



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Third Sunday of Easter April 18, 2021 Now the Feast and Celebration

The gospel for the third Sunday of Easter is always one in which the risen Christ shares food with the disciples, meals that are the Easter template for the meal we share each Sunday. In today's gospel, Jesus both shares the disciples' food and shows them the meaning of his suffering, death, and resurrection through the scriptures, the two main elements of our Sunday worship.

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

THANKSGIVING FOR BAPTISM

In this season of Easter, in this time of celebrating of resurrecting healing, as we continue to gather while apart, we give thanks to our God for the gift of baptism.

This gift brings us that healing in the resurrection of Christ. This gift brings us understanding of God and God's Word. This gift brings us the peace breathed in us by the Spirit, that joins us together as one body united in love.

Those of you with water in front of you may dip your fingers into it. As you feel the water swirling around your skin, be reminded of the healing, have your souls ready for the Spirit of peace, and open your hearts to receive God's love. And with thankfulness in your heart, you may use the water to mark your foreheads with a sign of the cross, as a symbol of God's grace bestowed upon you and all people, welcoming us into God's kingdom as God's children, now and forever.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING HYMN: Now the Green Blade Rises (#379)

GREETING

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

And also with you.

KYRIE (p. 3)

NOW THE FEAST (p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the love poured into our world through Jesus Christ, who opened our minds to see your presence in the world and to understand the peace that has been breathed on us with the Spirit. May we see your love in our spaces, here and now, empowering us to continue as your hands and feet of justice in the world, through Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 3:12-19

A reading from Acts.

After healing a man unable to walk, Peter preaches to the people, describing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus. Through the proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection, God is offering them forgiveness and restoration in Jesus' name.

¹²[Peter] addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk? ¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to

release him. ¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

¹⁷“And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.

¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 4

¹Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause;
you set me free when I was in distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

²**“You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory;
how long will you love illusions and seek after lies?”**

³Know that the LORD does wonders for the faithful;
the LORD will hear me when I call.

⁴**Tremble, then, and do not sin;
speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.**

⁵Offer the appointed sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

⁶**Many are saying, “Who will show us any good?”
Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.**

⁷You have put gladness in my heart,
more than when grain and wine abound.

⁸**In peace, I will lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me rest secure.**

SECOND READING: 1 John 3:1-7

A reading from 1 John.

God has loved us in order to make us children of God. Though we do not yet know the full details of our future existence, we trust that God will reveal it just as God revealed Jesus to take away our sins.

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God’s children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 8)

GOSPEL: Luke 24:36b-48

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In this account of an appearance after his resurrection, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand him as Messiah. Jesus convinces them that he has been raised and sends them on a mission to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness.

^{36b}Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?” ⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, may your radical and surprising love come to us through your holy Word by the power of your Spirit, that we might hear and understand the greatness of your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Later this week, I'll be attending our annual Pastor's Study Conference of the BC Synod, and for the second year in a row, it will be of course online. Normally, I love going to the Study Conference because it is designed to give you what you need for rest. For me, I usually like to sleep until like noon and eat as much of the delicious food as they'll let me.

But the rest of the Study Conference? If I'm honest with you... meh. Don't get me wrong, I love my colleagues and being able to see them and catch up in this capacity is great, but when we all get together like this it's hard not to see just how much I don't fit in. Sure, you ask any one of my colleagues about this, and they'll be all like “aw no, that guy totally fits in and is one of us” but then be completely oblivious to who I even am.

I don't mean that they need to know my favourite colour or my affinity for long walks on the beach or anything like that, but the number of times I get asked “where are you from” or “how did you find your way to the Lutheran church” or even “did you start a Chinese ministry in your context” is just absolutely tiresome, like I'm some novel anomaly that needs to be figured out (which I guess I technically am). I know they mean well and being asked the first time or two is fine, but pretty much every single time I see some of them, it just reminds me again of how I

am and always will be an outsider. And the kicker here is that this year's theme for the Conference is around systemic racism and inclusion.

So when they asked me to help out with the planning of different aspects of the Study Conference, mostly around worship, I flatly said no. First of all, I'm not really good at planning worship, but also I didn't want to be their poster minority boy like they could check off some kind of "inclusion box" or something. After several requests for different things, I was asked to preach at the opening worship service. Like the other requests I wanted to just give an "insta-hard-no" but then I thought maybe preaching at a Study Conference would be good for my own healing process and will force me to look closely at these feelings that I'm having inside. Also it probably won't hurt my career at all, I mean this could be part of my road to Bishop.

So I reluctantly agreed. I mean it isn't a huge thing, I preach every week, after all. But somehow preaching at a conference with the themes around systemic racism hits just a bit different. Knowing that I'll be setting the stage so to speak for the people who will be attending and/or even listening for the rest of the conference is a little bit nerve wracking. And if I'm honest, digging up these old wounds and bringing them to light isn't exactly what I'd call fun. In fact, it is sometimes scary.

And so I wonder if this is the same kind of fear that the disciples felt when they heard that Jesus was back and then actually saw him in the place where they were hiding. Were they feeling this same kind of intimidation by that which caused them to hide in that upper room? Did Jesus' return dig up the wounds of their guilt in abandoning him, not understanding his words, and allowing him to die?

"Peace be with you" are the first words that Jesus says to them in this particular encounter, but the text tells us that they were still startled and terrified. "Peace be with you" says the risen Jesus standing right there in their midst, yet they think they're looking at a ghost. "Peace be with you" Jesus reassures them with the peace that surpasses all understanding, but they continue to have their doubts and fears.

I guess I don't blame them. If I saw someone I watched die show up after like three days behind my locked doors, them wishing me all the peace in the world isn't going to suddenly make all of that cool. But I think Jesus knows what they're going through, Jesus is aware of their fears and doubts, Jesus understands that they are feeling wounded and defeated, so in an act of ultimate grace Jesus shows them his hands and feet and says "yeah, me too".

And then he asks for some fish. Because fish is delicious.

But the point of Jesus' actions here is to show them what the power of resurrection is. I understand Jesus here to be reconciling them to him and reminding them that they are loved and forgiven. I am convinced that Jesus' hands still bear the marks of crucifixion and those marks remind them and us that healing isn't about washing away or erasing the hurts and scars, but healing brings into wholeness and restores us to peace.

So as I was contemplating whether I should preach for the Study Conference or not, I struggled with my past of very clearly not fitting in. I felt ashamed that in all my years of ordination I feel as though I haven't been "Lutheran" or even experienced enough to be trusted with such responsibility or recognition. I actually felt a bit angry in that I was thinking that of course

they'd ask the minority looking guy to do all this stuff for like the first time ever because hey, it'd be a bad look to not ask when we're talking about systemic racism.

But before anyone bombards me with a load of excuses and "whataboutisms" around how I'm more than just a minority, I understand that this world is broken. I get that we aren't perfect and many of us are but products of the systems and cultures that have been in place for generations and not the instigators of them. I know that while we all work together to be reminded of how we are actually included and welcomed and need to be seen as fellow children of God, that I am actually guilty of denying that as well, both in myself and in others. This in no way excuses the wrongs and hurts of the world or alleviates or belittles the effects of all the systemic racism that I and others like me have faced throughout our lives, but it also doesn't somehow give me a magical "bye" from all the hurts and pains that I might have inflicted on others.

So I know, many of us have been hurt by many different things, be it racism, sexism, ableism, or any other of the number of "isms" that plague our society today. And in that hurt, it is hard for us to feel God's healing and wholeness, or the peace that has been breathed on us by the Spirit, or even that the request to preach isn't because of tokenism but because people just really want to understand the words coming out of your mouth. But in that hurt, we can see and feel Jesus present among us, bearing the scars and brokenness of the world, and revealing to us just how welcoming and inclusive God's grace for all people is.

This means those people who don't look like us. This means people who don't share the same exact beliefs as us. This means the wide variety of people that we, for whatever justifiable reasons in our mind, just don't like. And, as I have to remind myself of constantly, this even means us.

See, Jesus wishing peace upon the disciples here isn't just wishing them peace among each other, but it is also peace within themselves. Jesus' healing isn't just to restore the relationships we have with each other, but to restore the relationship and view we have on ourselves. Jesus' act and display of God's love isn't to just remind us that God loves all people, but also to remind us that we, too, are dearly and wholly loved.

Some of you might react to this with, "well yeah, right, of course." To which I respond with, then show this love to others as it has been shown to you. Some might react with, "oh yeah, right of course," to which I respond with encouragement to continue seeing this love active and present in your lives, that you might be empowered to share it with others. Yet others might respond with, "uh yeah right, of course," to which I respond with it is true, for the promises of God throughout scripture are promises of grace, peace, and love granted to all people, including you, and we are indeed witnesses of this in and throughout our lives, allowing us to believe it, trust it, and live it for all that we're worth. And according to God, that is a whole lot.

As we continue in this season of Easter and resurrection, may we lean on the healing of God that brings us into wholeness in our reconciliation with God, with each other, and especially with ourselves. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Healer of Our Every Ill (#612)

CREED (p. 9)

With all those living in the peace of God, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called to love one another with God's grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "have mercy on us, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you answer us when we call and you defend our cause and set us free. You call us to justice and strengthen us to love you and neighbour for the sake of your gospel. May we continually rely on this strength that we be filled with confidence as your people in the world. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we long to honour your glory and your truth of grace and mercy for the world. May our ministry reflect this upon all people, that we, like you, be slow to anger and quick to forgive. 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 in the BC Synod. In particular we pray for First Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their pastor Rebekah Swanson; and for all Lutheran Campus Ministry across Canada and their many pastors and leaders that serve them. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we know that you have created the wonders of the world and have surrounded us with its beauty and resources for life. Strengthen our stewardship of this planet and restore its health that it may continue to be our home for the generations to come. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we tremble before your might and authority and you lead us away from sin. Grant to all world leaders and politicians the wisdom that comes from you, a wisdom that is full of grace and peace, that we might one day live together in unity and harmony. We pray especially for

those we have sponsored to enter into our country safely: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their three children; that their applications be processed and they are able to arrive soon. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you heal us and put gladness in our hearts, filling us with the knowledge of your ever-present love. Make this particularly apparent with those of us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your goodness might be seen by all. We pray especially for Paula; Bev and family; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Henry; Charlotte; 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...
Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O God, when our time comes we shall lie down and sleep in peace, for we can rest secure in your promise of eternity with you and all the saints. May this promise inform us of the gravity of our actions and community living and we be strengthened to follow your will, by the teaching of Jesus our Lord and the power of your Spirit. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your peace and justice, revealed to us by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.
And also with you.

OFFERATORY HYMN: As the Grains of Wheat (p. 10)

OFFERING PRAYER

Holy God, you appear to us through the ordinary and you bring us peace. May this food before us remind us of this peace in our lives, that while our bodies are nourished by its nutrients, our souls are also nourished by your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

MEAL

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 and almighty God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who resides and is present among us through the Spirit, uniting us together with all the saints, the choirs of angels,

the hosts of heaven, and the whole church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 11)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

O God you answer and defend us when we call on your name even as our best intentions to honour your glory and truth don't go as planned. You continue to do wondrous works in and around our lives, and you forgive us of our sin and shortcomings and failings. You let the light of your face shine upon us, through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to teach us the ways of your truth and love.

For the on the night that he was betrayed, your son Jesus was with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, and broke and shared it and said, "take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

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

It is in this food and drink that we see the gladness of God abounding in us, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God, you alone grant us peace and you secure for us a place with you in eternity with all the saints, through the love and grace of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 13)

Gathered into one love 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, understand God's love for us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 14)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for feeding us physically and spiritually and renewing us with the wisdom of the Spirit. May your love for us shine in and through us, reflecting it upon all people of all ethnicities, orientations, and creeds, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May God our Sovereign bless you and keep you with peace,
God our Saviour shine on you understanding and insight,
God our Spirit look upon you with favour, and reveal to you a love full of grace and truth, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: We All are One In Mission (#576)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, treat others with love and gentleness.

Thanks be to God.

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