



**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

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## **Transfiguration of Our Lord Sunday**

**February 14, 2021**

**ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten**

The Sundays after Epiphany began with Jesus' baptism and end with three disciples' vision of his transfiguration. In Mark's story of Jesus' baptism, apparently only Jesus sees the Spirit descending and hears the words from heaven. But now Jesus' three closest friends hear the same words naming him God's Beloved. As believers, Paul writes, we are enabled to see the God-light in Jesus' face, because the same God who created light in the first place has shone in our hearts to give us that vision. The light of God's glory in Jesus has enlightened us through baptism and shines in us also for others to see.

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 while apart in the light of Christ that shines on us all and colours the world in which we live. We gather together while apart in worship and praise of the Spirit that leads and guides us all into new life. We gather together while apart in thanksgiving for God's love shown to us through the gift of baptism.

This gift reminds us of God's love through its life-giving properties. This gift shows us God's grace through how it connects us all together. This gift reveals to us God with us through touch, sight, and sound. For this gift we give thanks. For this love, grace, and presence, we give thanks. For this light that shines into our lives and hearts we give thanks.

And so those of you with water in front of you, you may use the water to mark your foreheads with a sign of the cross, allowing you to again tangibly feel God in our midst and be connected to one another while we are still apart, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** Arise, Your Light Has Come! (#314)

#### GREETING

The glowing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the radiant love of God, and the shining 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

Holy and almighty God, you gather us together in the light of your kingdom and community, and you ready our hearts to hear your Word and the leading of the Spirit, that we might be strengthened to faithfully serve you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

#### FIRST READING: 2 Kings 2:1-12

A reading from 2 Kings.

*Today's reading centers on the transfer of power and authority from the prophet Elijah to Elisha. Their travels, which retrace the path of Joshua back to Moab (the place where Moses died) and the parting of the waters, demonstrate that Elisha and Elijah are legitimate successors of the great prophet Moses.*

<sup>1</sup>Now when the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven by a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. <sup>2</sup>Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel." But Elisha said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they went down to Bethel. <sup>3</sup>The company of prophets who were in Bethel came out to Elisha,

and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he said, "Yes, I know; keep silent."

<sup>4</sup>Elijah said to him, "Elisha, stay here; for the LORD has sent me to Jericho." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So they came to Jericho. <sup>5</sup>The company of prophets who were at Jericho drew near to Elisha, and said to him, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from you?" And he answered, "Yes, I know; be silent."

<sup>6</sup>Then Elijah said to him, "Stay here; for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan." But he said, "As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you." So the two of them went on. <sup>7</sup>Fifty men of the company of prophets also went, and stood at some distance from them, as they both were standing by the Jordan. <sup>8</sup>Then Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up, and struck the water; the water was parted to the one side and to the other, until the two of them crossed on dry ground.

<sup>9</sup>When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, "Tell me what I may do for you, before I am taken from you." Elisha said, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit." <sup>10</sup>He responded, "You have asked a hard thing; yet, if you see me as I am being taken from you, it will be granted you; if not, it will not." <sup>11</sup>As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlwind into heaven. <sup>12</sup>Elisha kept watching and crying out, "Father, father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen!" But when he could no longer see him, he grasped his own clothes and tore them in two pieces.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM: Psalm 50:1-6**

<sup>1</sup>The mighty one, God the LORD, has spoken;  
calling the earth from the rising of the sun to its setting.

<sup>2</sup>**Out of Zion, perfect in its beauty,  
God shines forth in glory.**

<sup>3</sup>Our God will come and will not keep silence;  
with a consuming flame before, and round about a raging storm.

<sup>4</sup>**God calls the heavens and the earth from above  
to witness the judgment of the people.**

<sup>5</sup>"Gather before me my loyal followers,  
those who have made a covenant with me and sealed it with sacrifice."

<sup>6</sup>**The heavens declare the rightness of God's cause,  
for it is God who is judge.**

### **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 4:3-6**

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

*The spotlight of Christian ministry is not on the people who carry out ministry but on the Lord Jesus Christ. Just as God made light shine at creation, God makes the light of Jesus Christ shine in our lives through Christian ministry.*

<sup>3</sup>Even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing. <sup>4</sup>In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. <sup>5</sup>For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus' sake. <sup>6</sup>For it is the God who

said, "Let light shine out of darkness," who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (p. 205)

**GOSPEL: Mark 9:2-9**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Mark's gospel presents the transfiguration as a preview of what would become apparent to Jesus' followers after he rose from the dead. Confused disciples are given a vision of God's glory manifest in the beloved Son.*

<sup>2</sup>Six days later, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart, by themselves. And he was transfigured before them, <sup>3</sup>and his clothes became dazzling white, such as no one on earth could bleach them. <sup>4</sup>And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses, who were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup>Then Peter said to Jesus, "Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; let us make three dwellings, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." <sup>6</sup>He did not know what to say, for they were terrified. <sup>7</sup>Then a cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud there came a voice, "This is my Son, the Beloved; listen to him!" <sup>8</sup>Suddenly when they looked around, they saw no one with them any more, but only Jesus.

<sup>9</sup>As they were coming down the mountain, he ordered them to tell no one about what they had seen, until after the Son of Man had risen from the dead.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON** by Bishop Michael Pryse (Eastern Synod, ELCIC)

Hi everybody! It is a real delight to be here with you today and to be a part of your Sunday worship and to give your pastor this small bit of relief. Our rostered ministers have been doing a magnificent job of providing opportunities for us to worship over the course of this long pandemic. But friends, it is very hard work and anything we can do to help lighten the load they are carrying is well worth supporting!

Today I'd like to share a few thoughts with you concerning the subject of vision. And I'm sure that most of you would agree that vision is a very important thing. You know very well from your own experience, both individually and as a congregation, that you need vision to carry a task through to completion. You need vision to sustain you and refresh you as you press through the bumps, turns and valleys we will inevitably encounter in life.

There is, however, a potential danger involved in this vision business. Vision is good, but the line between being visionary and being delusional can sometimes become very fine! Let me spell out the differences I see by way of an incident that happened to me some years ago on a golf course.

Now, for those of you who know not the pleasure of chasing a little bouncy ball over hundreds of acres of mixed terrain, let me tell you that all golfers carry a common vision. It is the vision of the perfect shot, a drive to the pin, a smooth effortless stroke and perfect backswing. You can imagine the gentle arc of the ball as it climbs into the sky. Perhaps a few astonished oohs and aahs from the gallery. And then lastly, you imagine the final, graceful drop of the ball, pin high and just a few feet from the cup.

Well, one day it actually happened for me. The vision became a reality. A perfect shot on a 265 yard par three followed by a gentle, dare I say casual, tap-in for birdie! It had never happened before nor since!

In retrospect, I now know that I should have accepted that vision, that unique experience, for what it truly was. I should have enjoyed this brief glimpse of golfing glory and then set it aside in my mind for future inspiration and guidance. But I didn't do that. Instead I immediately adopted the delusional posture of a naïve visionary.

I was no longer Michael, the intimate friend of sand trap and water hazard. I now stood among the great ones; a veritable Tiger Woods! And, of course, I encountered the end which ultimately comes to all naïve visionaries; and by the time I had finished the fourth hole I had lost seven balls; torn up enough divots to generously sod my front lawn and was seriously contemplating how much my clubs would fetch at our next neighbourhood garage sale!

My vision was left in tatters. Not because there was anything wrong with the vision itself, but rather because I had naïvely assumed to have claimed and contained that vision rather than allowing myself to be carried forward, guided and inspired by it.

Do you see the distinction? In our Gospel lesson we see elements of this dynamic played out in more sacred terms. Jesus and his disciples go up a mountain. Jesus moves on ahead and then, suddenly and unexpectedly, apparent magic starts to happen. Jesus form starts to change, he becomes like pure energy, pure light. Glorified beings seem to appear; Moses and Elijah. And then finally the whole episode is dramatically concluded by a mysterious voice from the heavens that proclaims this same Jesus to be God's own Son.

Can you imagine having such an experience? And who can really know how or what was happening! Regardless, it was extraordinary and the response of the disciple's is understandable. They are both terrified by and captivated by this vision and want to hold onto it. They want this glorious moment to go on forever. They want to set up tents and live right there on the mountain!

But as quickly as the vision had come, it was gone. In an instant the disciples went from being privileged witnesses of the glories of heaven, back to being tired fisherman huddled on the unfamiliar face of a mountainside! The vision had come, and in spite of the disciples' desire to contain it and hold onto it, it had just as quickly passed. They confused this temporary and transitory vision for that which was eternal. They had confused the means with the end!

This is a danger which we, as a church, also need to continually guard against. We too can become misdirected and confused about the means and the end in ways that can distract us from our primary mission. Let me give you a secular example of what I mean.

In 1960 a Harvard business professor named Theodore Levitt wrote a classic article that focussed on the dramatic decline of the railroad industry in early 20th century North America. The decline of the industry, Levitt concludes, didn't come about because people and freight no longer needed to be transported. The railroad declined, rather, because the railway managers came to believe that they were in the railroad business rather than the transportation business. They confused the means - tracks and engines - with the ends - the transportation of people and freight!

Can you see any analogies for the church? Do we not sometimes function as if we were in the church business instead of the blessing business; the "we exist for ourselves" business as opposed to the "God's mission to bless the world" business?" Do we not sometimes fall into this same trap of confusing the means with the ends and making it all about us; acting as if the church – our buildings, institutions, practices and beliefs were an end in and of themselves, rather than being a means by which we can support and participate in the ultimate end of advancing God's mission to bless and save the world.

I believe that there are many people in our communities who are open to experiencing the kind of conversions that many people experienced through Jesus' life and ministry, many people who are coming to recognize the emptiness and hollowness of the false gospels of contemporary life. But those questioners and seekers won't look for a renewed life in a community, in a church, that doesn't provide evidence of having experienced a similar conversion; that doesn't believably express the new life that we claim to be calling others to embrace. They won't easily be drawn to the life of a church which appears to be more interested in the church business than in the blessing business.

One of the unexpected, albeit forced, blessings of this time of pandemic has been a reordering of priorities; a renewed appreciation of the means and the ends. During this time where we have been cut off from our church buildings and from the activities and practices that received so much of our attention and care in a pre-pandemic time, we've been given the opportunity to focus on the real end and purpose of everything that we do; advancing the reign of God through faithful proclamation, prayer and service. It's been a kind of forced re-set that we really need to hang onto when the day eventually comes when we can return to some measure of normalcy in our life together.

The same voice that proclaimed Jesus to be "well loved" on the mount of transfiguration speaks that same blessing to us, today. That blessing is a means, and not an end. It is a means by which we are called to aid and abet the ultimate end of God's mission to bless and save the world; a means by which we are empowered to share the Gospel of love and reconciliation that has been entrusted to us; generously, freely and extravagantly for the world's salvation. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Be Thou My Vision (#793)

## CREED

With all those basking in the light of Christ, 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 to and by the light of God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, by your Spirit," and you are invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, by your Spirit, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you have spoken to us with your mighty voice, calling from the sun up to sun down, and you lead and guide us with your wisdom. Enlighten us to see you in the world and may we always rely on your strength. Lord, by your Spirit, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your beauty shines forth through your glory and we stand in awe of your radiance that moves us to serve and minister. May our proclamation of your good news be faithful and be able to reach all people in your name. 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 congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Hope Lutheran Church in Nanaimo and their pastor Terry Richardson and intern pastor Nicolas Alexandre; and all the institutions in our church that care for the elderly. Lord, by your Spirit, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you come to us through creation, and you speak to us through the sights and sounds of nature. Allow us to hear your wisdom, strengthening us to properly care for this planet and all that you've entrusted to us. Lord, by your Spirit, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you judge all people in heaven and earth with wisdom and grace. May all world leaders and politicians learn from this wisdom and grace, that their judgements be fair and for the good of all. We offer a special pray for Solyana Amanuel, that her journey into our country be swift and free from complication. Lord, by your Spirit, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we remember your covenant of love and mercy with us, your loyal followers, as we look to you for healing and wholeness. We remember in prayer those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love shine in and through us all. Especially we pray for Paula; Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Henry; Tom; Jone; those who have contracted or been affected by COVID-19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

Lord, by your Spirit, **hear our prayer.**

O God, the heavens declare that you are righteous and just, and your love endures forever. You welcome us to live with you and all the saints for eternity, reminding us of our everlasting connection and community. May we be inspired by the faith of those we've loved and lost, that we might be strengthened to live our lives with honour and be pleasing to you. Lord, by your Spirit, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your radiant love seen in Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## MEAL

### PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

**OFFERATORY HYMN:** Shine, Jesus, Shine (#671)

### OFFERING PRAYER

O God, you have spoken the earth into being and welcomed us to be part of your wondrous creation and provide all we need for life. May this food we have before us be for us a reminder of this blessing and promise, that we eat and drink to your holy radiance, 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, holy God, through your Son Jesus Christ, who leads us into love by his love, that we might join 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 our God, you are mighty, perfect in beauty, and you shine forth in your glory, calling us all to witness your righteous deeds from the rising of the sun to the time it goes down. You make a covenant with us of grace and justice, and you have sealed it with the radiant life and ministry of Jesus, who you sent to us to lead us and guide us for sake of your gospel and teaching us the ways of your forgiveness.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, and with a thankful heart he broke and shared it saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate, he took the cup, gave thanks, and shared that saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this food before us that we see God's righteousness and mercy, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

O God we declare the rightness of your judgements, and we submit to your holy will, through Jesus Christ your Son, our Saviour, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into the light of God 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 goodness and love.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

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

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Gracious God, we give you thanks for the light of love around us and the fire of faith within us and this food of mercy that nourishes us. May we be strengthened by these gifts you give, that our lives reflect your glory for the sake of the gospel in the world, through Jesus our Lord.

**Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

May the being of God bless you and keep you,  
the light of God shine on you and be gracious unto you,  
the love of God look upon you with favour and give you peace,  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** Beautiful Savior (#838)

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, tell the good news of God's love.

**Thanks be to God.**

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