



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



**Seventh Sunday after Pentecost
July 11, 2021
ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight**

When Amos reports his vision of God judging Israel for its mistreatment of the poor, he becomes a threat to the power of the priests and the king. John the Baptist also speaks truth to power, and Herod has him killed. In Herod's fear that Jesus is John returned from the dead, we may hear hope for the oppressed: all the prophets killed through the ages are alive in Jesus. We are called to witness to justice in company with them, and to proclaim God's saving love.

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 again gather while still apart, we look to the connection we all share in God's grace accentuated in the gift of baptism, for which we give thanks.

This water that we attribute to baptism is the water of God's providence. It is the substance that joins us together as God's people. It is the symbol of the unending and steadfast love and grace that gives us value, gives us meaning, gives us purpose. And so those of you with water in front of you, you may dip your fingers in it. Swirl your hand around and feel God with us. Know that in the water, we see our humanity, we see our identity, we see ourselves in community living in the peace of Jesus Christ our Lord.

And now if you are willing, use the water to mark the sign of the cross on your forehead. Allow the Spirit to anoint you through this gift, allow God to bless you through the water, allow Jesus to be on the forefront of your mind as we together move to the end of this pandemic and transition.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate (#722)

GREETING

The compassionate grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the welcoming love of God, and the counter-cultural 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

Eternal God, from the foundation of the world you have set a standard of peace and community for us to live by, and when we proved unable to follow that standard you provided for us a forgiveness full of grace and mercy. Strengthen our hands for justice by your Spirit, that your truth be proclaimed in us and through us by the teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Amos 7:7-15

A reading from Amos.

Amos is not the kind of prophet attached to temples or royal courts. Rather, he is an ordinary farmer from Judah (the southern kingdom) called by God to speak to Israel (the northern kingdom). God's word of judgment through Amos conflicts with the king's court prophet Amaziah, whom Amos encounters at Bethel.

⁷This is what [the Lord GOD] showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"See, I am setting a plumb line

in the midst of my people Israel;

I will never again pass them by;

⁹the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword.”

¹⁰Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, “Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹For thus Amos has said,
‘Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.’”

¹²And Amaziah said to Amos, “O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; ¹³but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king’s sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom.”

¹⁴Then Amos answered Amaziah, “I am no prophet, nor a prophet’s son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, ¹⁵and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, ‘Go, prophesy to my people Israel.’”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 85:8-13

⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying;
for you speak peace to your faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to you.

⁹**Truly, your salvation is very near to those who fear you,
that your glory may dwell in our land.**

¹⁰Steadfast love and faithfulness have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹**Faithfulness shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

¹²The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.

¹³**Righteousness shall go before the LORD
and shall prepare for God a pathway.**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:3-14

A reading from Ephesians.

In Jesus, all of God’s plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God’s children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of

time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Mark 6:14-29

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

As Jesus and his disciples begin to attract attention, Mark recalls the story of John the Baptist's martyrdom. Like John, Jesus and his disciples will also suffer at the hands of those opposed to the gospel of salvation.

¹⁴King Herod heard of [the disciples' preaching,] for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

¹⁷For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. ¹⁸For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. ²²When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." ²³And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." ²⁵Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Loving God, your Word leads us into peace. Send your Spirit to dwell among us that we might live in love and community with you and all the saints, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Y'all.

I'm going to be honest with you, what on earth is up with this story out of our gospel lesson today? It's like those horror movies that just end without any kind of resolution because the monster of the story somehow didn't actually die like everyone thought but is just hiding in the closet or something ready to strike again. It's like those overly dramatic soap operas that are so popular now, with all these crazy plot twists that don't seem to make any sense whatsoever and are just added for the shock value alone. It's like a bad sermon that just shouts out gloom and doom and leaves you without any good news or ironically *gospel* at all.

And here I am giving a sermon on it.

So you can imagine that this isn't easy. I mean given that this text is disgusting, sickening, and absolutely outrageous, it's hard to figure out exactly where we can draw good news from it all. Looking at what Herod and his relatively new wife Herodias does here to John the baptizer, in beheading him just because Herodias has a bone to pick, really makes it hard to understand why this story made it into our lectionary at all. Judging by how Jesus doesn't even really show up in the whole passage really makes it darn near impossible to figure out just where we can see God in the midst of this injustice.

I mean John is a beloved character in our bible stories and he wasn't doing anything wrong but preaching what he believed to be true. Which in this case, was telling Herod that he shouldn't marry his dead brother's wife, which Herod did. And John was thrown into prison for that. But that wasn't good enough for Herodias, for as soon as she had a chance, she wanted John shut up for good. Thankfully for her, her daughter was a really good dancer, although I shudder at the thought of what kind of dance this possibly under-aged woman had to do in front of the king and his guests that the king would be so pleased that he'd promise her anything up to half his kingdom. So Herodias jumps on that opportunity and asks for John's head on a platter, to be served up as the final course of this deranged birthday party meal. See what I mean? Disgusting.

But then, is it really *that* bad? I mean, even though Herod learned to respect John as a prophet, he did what he had no choice but to do, as he made that promise to his step daughter in front of all his guests. He can't look weak in front of them or as a political leader that would be an open invitation for his enemies to attack. He did it for the best of society and to protect the greater good. Makes sense, right?

Don't buy it? Well, let's not forget that John was in prison for whatever reason and that makes him a criminal, so John probably had it coming. I mean the officials of the day labelled him as such and they must have had a reason to do so, so that really should be all the justification we need for capital punishment. Herod was doing society a favour by getting rid of this menace to society, right?

Still not a good enough reason? Well, I'm sure John probably had some drugs on him, given his spotty past. Or maybe he was wearing something too suggestive and so he was just asking for

his head to be cut off. Or he was likely resisting arrest, so if he would just comply then maybe he wouldn't have died.

I hope you see where I'm going with this now.

The fact of the matter is, there are a million and one different ways to spin this to make John at fault here. There are countless ways to justify Herod's actions. There are limitless excuses we can make for the privileged to continue to trample all over the non, so they won't have to face any consequences of their evil at all.

I know, it sounds kind of ridiculous when applied to this particular story, but why doesn't it sound ridiculous when applied to our current stories? Why doesn't it grind our gears when we hear of the finger-pointing, the victim-blaming, and the whatever-you-want-shaming that happens in our modern times? Why doesn't it bother us as a society in general that justice only seems to be justice when the select few in power benefit from it? I mean according to society now, the rhetoric is to forget the marginalized, disregard the outcast, screw the minorities. Let's just let those in power continue to determine how the scales of power can stay tipped in their own favour.

The sad part about that is that this is what we wanted. This is what we voted for, this is what we defend, this is the mentality that we teach our kids. If that weren't true, then we wouldn't be defined by our jobs, education, and pay scales. We wouldn't be judged by our houses, the cars we drive, or the clothes we wear. We wouldn't be seen as only a colour falling in the artificial hierarchy of melanin importance. The world wouldn't be in this mess that we are in now.

And maybe that is the good news of this passage. Not in the story itself, but as a warning that this evil of Herodias, this passiveness of Herod, this complicity of the guests, is how the world that we want will continue to be. The power, the prestige, the pretension of the world drives all people into this selfish and self centered frenzy. And this passage as a warning is contrasted with the actions of John's disciples.

In that, all they did was take his body and give it a proper burial. They just mourned the loss of their mentor. They didn't retaliate against violence with violence or pay injustice for injustice, but they continued John's message of repentance and kept the ministry alive.

See, just as there are no excuses for Herod to have done what he did, or Herodias to take advantage of the situation as she did, or even the guests to stand idly by and not speak out to the injustice of it all, there are no excuses for the evils of this time, the attempted genocide of the Indigenous people, the inequality among the sexes, classes, and ethnic groups, and the severe greed and supremacy held by the self-proclaimed elite. But the craziest thing isn't that this kind of stuff still happens, no the craziest thing is that while we know there aren't excuses, we continue to believe the ones that are given. So we might turn a blind eye to the racism. We might ignore the suffering of those deemed "beneath" us. We might justify the injustice.

But in the light of it all, God reminds us that there is a different way. A different and new way of living. A more compassionate and peaceful path for community. An alternative to the ruthless rat race of the world. And we see it in the story that comes right after this episode in our bibles. There is another feast that contrasts this one. Instead of a gathering of only the rich

and prestigious, this gathering welcomed all people of all walks. Instead of a meal of only the finest foods, this meal was simple and probably uncooked, but available for all who wanted to partake. Instead of a hate-fuelled murder, there was sharing, caring, and love. The meal after this one was the feeding of the 5,000 as we have in Mark, and there we have Jesus providing for all with an act of grace and mercy. We see Jesus watching out for the needs of others and acting out of compassion and generosity. We have a large group of strangers eating together, fellowshiping, and communing. And this meal of course alludes to the Eucharist feast that we are all invited to partake, welcomed into community, and loved into God's justice for all.

You see, this is the kingdom of God. A kingdom we don't often work for but we are always welcome to. A kingdom that we don't always want but is always freely offered and given. A kingdom that we might choose to ignore but always remains inviting, forgiving, and full of the Spirit of blessing and truth, reminding each and every one of us of our worth as God's beloved children.

And as we enter this kingdom, we are called to act with charitable justice, recognising the evil in the world and counteracting it with gracious community and compassionate mercy, that all might be able to join in on God's generous communion with God and all the saints, faithfully living in this new way of life forever.

So as we continue in this season after Pentecost, may we see God in the hard to see corners of life, that we be reminded of the truth and justice of the Spirit flowing in and through us even when we don't recognise it. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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

CREED

With the whole of God's 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 act and love in justice, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your just mercy, O God," and you all may respond with hear our prayer. By your just mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we hear your truth for our lives and you strengthen us to follow your plan of love and community. Teach us the ways of your grace, that we be able to treat others with kindness and equity. By your just mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your words of peace sparks our faith and drives us to turn our hearts to you. May this peace be reflected in our lives that others might see and feel your love through us. 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 St. Peter's Shared Ministry in Hudson's Hope and the pastors and leaders that help there; and Christ Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Patricia Giannelia. By your just mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your glory dwells in all the lands and seas of your creation. Help us in our stewardship of this earth, that we take seriously the warnings the climate tells us. Be with all who are suffering from harsh weather, especially those dealing with the forest fires of our province and beyond. By your just mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your steadfast love and faithfulness are seen in the diverse peoples of the world. May all world leaders and politicians learn to celebrate that diversity and lead us to live together in peace and harmony. We also pray for those who we've sponsored to come to our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maেকে Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; that their journey here might come soon. By your just mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you look down upon us with your righteousness and you grant to us a prosperity that expands beyond this world. Bring your healing and wholeness to those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that we all might know the joy in your name. We pray especially for Marie; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; those who continue to be negatively affected by this pandemic; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
By your just mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you call us to walk with you and all your saints, preparing for you a pathway into our lives and hearts. Remind us continually of your eternal promises and truths, that we be always aware of the ramifications of our actions and lives. By your just mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

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

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

OFFERATORY HYMN: When the Poor Ones (#725)

OFFERING PRAYER

Holy God, everything good comes from you and we give praise to your name. May this food before us be a reminder of your steadfast love and faithfulness, drawing us into your justice and peace 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 in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ;
who put us on a path toward your righteousness and peace,
joining us with 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. 190)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord our God, we listen to what you say, for you speak peace to us and our hearts turn to you. Your salvation is near and your glory dwells in the land. Your steadfast love and faithfulness springs up from the earth as your righteousness and peace comes down from heaven. You indeed grant great prosperity and your love yields increase in our lives, as you have sent to us Jesus, you Son, to prepare for you and your grace a pathway into our hearts.

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

And after they ate, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and 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 by this food that we are reminded of your truth and grace, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God may you bless this food. May you enrich our lives. And may you bring about a joy and peace that surpasses understanding, granting to us all your justice and community through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Brought together into God's justice and peace 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 righteousness and love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMN: Lamb of God (p. 191)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have fed us with your holy food, your Word of life and love. Continue to empower and strengthen us for your work in the world, that all people might see your justice shining in and through us, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May God the Creator bless you with faith and joy,
God the Christ save you with love and mercy,
God the Counsellor lead us into all justice, and bring you peace.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: Light Dawns on a Weary World (#726)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, led by the Spirit of justice.
Thanks be to God.