



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

Phone / fax: 604-433-1515

Website: www.graceburnaby.com

Email: office@graceburnaby.com

pastor@graceburnaby.com

Follow us on Twitter! @GraceLutBurnaby



Christ the King
25th Sunday after Pentecost
November 22, 2020

On this final Sunday of the church year our gospel is Jesus' great story of judgment. In the end, the faithful are those who served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, or estranged. In the first reading God is the shepherd who seeks the lost, weak, and injured and feeds them with justice. We gather this day to celebrate the reign of Christ and his victory over death, yet we await the consummation of all things yet to come. Acknowledging Christ as our merciful ruler, we go forth that his reign may be known in our loving words and deeds.

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 on this Christ the King Sunday to worship and praise this Christ who comes from God and is with God and is God.

Amen.

And in our worship and praise we also give thanks. We give thanks for the grace that was shown to us in the redemption of our sin. We give thanks for God's mercy in forgiving us and saving us from guilt and shame. We give thanks for the unending love and acceptance brought upon us and revealed to us through the gift of baptism.

Baptism, with its holy waters crashing into our lives and hearts, cleanses us from our iniquity, purifies us as God's children, and strengthens us to live lives of faith and compassion in the world. This water then becomes the symbol of God's grace, God's mercy, and above all, God's love so deep that it is present among us always.

So those with water in front you, you may dip your hand into your bowl. Swirl the water around your fingers, let it run on your skin, know that this life-giving water is a gift of grace, mercy, and love. And then use this water to mark a sign of the cross on your forehead or on the forehead of those in your home. Be refreshed. Be rejuvenated. Be redeemed in your thanksgiving and strengthened to be God's people in the world, through the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

GATHERING HYMN: Crown Him with Many Crowns (#855)

GREETING

May the majestic grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the life-changing love of God, and the forgiving 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

Almighty God, you raised Christ from the dead and established him as Lord over every rebellious power. Strengthen us to serve him, and him in others, with faith, wisdom, and compassion that the world might see his redeeming grace and mercy through us and recognize the joyous freedom from sin through the reign of Jesus Christ, in whose name we pray.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24

A reading from Ezekiel.

Because Israel's kings proved to be bad shepherds, Ezekiel declares that the LORD will assume the role of shepherd in Israel. The LORD will also set over them a shepherd-messiah, "my servant David," who will feed and care for the people.

¹¹Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. ¹²As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. ¹³I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. ¹⁴I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. ¹⁵I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. ¹⁶I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

²⁰Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. ²¹Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, ²²I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

²³I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. ²⁴And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 95:1-7a

¹Come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

²**Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

³For you, LORD, are a great God,
and a great ruler above all gods.

⁴**In your hand are the caverns of the earth;
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

⁵The sea is yours, for you made it,
and your hands have molded the dry land.

⁶**Come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

^{7a}For the LORD is our God,
and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.

SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:15-23

A reading from Ephesians.

In this passage, God is praised for revealing ultimate divine power in raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrected, exalted Christ is Lord of both the church and the entire universe, now and in the age to come.

¹⁵I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason ¹⁶I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. ¹⁷I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, ¹⁸so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, ¹⁹and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. ²⁰God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. ²²And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, ²³which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus compares himself to a king who moves among his subjects to see how he is treated: what is done for the least of those who belong to his family is truly done for him.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ³¹“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. ³²All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, ³³and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. ³⁴Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; ³⁵for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ ³⁷Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? ³⁸And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? ³⁹And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ ⁴⁰And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.’ ⁴¹Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; ⁴²for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, ⁴³I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ ⁴⁴Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or

sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

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

SERMON

O God, open the eyes of our hearts by the power of your Spirit, that we might know the hope to which we have been called in Jesus Christ our shepherd and guide. **Amen.**

So this past week our BC government has put out new restrictions due to the rising numbers around COVID in our province. In the past few weeks, we’ve broken records on how many have tested positive with the virus, how many active cases at any given time, how many are in the hospital because of this, and how many have died in a 24 hour period. And then we broke those records again. It’s pretty safe to say that we’re definitely in the second wave of this thing that many of the experts predicted in the summer and even earlier.

My mistake in this whole thing? I read the comments. I read an article on this whole thing because I wanted to see what the restrictions are and if I’d be allowed to get my haircut or not still, and against my better judgement I kept scrolling down and read the comments. You know many news sites these days have taken the comment section down because people like to, using the anonymity of the internet, to speak more harshly than they would in real life. This of course sparks emotions, and people on both sides of whatever argument get more riled up, and so they post more harsh comments, and the cycle continues.

And I went and read a bunch of this stuff.

I didn’t comment or anything, but man did I want to at some posts. People on both sides of these restrictions had some good points, and some of them had some not so good points. But two things were very clear throughout these comments that I spent way more time than I care to admit reading: First, no one’s mind is going to change from reading random comments, and none of these random comments were going to change the situation that we’re in.

The fact of the matter is, we are in a pandemic. There is a virus out there that we still don’t know enough about to make any real comparisons or predictions. People are dying from this virus, and many others affected negatively by it. No matter how much we deny these facts, that will not change that they are facts. No matter how much people posts about the statistics around who is affected and who dies from this thing, that doesn’t change the fact that people are being affected by it. And no matter how angry you might feel when reading those comments, that won’t change the minds of those who are just on the other side of that spectrum from you.

Sheep and goats. That is what Jesus talks about today in our gospel reading. He says he’ll separate the sheep and the goats, the sheep being the ones who are “good” and the goats being the ones who aren’t so much. The thing about this passage is that off the bat we all can identify the goats in our lives. Those are the ones in the comments who are spouting things that we don’t agree with. Those are the ones in our work places that we wonder how they got to where they are with their work ethic and faulty personality. Those are the ones that we

honestly won't be all that sad when we see them sent to the eternal fire and punishment that Jesus promises.

But then when Jesus explains the difference between the two, maybe our hearts sink a little. Jesus says how we treat the least among us is how we have been treating him. And suddenly we're second guessing how we've been treating each other. We're wondering if we've been caring and compassionate enough. We're trying to recall the last time we fed the hungry or welcomed the stranger or visited the sick. Because we don't want to be those goats. We don't want to be excluded from God's eternity. We don't want to be cast into the eternal fire and punishment with all those people that we don't like or don't agree with.

And so that judgement doesn't stop, does it? I mean, we were already judging those who we don't like, we're like "oh yeah, those are the goats in this passage for sure." And we're also judge ourselves, we're all like, "are we the goats in the story...?" And that is just where we go most of the time when we read passages like this, we think it's about us, that it is a warning for us to make sure that we're doing what we should to get on God's good side, and it gives us permission to point our fingers at others who aren't doing what they should.

To be honest, I think deep down we'd like it if that was what this passage was about. We'd like to know exactly what we need to do to gain God's salvation. We'd like to know exactly how our neighbour is doing something wrong so we can say we told them so. We'd like to draw that line ever so thick between the goats and sheep just so we know exactly where we stand. Just like we want to know exactly what we need to do to avoid this coronavirus, just like how we want to know how we can tell others how they aren't wearing their mask properly or washing their hands enough, just like how we want to be on the right side of history with this thing, thinking that we somehow have the inside knowledge of what this really is or isn't... we just want to know. We just want to do. We just want to be right in our assumptions, in our opinions, and in our judgements.

But... Jesus didn't give us that burden of judge, did he? He didn't say that the sheep can look down on the goats because they aren't educated or can't think critically. He didn't say that this passage is about us.

Rather, I think Jesus is talking about what is. He is talking about what is happening. He is talking about himself as judge, he is the one who decides, he is the one who seeks out us who are lost and lifts us up, joins us together, and redeems us with a grace and mercy that surpasses understanding. Him, not us. It isn't our job to decide who is what, it isn't our role to figure out what is sinful or not for others, it isn't our responsibility to take Jesus' role as judge away from him and put it on ourselves.

And, I believe that Jesus continues by promising us how he is here in the suffering of the world. He is here in the hurt, in the dysfunction, in the confrontations of communities and families. He is here with the lonely, the downcast, and the sick. He is here in the midst of this pandemic, reminding us that he is also present in others, and so maybe, perhaps, we can do whatever we can to show others care, compassion, and love.

See Jesus isn't the one causing this pandemic, but he is present in our handling and coping with it. Jesus isn't the one instigating the conflict and corruption in the world, but he is present in the aftermath of reconciliation and forgiveness. Jesus isn't inflicting the suffering and pain, but

he is present in the healing, the restoration, and the community-building that could come from it.

So it isn't up to us to decide who are the sheep and who are the goats, that is for Jesus alone to determine. It isn't up to us to figure out who is in and who is out, that is for Jesus to know. It isn't even up to us to judge who deserves our care and compassion, for Jesus tells us that he will be there among all those in need whether we do anything about it or not, and we are free to just act as we are moved by God's gracious and merciful love.

Today is Christ the King Sunday, and we are reminded of how Christ's reign isn't one of power, of militaristic might, or of fear. Rather, Christ's reign is one of love, humble service, and community. In that Christ is present among the needy, Christ can be seen in the humble and penitent, Christ is found in all of us joining us together as his own body, empowering us in our ministry and service, and lifting us up as children of God.

So as we are here at the end of the church year, may we look back at this year of lessons and inspirations and be motivated to love as Christ loves, to serve as Christ serves, and to be free from judging or being judged by anyone but Christ himself who judges with grace and mercy. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Beautiful Saviour (#838)

CREED

With all those serving Jesus the Christ, let's 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 serve out of compassion and love, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "God, in your sovereignty," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. God, in your sovereignty, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we sing and shout for joy to you, as you are the rock of our salvation. You remind us of your grace and you reassure us with your mercy. Continue to strengthen us for your service in the world. God, in your sovereignty, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we come before your presence with thanksgiving and we sing hymns and spiritual songs to your name. May our ministry to our communities and beyond be full of love and compassion, and may it forever be pleasing to you. We pray especially for 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 Grace Lutheran Church in Dawson Creek and the leaders and pastors that serve their ministry; and for Deo Lutheran Church in Salmon Arm and their pastor Erik Bjorgan. May we all be filled with your grace to serve one another in your love. God, in your sovereignty, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you have molded with your hands all the earth, from the depths of the seas to the highest mountains, and it is wondrous and beautiful. May we properly care for this creation that you have entrusted to us, that it might continue to flourish and serve as our home for the generations to come. God, in your sovereignty, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you are a great God, a great ruler above all gods. Teach us your ways of justice and peace, that the nations of the world might put down their weapons and celebrate diversity and equality. We pray especially for Solyana Amanuel, that she be able to enter our country quickly even in the midst of a pandemic. God, in your sovereignty, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we worship and bow down before you, for you are our maker and you know us better than we know ourselves. May your presence be apparent with us, especially among the sick, the downcast, and the lonely, that we might all rely on your love and grace. With compassion we pray for Paula; Beulah; Bev and family; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Henry; 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...
Look upon us with compassion and grace. God, in your sovereignty, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you are our God and we are your people. You join us all together by your grace, and you welcome us into your eternal kingdom. Remind us of the lives of the saints, that they be for us examples of faith and service. God, in your sovereignty, **hear our prayer.**

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

MEAL

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERING HYMN: Will You Let Me Be Your Servant (#659)

OFFERING PRAYER

Holy God, may these gifts you give us of food and drink nourish us and remind us of your providence and love, compassionately shown to us through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

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 God, through your Son Jesus Christ, who reigns over us with grace and mercy, joining us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 207)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord, we sing to you, for you are the rock of our salvation. We come before your presence with thanksgiving for all that you have done, and we raise a loud shout to you, our great God who is above all other gods. You mold the earth and form the seas with your might, and in your grace you have made it our home. And in the fullness of time, you send to us Jesus, your Son, to reveal to us your redemptive love.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, 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."

After they ate, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, shared that and said, "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 by this food before us that we see just how worthy you are of our worship and praise, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

You are our God, O Lord, we are the sheep of your pasture and the people of your hand, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit as one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one flock 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

Taste and see the compassion of our Lord and Sovereign.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 208)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks and praise for your love for us through Jesus Christ, who rules over all with grace and mercy, empowering us to live lives of faith and love that we might show compassion to the hungry, poor, and needy. May we see the face of Christ in all people, that we be truly joined in your kingdom, by the Spirit, through Jesus our brother, with whom we pray. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the Spirit who seeks the lost keep you,
may the Saviour who brings back the wandering heart uphold you,
and may the Sovereign who strengthens the weak empower you, now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name! (#634, vs 1, 4, 5, 6)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, faithfully love and serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.