



**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA**

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**Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost  
September 12, 2021  
ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight**

Three weeks ago we heard Peter's confession of faith as told in John's gospel. This week we hear Mark's version, when Peter says, "You are the Messiah." In John, the stumbling block is Jesus' invitation to eat his flesh, given for the life of the world. In Mark too the scandal has to do with Jesus' words about his own coming death, and here Peter himself stumbles over Jesus' words. But Jesus is anointed (the meaning of *messiah*) in Mark only on the way to the cross (14:3); so we are anointed in baptism with the sign of the cross.

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

We are gathered again while apart, looking forward to our return into this space and to be more aware of the limitlessness of God's love and reach to us all in community.

This is what we give thanks for in baptism. Baptism is a symbol of God's love for us, but it is also a reminder of how we are all connected throughout time and space. Just as there is one Lord and one faith, there is but one baptism that brings us all together, joined in community, and empowered by God's love.

So if you have water in front of you, you may dip your fingers into it. Be reminded of our connection to Christ and each other, feel the presence of God in our midst, sense the Spirit working in and through our hearts for the good of all people.

And when you are ready and if you are willing, use the water to mark your foreheads with a sign of the cross. Know that you are God's beloved forever.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING SONG:** Lord of Light (#688)

### GREETING

The humbling grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the divine love of God, and the unifying fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, you teach us to live in a way that denies what is unhealthy and unloving and you grant to us a wisdom to discern your will for us. Awaken us to your calling, your empowering, and your blessing, that we might be able to humbly serve you and neighbour through and with the love of Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 50:4-9a

A reading from Isaiah.

*The image of the servant of the Lord is one of the notable motifs in the book of Isaiah. Today's reading describes the mission of the servant, whom early Christians associated with Jesus. Like Jesus, the servant does not strike back at his detractors but trusts in God's steadfast love.*

<sup>4</sup>The Lord God has given me  
the tongue of a teacher,  
that I may know how to sustain  
the weary with a word.  
Morning by morning he awakens—  
wakens my ear  
to listen as those who are taught.

<sup>5</sup>The Lord God has opened my ear,

and I was not rebellious,  
I did not turn backward.  
<sup>6</sup>I gave my back to those who struck me,  
and my cheeks to those who pulled out the beard;  
I did not hide my face  
from insult and spitting.  
<sup>7</sup>The Lord GOD helps me;  
therefore I have not been disgraced;  
therefore I have set my face like flint,  
and I know that I shall not be put to shame;  
<sup>8</sup>he who vindicates me is near.  
Who will contend with me?  
Let us stand up together.  
Who are my adversaries?  
Let them confront me.  
<sup>9a</sup>It is the Lord GOD who helps me;  
who will declare me guilty?

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 116:1-9**

<sup>1</sup>I love the LORD, who has heard my voice,  
and listened to my supplication,  
<sup>2</sup>**for the LORD has given ear to me  
whenever I called.**  
<sup>3</sup>The cords of death entangled me; the anguish of the grave came upon me;  
I came to grief and sorrow.  
<sup>4</sup>**Then I called upon the name of the LORD:  
“O LORD, I pray you, save my life.”**  
<sup>5</sup>Gracious is the LORD and righteous;  
our God is full of compassion.  
<sup>6</sup>**The LORD watches over the innocent;  
I was brought low, and God saved me.**  
<sup>7</sup>Turn again to your rest, O my soul.  
for the LORD has dealt well with you.  
<sup>8</sup>**For you have rescued my life from death,  
my eyes from tears, and my feet from stumbling;**  
<sup>9</sup>I will walk in the presence of the LORD  
in the land of the living.

**SECOND READING: James 3:1-12**

A reading from James.

*This text uses various images to illustrate how damaging and hurtful the way we speak to and about others can be. Not only are we to control our speech, but what we say and how we say it are to reflect our faith.*

<sup>1</sup>Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. <sup>2</sup>For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who

makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. <sup>3</sup>If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. <sup>4</sup>Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. <sup>5</sup>So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits.

How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! <sup>6</sup>And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. <sup>7</sup>For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, <sup>8</sup>but no one can tame the tongue—a restless evil, full of deadly poison. <sup>9</sup>With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. <sup>10</sup>From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. <sup>11</sup>Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? <sup>12</sup>Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (p. 188)

**GOSPEL: Mark 8:27-38**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*This story provides the turning point in Mark's gospel. Peter is the first human being in the narrative to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, but he cannot accept that as the Messiah Jesus will have to suffer. Moreover, Jesus issues a strong challenge to all by connecting discipleship and the cross.*

<sup>27</sup>Jesus went on with his disciples to the villages of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that I am?" <sup>28</sup>And they answered him, "John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; and still others, one of the prophets." <sup>29</sup>He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Messiah." <sup>30</sup>And he sternly ordered them not to tell anyone about him.

<sup>31</sup>Then he 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. <sup>32</sup>He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. <sup>33</sup>But 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."

<sup>34</sup>He 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. <sup>35</sup>For 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. <sup>36</sup>For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? <sup>37</sup>Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? <sup>38</sup>Those 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

O Lord, may your tongues of wisdom be heard by the opening of our hearts and minds by the Holy Spirit, that we might follow in your way and walk in your path, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

So, school has started and I'm trying to get back into routine. Being forced to wake up early and getting the kids ready for school is a great motivator for me to... well... wake up early and get the kids ready for school. But the problem this year is that the routine has slightly changed and so the timing of everything has to shift with it. Without getting into the gory details, a lot of the precautions that were in place for our kids and parents at the school to more easily distance from each other are no longer in place. So instead of a staggered drop off and pick up, EVERYONE IN THE SCHOOL IS THERE AT THE SAME TIME.

What does that mean practically? More traffic. More hair pulling around the typical parent driver who is completely oblivious to other drivers on the road. And those parents that have no clue how to park so they take up much more space than they need, so there is less room for other cars. And don't even get me started on the days when the neighbours' garbage gets picked up as it just makes the traffic even worse, especially when the garbage truck decides to roll down the street at the prime drop off time. Sigh. It is so frustrating for me.

And I know, I can just be a bit more patient. And generally, I am a pretty patient person. But just my luck, one of my major triggers that throws that patience out the window is around punctuality. In that I like to be punctual. I like to get my kids to school on time. I would rather wait for others instead of having them wait for me. And it frustrates me to no end when others don't feel the same way as I do, which seems to be like the majority of the school population.

I mean, if they did care about punctuality, they'd be more considerate. They wouldn't be driving so dang slow and getting in the way of others. They would be more like how I want them to be.

Uh oh. Maybe I'm setting my mind on human things, and not on divine things. Maybe I'm too focussed on myself than the greater good. Maybe my frustration isn't around my need for punctuality, but around my own selfishness.

I think that's what Peter's problem is in today's gospel lesson. We know this story. We remember it as our pride in Peter for finally getting an answer correct gets shot down in flames with him being called Satan when he pulls Jesus aside and tells him that he doesn't want him to die. Jesus tells him that his problem is that he doesn't have his mind on divine things but rather on human things. But what does that even mean? How do we ever hope to have our minds set on divine things and not human things when we, last I checked, are human?

But Jesus isn't done confusing them or us. He says that whoever wants to follow him must take up their cross. And this would have been baffling for them, because in those days, the cross wasn't a nice piece of jewelry you wear around your neck or a symbol you draw on your forehead with some water. In those days, the cross meant punishment. It meant humiliation, guilt, and shame. The cross meant death.

And Jesus says we should pick up our punishment, guilt and death to follow him? If I were Peter, I'd be like "nah forget it, I don't need this, I don't need to pick up my shame and be called

Satan for it” and bail on out of there. I’d rather take my chances in the cruel world. I’d rather be able to do my own thing and face the consequence of my own choices. I’d rather just follow a Messiah that fits the mold that I make, one that listens to me, does what I want, and says that I want to be right.

And there it is again. There is that attitude around selfishness and egotistical pride that we are the sole proprietor of all the right answers. This idea that we somehow know better than everyone else and that our own opinions beat all. This belief that there is a stark contrast between right and wrong and that there is only one proper way to do things, and that way is the way that we would do them.

This is what Jesus meant about having our minds set on human things. This is why Jesus asked what people are saying about him. This is why Peter, while getting the answer right, actually got it all wrong.

Because Jesus is reminding us that there comes a time when we will need to question our own selfish pride and know-it-all attitudes. There comes a time that we will need to be humbled and realise that we don’t have all the answers. There comes a time when we just need to hang up our old ways and look to him to figure out the new ways. The old ways of seeing the cross, for example. The old ways of understanding what it means to have power. The old ways of defining a Messiah. The old ways of holding onto those old ways.

And when those old ways are let go, then there is room for the new ways. There is space for new understandings. There is the chance to change our lenses that will then allow us to see things in a new light that will hopefully bring us joy, peace, and love.

See Peter said Jesus is the Messiah, but his interpretation of the Messiah was the old way. He couldn’t handle the thought of Jesus suffering under the religious leaders. He had to pull Jesus aside and tell him that his new way is wrong. He had to assert his own opinion on Jesus, thinking that he somehow knew what was best. And Jesus declared Peter as the adversary at that point. Peter’s mindset was in the way. Peter couldn’t let go of that old way, and Jesus had to put it in its place.

So then the question is, who do *you* say Jesus is? Because who you say he is, and how you interpret that, will change the way you act, the way you treat others, the way you live. Who you see Jesus as will reinterpret life for you.

Is Jesus a militaristic patriot or a humble servant? Is Jesus an authoritarian king or a suffering saviour? Is Jesus a punishing judge or a gracious Messiah?

See how we understand Jesus changes for us the things he says and teaches. How we see Jesus changes for us what truly is right and wrong. Who we say Jesus is humbles us and allows that righteous change to even take place within us by God through the power of the Spirit.

So that whole school drop-off thing for me? I can stop seeing it as others being inconsiderate bad parents, and change my perspective and see how lucky we are to have kids to even be able to go to school, and that the frustrating traffic is just part of the package. That cross that Jesus asked us to pick up? It no longer is about punishment, shame, and death, and the fear around those things. But instead it becomes about forgiveness, mercy, and life for all people. And the

Messiah? The title no longer brings ideas around power mongering, totalitarian rule, and dominion over one's enemies, but Jesus the Messiah brings humble service, gracious freedom, and community together in God's kingdom.

The old ways are just that, the old ways. We can let go of the selfishness, the self-centeredness, and the self-indulgence. We can let go of how our minds are set on our own human ways. We can let go and let God. Let God continue in God's new ways, transforming us by grace and reforming us in love. Let God's humility run in and through us, allowing us to see the follow of our ways and adhere to the ways of God. Let God's redeeming salvation inform us of who we are, whose we are, and what we're even doing on this earth.

May we, as God's beloved children, continue in our pursuit of holiness, bridling ourselves by God's strength, and discerning right and wrong by God's wisdom, that as we continue in our journey in this season after Pentecost, we might know more fully just who Jesus is, in transforming us and shaping us by the power of the Spirit. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Lift Hight the Cross (#660)

### **CREED**

Together with all the church, 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 set our minds on divine things, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "in your compassionate grace, O God" and you may respond with **hear our prayer**. In your compassionate grace, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we love you and you hear our voices and listen to us as we pray. Keep our minds set on divine things, that we might live in humility in our service to you and neighbour. In your compassionate grace, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you give ear to us when we call, and you lift us up into new life. May our ministry reflect your grace, that all people we encounter be encouraged by your love. 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 Faith Lutheran Church in Powell River and their Anglican interim pastor Paula Sampson; and for Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Prince George and their pastor Fleming Blishen. In your compassionate grace, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we call upon your name and you provide for and save our lives. You have created this planet and entrusted it to us to be our home and source of life. Strengthen our stewardship, that our care for your creation be pleasing to you. In your compassionate grace, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you watch over the innocent and we turn to you. Enlighten all world leaders and politicians with your wisdom, that their leadership might reflect your humility and grace. We pray for all areas of the world that suffer from political turmoil, and we especially pray for those that we have sponsored to enter our country in their escape from danger: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; that they stay safe and away from harm. In your compassionate grace, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we are entangled by the cords of illness, death, and grief, but you come and save us from harm. Be with all who call upon your name, and shine your divine mercy on us all. Especially we pray for Beulah; Diana; Marie; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Paula; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; William; those who have been affected by COVID-19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...  
In your compassionate grace, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you have rescued our lives from death, our eyes from tears, and our feet from stumbling. You join us with all the saints and allow us to walk in your presence forever. May this promise inform our living, setting our minds on divine and eternal things, in your name. In your compassionate grace, O God, **hear our prayer.**

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

## **PEACE**

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

## **OFFERING PRAYER**

Holy God, you set our minds on you and your gifts, and you bless us with this food from heaven. May it be for us a reminder of your unending grace, that we be filled with your Spirit and truth through Jesus 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 Saviour Jesus Christ;  
who saves us through humble grace and joins us together  
with the choirs of angels,  
the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
that we might praise your name with this unending hymn:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY** (p. 190)

### THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord, your love for us is reflected in how you hear and listen to our supplication and answer us when we call. Even as we come to you in our grief and sorrow, entangled in death and anguish, you save us with your grace and righteous compassion. You watch over us and lift us up into life, wiping the tears from our eyes and keeping our paths straight. And you further welcome us into your presence by sending to us your Son Jesus, to live among us as one of us to set an example of your gracious love in the world.

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 given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And after they had eaten it, 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."

For in this food we see the humility in your saving grace, present with us as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

My our minds be always set on you and your truth, made possible by your Word, given to us through your promises in Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into God's saving grace 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 that God is with us.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 191)

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding us and filling us with your Word and truth, nourishing us with this bread from heaven. May we be empowered by your love and blessed by your strength, allowing us to see you working in and through the world, through Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

May the blessing of God, Sovereign, Saviour, and Spirit,  
abide with you, keep you strong and gentle,  
and bring you peace for the sake of the goodness that is willed for you, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** The Church's One Foundation (#654)

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, take up your cross to follow Jesus.

**Thanks be to God.**