



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Second Sunday in Lent

February 28, 2021

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

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 together in spirit while in different houses, different area codes, maybe even different time zones, by the grace and mercy of God to worship, to pray, and to collectively lean on God's strength and wisdom. This strength and wisdom leads us, guides us, and reminds us of the identity given to us through God's welcome, God's love, and the waters of baptism.

While in itself, the water is just water, but when paired with the principles and properties of baptism it becomes for us the mark, a symbol of God's unending presence and providence in our lives. The waters of baptism and our relationship with it will always be with us, around us, and interacting with us as we look to it for life, for sustenance, and connection with God and each other.

So those of you with water in front of you, use the water to mark your foreheads with a sign of the cross. Feel God present in your lives. Feel God's strength invigorating and empowering you. Feel God's love and blessing on you, this day and always.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

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

GREETING

The strengthening grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the empowering love of God, and the reinforcing fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

KYRIE (p. 138)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, your Son Jesus bore the cross for our sake and was raised from the dead for the redemption of the world. Give us the courage to take up our crosses, that we might face this world as your faithful disciples ready to engage, ready to serve, and ready to receive your love and strength, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

A reading from Genesis.

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said

to him, ⁴“As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you.”

¹⁵God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 22:23-31

²³You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob’s line, give glory.
Stand in awe of the LORD, all you offspring of Israel.

²⁴**For the LORD does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither is the LORD’s face hidden from them;
but when they cry out, the LORD hears them.**

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;
I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.

²⁶**The poor shall eat and be satisfied,
Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever!**

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;
all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁸**For dominion belongs to the LORD,
who rules over the nations.**

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;
all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

³⁰**Their descendants shall serve the LORD,
whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.**

³¹They shall proclaim God’s deliverance to a people yet unborn,
saying to them, “The LORD has acted!”

SECOND READING: Romans 4:13-25

A reading from Romans.

Paul presents Abraham as the example for how a person comes into a right relationship with God not through works of the law but through faith. Though Abraham and Sarah were far too old for bearing children, Abraham trusted that God would accomplish what God had promised to accomplish.

¹³The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who

share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, “I have made you the father of many nations”)—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become “the father of many nations,” according to what was said, “So numerous shall your descendants be.” ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah’s womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith “was reckoned to him as righteousness.” ²³Now the words, “it was reckoned to him,” were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

GOSPEL: Mark 8:31-38

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter’s response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.

³¹[Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, “Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, open our eyes, ears, and hearts to see, hear, and feel you speaking your Word to us, that your good news might empower us to receive and trust in your promise of salvation and grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

So... any of you been watching WandaVision on Disney+? The season isn't over yet, so for the sake of those who are waiting for it to finish and then binge the whole season, I'll try to keep this completely spoiler-free. But if you're still worried about spoilers, feel free to just pause this video and go catch up and then come back.

Well, WandaVision is basically the latest installment in the MCU, the Marvel Cinematic Universe that is based on the superheroes of the Marvel comics universe, which many of you know that I love. I realise some of you might be rolling your eyes right now, but that would be shame because WandaVision, and the whole MCU for that matter, is really really good.

Anyway, without getting into too many details that would take forever to explain, this WandaVision TV series follows two of the superheroes who were romantically involved in the movies, Wanda and Vision (I know, they got really creative with the series title). But the weird thing about this series is that the last time we saw Vision was in Avengers: Infinity War, where he died. In fact, everyone in Wanda's life died throughout the movies. Her parents, her twin brother, and now her significant other. And so this series then is about how she deals with the pain of all her loss, the trauma of having her heart broken over and over, and suffering that she's been through after all of her dreams of happiness have been shattered.

In that... she actually doesn't deal with any of it at all.

Instead, she uses what is called "hex magic" (or maybe chaos magic if you've read the comics) and creates a completely new and different reality in which Vision is alive and they're married and she attempts to live happily ever after. But of course, it doesn't work. Maybe in the classic Disney fairy tale and princess movies it would, but not in the MCU or else they couldn't make more movies which translates to billions of dollars which allows them to live happily ever after. Or so we think it might work in the industry, at least.

Because that's just a pipe dream, isn't it? To live happily ever after? I mean, how many of us can honestly say that we or someone we know are living happily ever after? Like no sadness, no setbacks, no suffering? No complaints, no complications, no conflicts? No pain, no problems, no pandemics? I'm pretty sure it's safe to say that none of us could honestly say that. In fact, I don't think anyone in the history of anyone ever could. This certainly was the case in bible times.

The bible is all about people trying to live happily ever after and God saying "well..." It all starts with Adam and Eve thinking that eating from the forbidden tree will give them happiness. Then there's Noah and his family that we read about last week that thought a brand new world would be great but it turned out to be like the old world. And then to Abraham and Sarah (nee Abram and Sarai) as we read today, that just want a kid and will do anything to have one which cost them a lot more than they had wagered on. And all that leads us to the birth of this nation of Israel that just wanted to get into their promised land where they were supposed to live happily ever after but things just kept getting in their way. You know, like the Babylonians, Assyrians, and Romans. It's like they just can't escape life's problems, hurts, and suffering.

But then murmurs of a Messiah started. One who would bring balance to the force, free everyone from the Matrix, and restore Israel to all its intended glory. This gave people hope.

They put their trust in a brighter tomorrow. There was a new faith that happily ever after might finally be attainable.

And he actually showed up. A bit less religious than they thought but still a breath of fresh air. Perhaps more carpenter-y than they expected but he still checked off a lot of those boxes. Maybe not as mighty and in-your-face that the prophecies alluded to, but he was the one. They were sure of it. Let the good times roll.

But then, as we read today, he says something weird. He doesn't talk about putting together a plan to overthrow their oppressors and free them from captivity, but instead he talks about suffering and dying at the hand of his enemies. Essentially these words just grab Israel's collective heart, rips it out of its metaphorical chest, and smashes it into tiny bits.

God forbid! That can't happen! Our hopes of happiness, our expectation of elation, the promise of peace... gone? Really? Are we just doomed to live in perpetual torment and never be happy? Was this all a pipe dream? Is life really just suffering? Well, brace yourselves, because he's not finished. He then says if we want to follow him, we need to first pick up our crosses.

Our cross. Let's not forget that the cross in those days wasn't the fancy jewelry piece that it is today, but it was only known as an instrument of pain and humiliation. Not a weapon for defense, mind you, but a tool to oppress *you* literally to death. It was used to prove a point that we are but powerless against the evils of the world. It was used to make an example of anyone who thought they were better than the ruling government. It was used to bring even more suffering to an already suffering people.

So like we talked about last week, yeah, life is suffering. And we don't have the powers or hex magic to recreate reality like in WandaVision. We don't have the ability to rewrite our lives so we can live happily ever after. We just don't seem have what it takes to pick up those metaphorical crosses that plague our lives, that hold us back, that just suck the literal life out of us. Life is suffering.

And so we hide our pain. We're ashamed of our problems. We're embarrassed to ask for help. But Jesus says no. Don't deny the hardships we face, because that is part of being a child of God. Don't mask the brokenness of life, because that is what he has come to heal. Don't try to cover up our deep battle scars, our desolation, our depravity, because that is what joins us together as a community, a people, a kingdom in need of a Saviour.

See, it's in life's problems that we can lean on God's strength. It's in the ups and downs of life that we can rely on God's providence and grace. It's in facing the evils that plague us that we can truly see God on our side, holding us, redeeming us, and lifting us off our crosses and bringing us into the life that is truly life. A life not free of problems and pain, but a life that knows the fullness of God's peace, relationship, and love.

So this isn't to say that life will suddenly be easy, because it won't. It isn't to say that we'll no longer suffer, because we will. It isn't even to say that all our problems will vanish in the blink of a magical hex, because that's not even possible in the real world. But it is to say that we can be healed in our brokenness, we can be saved from within our pain, we can feel joy in God even in the midst of the difficulties in life. Not that we can just ignore or brush off those difficulties,

but that we can accept suffering as a part of life, but it doesn't control us, it doesn't define us, and it most certainly doesn't have the last word in who we are or whose we are. For our God has declared us from the beginning of creation as God's own forgiven and redeemed race.

And so we can pick up our crosses and follow Christ, because in Christ our yoke is easy and burden light. Not because they aren't there, but because we know we have someone beside us, journeying with us, and helping us carry this seemingly unbearable load. Yes, life can be painful with all these things that it can throw at us, but we are given tools and truths to help us battle it. Life can be difficult, but we are given strength and the support of a community to help us withstand it. Life is suffering, but we do not suffer alone and are reminded that God is with us, God resides in and around us, and God loves us beyond anything we can comprehend or imagine. And because of that, while life can remain suffering, life can also be good.

In this season of Lent, may we embrace our crosses that might hinder us but don't define us, that we could face them and face ourselves, and see and remember just how loved we are as God's blessed and beloved children. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said (#667)

CREED

With all the disciples 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

Strengthened to pick up our crosses to follow Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Divine God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Divine God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we give you praise and glory, for we stand in awe of you and all that you do. Remind us always of your presence with us, that we may face our trials with confidence and the hope found in you. Divine God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we assemble together in your name to praise you and serve you and neighbour, proclaiming your good news and sharing your love. May our ministry to our neighbourhoods be faithful and pleasing in your sight, that all people might recognise you and your grace living in us. 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 Mount Olivet Lutheran Church in North Vancouver and their pastor Carolina Glauster; and for Christ the King Lutheran Church in Surrey and their pastor Lori-Anne Boutin-Crawford. Divine God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you feed us from the ends of the earth and you satisfy us with your providence. Strengthen us in our care for this planet and all that is in it, that it may continue to feed and house us for generations. Divine God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you rule over the nations and families that bow before you. May your grace be known in all countries, cities, and communities, that all people might know of and reflect your love and grace on others, allowing us all to live in peace and harmony. We pray especially for Solyana Amanuel, that her journey into our country not be hindered too much more by the pandemic, and that she might be able to enter soon. Divine God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you do not hide your face from us, but you hear us when we cry out to you. We pray for those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely that your love might bring us all into healing and wholeness. We pray especially for Paula; Bev and family; Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Henry; those who have contracted or been affected by COVID-19; and all we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time....
Divine God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, even the saints of the past continue to kneel and bow down in worship, for your love and grace are eternal. Remind us of our connect to those we have loved and lost, that their lives of faith might inform us in our actions and decision making, allowing us to set a good example for the generations to come. Divine God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, leaning on your strength and mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

MEAL

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERATORY HYMN: The Peace of the Lord (#646)

OFFERING PRAYER

God our strength, you sustain us with your grace and you feed us with your Word. May this humble food before us serve as a reminder of your gracious blessing in and through us, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Amen.

DIALOGUE (p. 144)

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 in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who strengthens and empowers us as his disciples,
joining us together with all the choirs of angels,
the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 144)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord, to you we give praise and glory, for we stand in awe of you and your grace and mercy. You do not hide your face from us when we call, but you hear our cries and answer them. So we praise you in our community and congregation, and gladly serve you and proclaim your love to the world. For you feed us with your Word and nourish us with your dominion. You continue to bless us by sending to us your Son, Jesus, to reveal to us just how deep and wide your love and grace are.

Because on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus went and sat with his friends for a meal, and taking some bread, he gave thanks for it, 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, 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 through this food that we can see how strength is manifested in love, allowing us to proclaim the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Again we kneel to you, O Lord, we bow down in worship and we proclaim to you all glory and honour through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Strengthened collectively 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

Take and eat, be fed by God's love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 146)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we again praise you for feeding and nourishing us with your Word, graciously given to us through you covenant with us and our ancestors, empowering us to pick up our crosses and follow you in your wisdom and truth and love, through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May God our Creator bless you and strengthen you,
God the Christ teach you boldness and grace,
and God our Counsellor journey with you, holding your hand and granting you peace,
both now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song (#808)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, pick up your crosses to follow Christ.

Thanks be to God.