



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

Phone / fax: 604-433-1515

Website: [www.graceburnaby.com](http://www.graceburnaby.com)

Email: [office@graceburnaby.com](mailto:office@graceburnaby.com)

[pastor@graceburnaby.com](mailto:pastor@graceburnaby.com)

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### **Third Sunday after Epiphany January 24, 2021 ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten**

As we continue through the time after Epiphany, stories of the call to discipleship show us the implications of our baptismal calling to show Christ to the world. Jesus begins proclaiming the good news and calling people to repentance right after John the Baptist is arrested for preaching in a similar way. Knowing that John was later executed, we see at the very outset the cost of discipleship. Still, the two sets of brothers leave everything they have known and worked for all their lives to follow Jesus and fish for people.

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

On this day when we gather while apart, we give thanks for the salvation that comes from God, reminded to us through these waters of baptism. Although this water is just ordinary water from the tap, it is the symbol of water that we are giving thanks for. The symbol of water as an element that we all commonly need and thus brings us together. The symbol of a substance that draws us in with its refreshing allure. The symbol of a liquid that gives and provides us all with life.

And so we take this symbol of water, this symbol of togetherness, community, and life, and we use it to create another symbol, the symbol of the cross on our foreheads. This is a symbol of service, humility, and love. Together, they mark us, empower us, and call us forth into the streams of God's justice, for which we give thanks, now and forever.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (#707)

#### GREETING

The equalizing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the inclusive love of God, and the welcoming 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

O Lord, we know that the present form of this world is passing away. May our focus always be on you, that we might be driven to serve humbly, love wholly, and walk justly in your ways, through the strength and wisdom of Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

**Amen.**

## WORD

#### FIRST READING: Jonah 3:1-5, 10

A reading from Jonah.

*The book of Jonah is a comedy starring a reluctant prophet who is given a one-sentence message: Nineveh will be destroyed in forty days. Much to Jonah's dismay, the people of Nineveh repent. The point of the story is to get the reader to wrestle with the question "On whom should God have mercy?"*

<sup>1</sup>The word of the LORD came to Jonah a second time, saying, <sup>2</sup>"Get up, go to Nineveh, that great city, and proclaim to it the message that I tell you." <sup>3</sup>So Jonah set out and went to Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an exceedingly large city, a three days' walk across. <sup>4</sup>Jonah began to go into the city, going a day's walk. And he cried out, "Forty days more, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" <sup>5</sup>And the people of Nineveh believed God; they

proclaimed a fast, and everyone, great and small, put on sackcloth.

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what they did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 62:5-12**

<sup>5</sup>For God alone I wait in silence;  
truly, my hope is in God.

<sup>6</sup>**God alone is my rock and my salvation,  
my stronghold, so that I shall never be shaken.**

<sup>7</sup>In God is my deliverance and my honour;  
God is my strong rock and my refuge.

<sup>8</sup>**Put your trust in God always, O people,  
pour out your hearts before the one who is our refuge.**

<sup>9</sup>Those of high degree are but a fleeting breath; those of low estate cannot be trusted.  
Placed on the scales together they weigh even less than a breath.

<sup>10</sup>**Put no trust in extortion; in robbery take no empty pride;  
though wealth increase, set not your heart upon it.**

<sup>11</sup>God has spoken once, twice have I heard it,  
that power belongs to God.

<sup>12</sup>**Steadfast love belongs to you, O Lord,  
for you repay all according to their deeds.**

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 7:29-31**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

*Paul does not disapprove of marriage or other human social institutions. He does, however, want Christians to live in the present in fervent anticipation of God's future, which even now has dawned through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.*

<sup>29</sup>Brothers and sisters, the appointed time has grown short; from now on, let even those who have wives be as though they had none, <sup>30</sup>and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no possessions, <sup>31</sup>and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)**

**GOSPEL: Mark 1:14-20**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Before Jesus calls his first disciples, he proclaims a message that becomes known as “the gospel” or good news from God. God is ready to rule our lives. Those who realize this will respond with repentance and faith.*

<sup>14</sup>Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, <sup>15</sup>and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.”

<sup>16</sup>As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea—for they were fishermen. <sup>17</sup>And Jesus said to them, “Follow me and I will make you fish for people.” <sup>18</sup>And immediately they left their nets and followed him. <sup>19</sup>As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. <sup>20</sup>Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

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

### **SERMON**

Speak to us this day, O God, that we might hear and heed to Jesus’ call to follow him and be his disciples, serving you and neighbour for the sake of the justice that you will upon the world.  
**Amen.**

So I don’t know how many of you watched the US presidential inauguration this past Wednesday. I missed most of it because time zone, and I’m not huge on watching these things anyway. I mean, I didn’t even watch the inauguration of the brother-in-law of my brother-in-law’s cousin 16 years ago, so I don’t think it’d be fair for me to watch the inauguration of someone with whom I have zero familial relationship... that I know of at least.

Either case, I feel like I caught the best part of the whole ceremony anyway. If you watched it, you might know what I mean. No, it wasn’t the actual swearing in part, I totally missed that. It wasn’t the musical performances by J. Lo and Lady Gaga, I missed those too although I heard they were pretty good. And it wasn’t even that part where Garth Brooks tried to leave after singing Amazing Grace but everyone kept shaking his hand or hugging him so it took him like 15 minutes to get out of there. Ah, that was good stuff. No, the best part for me is when poet Amanda Gorman read her poem “The Hill We Climb.” Don’t worry, I never heard of her before either, but I looked her up and now, like I’m sure all of you, know her now. She was the first and youngest person to ever be named National Youth Poet Laureate in 2017, a title that I admit I also never heard of but after hearing her on Wednesday, I would say she totally deserves it. I mean she is 23 years old and she totally stole the show for me. Seriously. At 23, I was still spending most of my time hanging out with my friends working on my Super Smash Bros skills, and she’s reciting her poetry for the president and the whole country and beyond. If you didn’t see her recite her poem or read it online, I suggest you do so because it truly was spectacular.

One line in particular that really caught me was near the beginning of the poem as I was still trying to figure out who this person was. She said “We’ve braved the belly of the beast | We’ve learned that quiet isn’t always peace | And norms and notions of what just is | Isn’t always justice.”

What just is isn't always justice.

Profound, yes. But where do we go from here? I'm sure there are a lot of people who still feel that the election that culminated in this inauguration was unjust. I'm sure there are a lot of people who felt the past 4 years were unjust. I'm sure there are a lot of people who feel like anything that doesn't go in their own specific way is unjust.

What is justice, then? It's like the definition is in the eye of the beholder. Some would say that justice is their own brand of politics and everyone else is just wrong. Others say justice is when evil is abolished, at least, the evil that plagues them. Others still might take it a step further and say that justice is when those who hurt or harm us get hurt or harmed back, hopefully by our own hand but we're happy with however karma decides to play itself out on that.

And I don't think we'd like to admit it, but we probably believe the latter to be true. Justice, for most of us, is when those we don't like get what's coming to them. We believed this on the schoolyard, that's for sure. We see this in the movies and other forms of media that we love. We read about this in the story of Jonah, part of which we get in today's readings.

This is totally a familiar story, I mean everyone knows about Jonah and the whale. The problem is that if we heard of it, we were probably told that the moral of the story was to not run away from God's call, or else you might just get swallowed up by a large undetermined sea creature. And that seems to make sense, as Jonah did something wrong, disobeying God and running away, and so something bad happens to Jonah, getting eaten alive. Justice, right?

But that isn't what this story is about and that isn't the justice that I'm talking about. The story is more about the struggle inside Jonah to be able to let go of his definition of justice. See, God told Jonah to go to Nineveh and preach salvation to them. We might know that Nineveh was just a bad city that Jonah didn't like, but we might not have known that Nineveh was actually the capitol of Assyria, which is one of the sworn enemies of Israel. In fact, you might remember that Israel actually fell to the hands of the Assyrians before the Babylonians took over all of them. So it wasn't that Jonah just didn't like the city like how we might not like, I don't know, Spuzzum, BC or something. No, this was a deep-seated, cultural, and national rivalry and hatred. It was like how the US and Russia were at odds back when Rocky IV came out.

So for God to call Jonah there and try to get them to repent? Maybe you can see what a difficult task this would have been for Jonah. It wasn't even so much that Jonah didn't want the Ninevites to be saved. It was more that he *knew* that God would be gracious and save them, he just didn't want any part of it. Because in Jonah's eyes, those darn Ninevites *deserved* what was coming to them. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah? That would seem like a walk in the park compared to what God should have lined up for Nineveh.

Justice, right? We want the little guy to win. We want Jonah to be able to smite his enemies. We want Rocky Balboa to beat Ivan Drago.

But God has a different idea of what justice is. Instead of dishing out punishment and smite, God answers with grace and mercy and invites us along for the ride. This isn't easy. It wasn't easy for Jonah to watch his enemies repent and be saved despite his best efforts to not help them. It wasn't easy for the Corinthian church to not act out of spite of and superiority over

each other. And it wasn't easy for the disciples to not just say no to Jesus when he called them to fish for fish no more, but to fish for people instead.

And it isn't easy. It's not easy for us to not wish harm on our enemies. It's not easy for us to want to get back at those who hurt us. It's not easy for us to dish out our own brand of justice, the kind that could and likely would lead to violence, division, and pain.

The poet Amanda Gorman had a lot of good points in her poem that she read at the inauguration, but before her big finale she hinted at how we can achieve this justice. She said "We close the divide because we know, to put our future first | we must first put our differences aside | We lay down our arms | so we can reach out our arms | to one another | We seek harm to none and harmony for all."

And this right there is God's idea of justice. It isn't vengeance. It isn't evening the score. It isn't about harming those who have harmed you. But it's about putting aside differences, laying down our tools and tendencies for destruction, and learning how to love those you hate.

How on earth can we do that?

Well, Jesus showed us through his ministry and through the calling of his disciples. We are called to serve the other. We look at their needs. We see their hurts. And we realise that we aren't all that different after all. We are all broken, damaged, fallen. We all need community, support, and love. We are all in need of a Saviour.

And thanks be to God, for we get one.

In spite of all the stuff that is going on in the world with this pandemic that has taken so much from us, all the political turmoil we see in our country and elsewhere, all the personal problems we all face in our own lives, God continues to reside with us, abide in us, and be among us through Christ in the Spirit and empowers us to see and feel that love and in turn reflect it onto others. This is the promise given to us. This is the hope we have in a greater future. This is the justice that we are called to, that we might see each other as God does, with eyes of grace, mercy, and love.

In this season after the Epiphany, may we see and feel the Spirit residing in our neighbours, friends, and even enemies, that we might together strive for the divine justice that we've been called to serve, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Canticle of the Turning (#723)

### **CREED**

With all of God's people called to justice, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's 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 love and justice, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "in your mercy, O Lord," and you are invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. In your mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, for you we wait in silence. For you are our hope, our rock, and our salvation and stronghold, in you we shall not be shaken. May we always lean on your strength, that pursuit of justice be lined with your love and grace. In your mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you are our deliverance and our honour, our strong rock and refuge. In you we take delight and we draw out wisdom and truth, teaching us the value that you give to each of us as your own children. May our ministries reflect this gracious truth, that those whom we come in contact with be touched by your welcome and love. 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 Faith Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Brian Krushel; and Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in North Vancouver and their interim pastor Vida Jaugelis. In your mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, our trust is in you always, for you have been our refuge and have created for us a wondrous planet to live in. Strengthen our stewardship, that our care for your creation and all that is in it might result in it continuing to be our refuge for generations. In your mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, the world leaders and politicians are fleeting, but your truth and wisdom remains. May all those in power faithfully serve their constituents, that peace and the good of all continually be on the forefront of their minds and work. We offer a special prayer for Solyana Amanuel, that she be able to begin the journey into Canada and safety, in spite of the difficulties of this pandemic. In your mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we do not put trust in the temporary or set our hearts on the fleeting, but we set our minds on the power of your love, that speaks into our lives and hearts even in times of trouble. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your everlasting promises might always lead and guide us all into hope. We pray especially for Paula; Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Henry; those who

have contracted or been affected by COVID-19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

In your mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, your love is steadfast and you prove that in your welcome of all your children to live with you in eternity. May this promise bring calm to our spirits, that we may continue to stand for justice for all and see each other as a companion in our pilgrimage until we are reunited with you and all the saints in your kingdom. In your mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

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

## MEAL

### PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

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

### OFFERING PRAYER

O God, our rock and salvation, we together celebrate our salvation with the breaking of bread, reminding us of your welcome, your inclusion, and your providence for us all. May this food before us be blessed, that while we are still apart we can still feel the connection with you and each other, through this body and blood of 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

Indeed it is right, our duty, and our joy, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, almighty and gracious God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who calls us to serve and act justly in your name, and joins us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth, in praising you with this unending hymn:

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

### THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O God, we wait for you in silence as our hope is in you. For you alone are our rock and salvation, our stronghold that shall never be shaken. You honour us with your deliverance as our strong rock and refuge. Our trust is in you, as the things of this world are fleeting and pass away, but your Word of grace and peace last forever and your love is steadfast. This is shown



to us through your Son, Jesus Christ, whom you sent to us as one of us to teach us your truth and justice and forgiveness.

For on the night that he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, took some bread, gave you thanks for it, then 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 it 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."

**Christ has died.**

**Christ has risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

May your justice shine throughout the lands, O God, and may your mercy reign in all our hearts, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

#### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Called into one 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 God's love and grace.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMN:** Lamb of God (p. 208)

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Merciful God, we give you thanks for again feeding us with this heavenly food, saving us for a purpose, and calling us into your welcome and justice. May we go forth into the world in your service, showing all people the love and grace that we have received from you, through Jesus Christ, our brother and friend. **Amen.**

### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May the God of second chances  
renew your sense of call into loving service  
and inspire you to go out and share the good news  
of the forgiveness and hope found  
in the name of God, Sovereign, Saviour, and Spirit.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** You Have Come Down to the Lakeshore (#817)

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, believe in God's call for your life.  
**Thanks be to God.**

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