sup>46</sup>They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

God of all wisdom, give us your Word and send us your Spirit, that we might know, see, and hear Christ in our lives. **Amen.**

At the time of me writing this sermon, the news of threats of violence, death, and even worse directed toward BC’s Chief Medical Officer Dr. Bonnie Henry is still fresh in the news. And while Dr. Henry seemed to be taking it all in stride, I am appalled with nerve of the people who seem to think that such behaviour is ok. Now it’s important to note that we don’t know who they are, what they’re about, or why on earth they’re doing these things, but it’s clear to most people, hopefully all you who are watching, that it’s wrong, wildly inappropriate, and in my mind, evil.

And it’s unfortunate that Dr. Henry isn’t the only one. I remember hearing near the beginning of this pandemic Dr. Theresa Tam, Chief Health Officer of our *country* receiving similar threats and insults. What on earth, Canada? Aren’t we supposed to be the friendly ones? Oh sorry, I meant the apologetic ones.

But seriously, what on earth?

Dr. Henry says that because she is a woman that is educated and in power, she is more susceptible to such abuse. And she definitely has a point, which is sick enough, but at the same time I think there is more to it. Some people have a problem with women in leadership, yes, but I think the double whammy against Dr. Henry is that people also have a problem with news

that they don't want to hear. And perhaps to escalate this into triple whammy status, as we've learned these past few months, people have a problem with this pandemic and the lockdown imposed on us because of it, and the implications it had on our business, schools, and community on the whole.

So pile these things on top of Dr. Henry, and I hate to say it, but that puts a target on her back. Not because she is doing something wrong, but because people suck. She didn't create the virus, nor is she the one spreading it. She only comes out in front of the cameras almost every day with her calm and collected demeanor and brings to us the news, the recommendations, and wishes only that we stay safe and protect the most vulnerable among us. Is that worthy of harassment and death threats?

Well, according to the evil in the world, yes. And yet... Dr. Henry still holds her position. She continues to care about the health and safety of our province. She keeps speaking to us, day after day, announcement after announcement, outbreak after outbreak, imploring us to stay safe, stay calm, and perhaps above all, stay kind.

All of this "shooting the messenger" mentality reminds me of the parable that Jesus gives us in today's gospel lesson. This episode comes right after last week's failed "by whose authority" trap set by the religious leaders against Jesus. In typical Jesus fashion, they were put in their place by the incredible insight and wisdom akin to the actual Son of God, and we get more of that this week. To elaborate on this extreme inability to understand God's kingdom, Jesus gives another somewhat confusing story. This one is a bit more malicious than last week's. It's a bit more telling and straight forward. It's also more dark than a son saying he won't but then does and another that says he will but doesn't.

This poor (but really rich) landowner just wanted his produce from his land. He just wanted what was rightfully his. But his employees kept killing those sent by the poor but rich landowner to collect, including the landowner's own son. What did they want to accomplish? What would they gain in this? What did they think was going to happen from the senseless killing?

Well, we know what the religious leaders thought would happen. They thought that those evil tenants will get what was coming to them. They were going to pay at the hands of the landowner. Those who were murdered will be avenged and justice will be served.

And if we're honest, we're probably thinking the same thing. At least, I know that's what I'd make happen if I were the landowner. I'd make sure that there will be consequences for that kind of evil. I'd put a bounty on their heads so big that there'll be a line up around the block of people who would take care of those marks. I know I would do this, because that's what I want to do to those who are harassing Dr. Bonnie Henry. That's what I would want to do if someone were to threaten my own children. That's what I want to do when someone crosses me, harms me, or maybe even looks at me the wrong way.

Suddenly I sound more like a petty thug than a pastor.

But you must know what I mean to a certain extent. It is our natural reaction to retaliate when something bad happens to us. Our first thought after being wronged is revenge. We just want to hurt those who have hurt us. Sure, we're church-going folk, so maybe we'll let the first

wrongs slide, maybe even the first 7 of them. But after that? Well, then the gloves come off. And they better watch their backs.

But is that what Dr. Henry did? Is that what the landowner did? Is that what God does?

See Jesus didn't confirm that the assumption of retaliation was correct. He didn't say that those who killed the son would pay. He didn't say that the landowner even hated those evil tenants. If anything, Jesus said that even though the landowner knew of all the killing, he kept sending more and ultimately his own son. The landowner kept reaching out to the tenants even in the face of evil. The landowner, which we can safely assume is God, forgives.

Sure, Jesus says stuff like the kingdom will be taken away and the one who falls will be broken, but he doesn't say that all that is God's doing. He doesn't say that God will retaliate and inflict harm. He doesn't say that God will punish.

But you know who did? The religious leaders. And thus that is where that punishment comes from. See, they were trapped by and in their own mentality of their rights and privilege. They were blinded by their own assumptions of superiority and entitlement. They were so deafened by the cries of their own power and prosperity that they couldn't even hear the truth of Jesus' words of grace and mercy, and immediately began plotting Jesus' arrest and perhaps death, thus living exactly as the parable explained.

See this parable isn't one that is telling us that we need to shape up or we'll face the consequences. It isn't one that warns us that we'll reap what we sow. It isn't even one that describes to us the wrath of God. Rather, this parable is about God's love and forgiveness. It explains how God continually reaches out to us, giving us more and more chances, and will not write us off. It tells us how our worst enemy isn't God and God's laws and ways, but it's ourselves, our attitudes, and our inability to really grasp the gospel of Christ. This gospel that is all grace, all mercy, all love, revealing the truth of God's salvation, welcoming all people into God's kingdom and propelling us into the hope of peace and joy.

The amazing thing about all this isn't that God is awesome, as true as that is. The amazing thing isn't that God continues to send prophets and messengers to reveal the new things that God is doing in our church and in our world, although God does that as well. The amazing thing isn't even that God is forgiving, which God totally is.

The amazing thing is that God forgives *us*. Us. We who don't even know that we're sinning. We who cannot always admit that we have the capacity of evil. We who don't always recognise ourselves as the ones who nailed Jesus to that cross. God forgives, yes. But let's not forget that God forgives *us*.

Because we need it. Oh man do we need it. And admit it or not, God forgives. God welcomes. And God loves.

In this season after Pentecost, may we continue to recognise God's grace in our lives, freeing us from our guilt and shame and pushing us into the future of ministry, community, and service. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Have No Fear, Little Flock (#764)

## **CREED**

With all of God's loved and forgiven 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 God's forgiveness and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your grace, O Lord," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your grace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you restore us into your love and save us from our guilt and shame. Continue reminding us of your unending forgiveness, that we can live confidently in your mercy forever. By your grace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you rescue your people from harm, and you raise up your church in the world to spread your joy to the nations. Strengthen our ministry, that we may accurately reflect your love unto all people. 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 congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for North Thompson Ecumenical Shared Ministry in Barriere and Clearwater and their new priest Bruce Chalmers; and for Spirit of Life Lutheran Church and their interim pastor David Lefsrud. Be with all ministries as we together look into the future and navigate this pandemic together. By your grace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your creation is vast and beautiful and you have planted us in it to grow and care for the land. Strengthen our stewardship, that this earth can be restored and continue to house and nourish us for generations. By your grace, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, there are times when we fail to recognise you and your presence in the nations of the world. We feel persecution, discrimination, and oppression. May your wisdom and peace be known throughout the world, that all people can feel safe and free of violence and war. We

pray especially for Solyana Amanuel, that her journey into our country be swift even in this time of pandemic. By your grace, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you turn to us and see us in our ailments and you lift us up and bring us into wholeness. We remember in prayer those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and we commend your healing on us all, that your love might be seen and felt in all our lives. Especially we pray for Bev and family; Beulah; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Linda; Cindy; Henry; Chris; all those who have contracted or been affected by COVID-19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

O God, you tend to us, your children, and you preserve us in your care with all the saints forever. May we rest in your loving arms, that we be strengthened by your promises and truth. By your grace, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your wisdom and grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### MEAL

#### PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

#### HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 207)

#### THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O God, you shine your face on us, and you restore and save us from our shame and guilt. For you have brought us up out of our sin and you have cared for us and tended to us as we grew in faith in your kingdom. Then in the fullness of time you sent to us Jesus, your Son, to reveal to us the true darkness of sin and the true light of your forgiveness and grace.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for the Passover meal, where 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 all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this food before us that we are reminded of how God tends to our needs and preserves us even as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

For you are love, grace, and mercy, O God, and you bring us joy and salvation while we still live in sin and you welcome us into your kingdom forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into grace and mercy 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 HYMN:** Lamb of God (p. 208)

#### **INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Taste and see God's providence and love.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### **COMMUNION**

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

O God, we give you praise for again feeding us with your Spirit and nourishing us with your Word. Strengthen us as we continue to strive to reflect your love and grace and abundant blessing unto the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

#### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

Now may the face of God shine upon you and give you salvation,  
may the grace of Christ live within you,  
and may the wholeness of the Spirit motivate you to live in love and peace,  
both now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (#815)

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, press on toward the call of God in Jesus Christ.

**Thanks be to God.**