



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

Phone / fax: 604-433-1515

Website: www.graceburnaby.com

Email: office@graceburnaby.com

pastor@graceburnaby.com

Follow us on Twitter! @GraceLutBurnaby



Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 13, 2021

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

The mustard seed becomes a great shrub that shelters the birds, recalling ancient images of the tree of life. We'd expect a cedar or a sequoia, but Jesus finds the power of God better imaged in a tiny, no-account seed. It's not the way we expect divine activity to look. Yet the tree of life is here, in the cross around which we gather, the tree into which we are grafted through baptism, the true vine that nourishes us with its fruit in the cup we share. It may not appear all that impressive, but while nobody's looking it grows with a power beyond our understanding.

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

As we are gathered while apart, we are reminded of our call to be God's people, joined together in the Spirit through the gift of baptism, for which we give thanks.

By these waters of baptism, God has welcomed us into God's kingdom of community and peace. In these waters of baptism, God recreates us and empowers us for the journey of life. Through these waters of baptism, God moves us into an abundant life full of grace, mercy, and love.

So those of you with water in front of you, you may dip your fingers into it. Swirl your hand around and interact with this gift. Let the water run through your fingers and be reminded that God is with us, holding us, and working through us and in spite of us for the sake of the gospel. And when you are ready and if you are willing, use the water to mark your forehead with a sign of the cross as you are called to be witnesses and bearers of God's love forever.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: Just As I Am, without One Plea (#592)

GREETING

The reassuring grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the forgiving love of God, and the welcoming fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

KYRIE (p. 184)

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 185)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord our God, you are at work within us, allowing us to thrive in faithfulness. Continue to work in us and through us, that the fruit that is born by your power and grace be seen in our communities and throughout the world, in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour and brother.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 17:22-24

A reading from Ezekiel.

Tree imagery is used in a messianic prophecy to tell how the LORD will choose someone from Judah's royal family (the cedar tree) to reign over all creation. This tree will be planted on Mount Zion, the location of the holy temple.

²²Thus says the Lord GOD:

I myself will take a sprig
from the lofty top of a cedar;

I will set it out.

I will break off a tender one
from the topmost of its young twigs;

I myself will plant it
on a high and lofty mountain.
²³On the mountain height of Israel
I will plant it,
in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit,
and become a noble cedar.
Under it every kind of bird will live;
in the shade of its branches will nest
winged creatures of every kind.
²⁴All the trees of the field shall know
that I am the LORD.
I bring low the high tree,
I make high the low tree;
I dry up the green tree
and make the dry tree flourish.
I the LORD have spoken;
I will accomplish it.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 92:1-4, 12-15

¹It is a good thing to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, O Most High;
²**to herald your love in the morning
and your faithfulness at night;**
³on the psaltery, and on the lyre,
and to the melody of the harp.
⁴**For you have made me glad by your acts, O LORD;
and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.**
¹²The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.
¹³**Those who are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God;**
¹⁴they shall still bear fruit in old age;
they shall be green and succulent;
¹⁵**that they may show how upright the LORD is,
my rock, in whom there is no injustice.**

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:6-17

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

Paul encourages believers to live by faith and not by sight. We do not consider Jesus from a human perspective but through the eyes of faith, believing he died for all and was raised. All who are in Christ are now in God's new creation.

⁶So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before the

judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Mark 4:26-34

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus frequently uses parables to teach ordinary people as they are able to hear and understand. Images of sowing and growing show the vitality of God's kingdom.

²⁶[Jesus] said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground, ²⁷and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

³⁰He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, you lead us not by sight but by our faith through your Word and truth. Guide us by your Spirit, that we might walk upright in your love and peace, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

One of the things about me that I'm kind of proud of is that I'm relatively drama-free. I don't get offended easily and even if I am, it usually isn't enough for me to do anything about it. And I think most of the time, I'm a bit too dull to even get that something offensive happened anyway. So because of this blissful ignorance, I'm able to live my life relatively free from conflict, controversy, and confrontation.

On the one hand, this pretty awesome trait of mine allows me to go about life with pretty little stress and a somewhat carefree attitude. But on the flip side, on those off chances that some stress does enter my life, goodness gracious am I ever ill-prepared to handle it. And as you might have guessed, I'm going through one of those times, like right now.

Actually, I've been going through it for the past, say, 15 months. This pandemic, while offering me a unique opportunity to get myself on YouTube on a weekly basis, has also dug up a lot of wounds that quite honestly I didn't even know was there. Wounds around inequality, around racism, and perhaps most painful, around identity.

You see throughout this pandemic, a lot of my colleagues and I have been pushed online, meaning we can now see each other and converse a lot more often than before. Which is great, because I do truly love and respect them (most of them), but I'd be darned if I can't help but compare myself to them. I mean, in terms of affinity for pop culture, sheer wit, and stunning good looks, I know I rank pretty high among them. But when it comes to skill in ministry, in caring for the poor and needy, and in just doing God's work in the world? I'll admit that I often feel like running home with my tail between my legs when compared to most of them.

It got so bad, in fact, that I began to wonder, why on earth am I even a pastor?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not about to quit or anything, I still have a family to feed (not to mention myself), but I couldn't help but feel really inadequate when compared to my colleagues. I feel so ineffective and untalented when I hear about all things they do and accomplish. I feel small and insignificant, sort of like a mustard seed.

We know these parables that Jesus gives in today's gospel reading, or at least the second parable around the mustard seed. And you'd think that such a parable should give me a good deal of encouragement that if even the small insignificant mustard seed can grow into the greatest of shrubs, then I should be able to see that I can grow and flourish to be something great as well, right? The thing is about that analogy is that a shrub is still just a shrub. I mean Jesus totally exaggerates here when he talks about it being great and puts forth large branches, as it actually isn't all that great nor are its branches all that large. In fact, I can't see how any bird could make a nest in one of these plants, unless the bird itself is super small and insignificant. Look it up, mustard plants are actually annoying invasive weeds that you don't plant on your own, but what you'd pull out of your gardens and yards and throw on a healthy dose of weed killer so they don't come back.

So yeah, by itself this parable doesn't seem to be all that helpful.

But this parable as we get it today isn't by itself, is it? The parable preceding it about some dude scattering seed without much worry and just goes to sleep, actually reframes its more famous and popular counterpart in reminding me that the mustard seed doesn't choose what it grows into. God does. The guy who plants the seeds in the ground in the first parable doesn't control how the seeds work and what they do. God does. And what I am called to do and become isn't a matter of what I can do and what my perceived skills and talents are, but of what God can do with what and who I am.

Maybe you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you've felt like I have, at times insignificant in what we do and who we are. Maybe you've felt like you can't compare to your own colleagues and peers. Maybe you've felt like you're just not good enough because we haven't and don't look like we will live up to the expectations that we put on ourselves, whether it be our own or what we think others expect us to be. But God is telling us that our own expectations aren't an

actual measure of our worth. Our goals whether they are met or not aren't the litmus test of our belonging. Our own image of what should be doesn't change who we are in God's eyes. And who we are, are beloved children full of potential and promise as faithful witnesses of God's grace and truth.

I know, this might still sound a bit belittling in that we're just "good enough," but I think there is more to it than that. See, I don't think God as concerned with our "finished product" as we might be. I don't think we're here to compete with others and whoever has the most in the end wins. I don't think God puts us in this endless rat race that we often choose to be in ourselves, where we continually perpetrate a dog-eat-dog world. Rather, I think God calls us into a journey. God invites us into growth in relationship and community. God liberates us from our feelings of inadequacy in comparing ourselves to others and reveals to us the blessing in change, the confidence in our faith, and the joy in being a new creation.

So those of us who might be feeling that insignificance, be it in our vocation, in our relationships, or in our faith, don't you think that God knows who you are and what you're like? Those of us who can't help but compare ourselves to others, don't forget that the body has many parts, and the parts all have a different function or perhaps just a different timing. Those of us who might be feeling that we're just "good enough" or are only eking by on the skin of our teeth, remember that even in whoever you might see yourself as right now, God sees you, God values you, and God calls you to things that might not even know are possible.

For myself, I know I might not be the greatest pastor in the world or even in our Synod, in that I'm not a super charismatic preacher who attracts millions of views. I mean see for yourself, the views for this service can be seen right now down in this corner. I know that as a pastor, I might not be the best at finding what social justice issues need our attention right now and lead the charge to support it or protest for it or do whatever might be the case to do. I know I might not actually be the best looking pastor although I try really really hard to be. But I also know that God calls me preach however best I can, to proclaim what little knowledge I have, and to love and serve people with whatever little energy or ability I can muster.

The point is, while we might think ourselves as not enough when compared to others who are just better by whatever standard we hold, God can take the small tiny seeds of good that we scatter among people and grow them in ways we never could have dreamed or imagined. God can flourish in the insignificance and failed expectations that we think we have and turn them into something great for the kingdom and for the service of others. God can look at all the ways that we feel like we fall short and in God's unending and steadfast compassion and grace, call us into something new, something full of meaning and purpose, something that screams the worth and value God blesses us with.

In this season after Pentecost, may we find confidence in our identity as God's people and draw strength from God's faithfulness, that we might see ourselves not as insignificant or just good enough, but as God's dearly beloved children full of promise and hope, called to do great things in the name of Jesus Christ our Saviour, Redeemer, and Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: We Walk by Faith (#635)

CREED

With all of God's called and empowered people, 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 and serve our God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "Lord, in your gracious mercy," and you may respond with hear our prayer. Lord, in your gracious mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our most high, we give you thanks and sing praises to your name, for you give our lives meaning and purpose. You call and empower us to be your people, that we might effectively share your love and truth to all. May your presence in our lives and vocations always be apparent to us, and may it motivate us to continually live for you. Lord, in your gracious mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our song, we herald to your love and faithfulness and we sing your melody throughout our lives. You bring us joy as we serve you through our ministry and community with others. Strengthen us in all that we do, that our whole lives be a testament to your grace. We remember in prayer 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 Chetwynd Shared Ministry in Chetwynd and the pastors and leaders that serve them; and Christ Lutheran Church in Chiliwack and their pastor Dean Andersen. Lord, in your gracious mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our joy, you have made us glad by the works of your hands in creating all things and entrusting them to us. Help us in our care for this planet, that its beauty and resourcefulness will be a blessing to all future generations. Lord, in your gracious mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our righteousness, your justice flows and flourishes throughout our lives and you guide us on the path of peace and community. Be with all world leaders and politicians and instill in them your wisdom, and reveal to us all your call for our lives to live with each other in right relationship. We pray for those whom we have sponsored to live in our country: Solyana

Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children, that their journey be swift. Lord, in your gracious mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our stronghold, you plant us in your household and welcome us into your courts, nourishing us with your love and healing. Be especially apparent among those who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that all might find wholeness in you. We pray especially for Marie; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Bev and family; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; those who have contracted or been affected by COVID-19; and all whom we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
Lord, in your gracious mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our rock, in you there is no injustice but you are upright and hold us in your love forever. Remind us of our connection with you and all the saints of all times and places, that we might never forget your call for us and our lives as your people in Christ's name. Lord, in your gracious mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your eternal love and forgiveness, shown to us by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

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

OFFERING PRAYER

Holy God, all good things that we have come from you. Bless the food we might have in front of us that it might further remind us of your blessing, your providence, and your love, through Jesus the Christ. **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 in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who on this day overcame death and the grave,
and by his glorious resurrection opened to us the way of everlasting life.

And so, with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 190)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord the Most High, we give you thanks and praise your name for your love and faithfulness never end. They make us glad and we shout for joy at the works of your hands. You allow us to flourish by your grace, and we bear witness to your goodness throughout the world. In you, there is no injustice but you are steadfast in your righteousness and truth. And in the fullness of time you sent to us your son Jesus to show us how we are redeemed by your love and forgiveness.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, and he took the bread, gave thanks, broke, and shared it saying, “take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

After they ate it, he took the common cup and gave thanks for it, then he gave it to them to drink from 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 that we see you providing for us and calling us as your own, even as we declare the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God, we glorify your name for joining us together with you and the saints, reminding us of your unending love and grace, and calling us to be your people in the world through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.
Amen.

LORD’S PRAYER

Called to be God’s people in the world, 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 that God indeed loves you.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 191)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we have been nourished by your Word and blessed by your truth. Renew in us the sense of call in our lives, that we might confidently continue to serve you and neighbour in the gracious love of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May God the Creator bless you with new life,
God the Christ tend you with grace and mercy,
and God the Counsellor guide your steps as you walk by faith, now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: Will You Let Me Be Your Servant (#659)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, reconciled to God through the grace of Christ.
Thanks be to God.