



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 3, 2021

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and 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.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

GREETING

The reconciling grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,
the truth-evoking love of God,
and the healing fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF RECONCILIATION *by Cari Klaassen, MDiv student at VST*

*Creator God, most loving and our protector,
we come today to offer our sorrows, our passions, our grief, our commitments.*

*We thank you Creator God, for the life you bestowed upon us.
We thank you Creator God, for the journey that we have indwelled with your direction.*

We thank you for the creation that you have given us and for the earth and all that is within it. From the land, the oceans, the water ways, the trees, the vegetation; to the animals, birds of the air, animals of the sea, that give life and continue to nourish our lives. We take great pride in what you have given us.

We remember the children that have been found and have been hidden from us for so long. We thank you for each one of their lives, that you protected and cherished them when we didn't know.

We pray for all the families that have lost these little ones and we pray for those who endured the pain, abuse and neglect but survived to tell their story. We thank you for giving them the courage and strength to move on and heal. With you all things are possible.

We pray for the governments, churches, and other institutions that were involved with the Residential Schools and that justice is served and the healing may continue.

Gracious God, protect and surround Indigenous people with your Great Spirit and comfort us in this time.

Our lament is to cry out to you, to cry to you for healing, to take away the pain that burdens Indigenous people. The pain of the horrors that these innocent children endured. The cries that were only heard by their abusers.

Give us the strength and the boldness to rise above and prevail in the work that you have entrusted to us to fulfil.

Most of all, Loving God, we thank you for each one of our lives. You created us in your image. Not one is left alone, not one is forgotten. We thank you that even when we live in a fallen world and evil has been bestowed upon us, we still prevail above all to continue the work you have given each of us.

Give us the courage to say, yes, and to stand up against wrongs that have been done, to stand up against wrongs done to Indigenous people of Canada. That this world is restored to what it was intended by you.

We thank you for the lives that have gone to be with you. We thank you for their leadership and compassion. Their work is done on earth and continues, as they have left for us to continue.

Sovereign of our lives, we pray for leaders in government, in churches, in the world that they make just decisions and reprimand the wrongs that have been done to these children and families. You are a just God and a God of vengeance.

*We thank you, Holy God, as we meet in this sacred space.
In Jesus' mighty name, in all my relations.*

Amen.

SECWÉPEMC HONOUR SONG AND LIGHTING OF (15) CANDLES FOR THE CHILDREN WHO ATTENDED CANADIAN RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS

GATHERING HYMN: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say (#611)

WORD

GOSPEL: Mark 10:2-16

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus announced and enacted in history the new reality of God's surprising activity. These two stories demonstrate this new reality: Women and children are accepted and valued, not dismissed as inferior to adult men.

²Some Pharisees came, and to test [Jesus] they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." ⁵But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

¹⁰Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹²and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

The gospel of the Lord.
Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O Lord, you have spoken to us long ago through your prophets and you continue to speak to us directly. May we hear your truth this day, that by the power of your Spirit we might know the full reconciliation of your love and grace, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

As I'm sure you've very well noticed by now, today's service was designed very much with our National Day of Truth and Reconciliation in mind, also known as Orange Shirt Day. And I know that in general, I usually don't design or change our worship services around national holidays, aside from some obvious exceptions like Christmas and Easter and Thanksgiving to a certain extent. Like what I mean is we don't have a Labour Day Sunday or sing hymns around Family Day or anything like that.

But this National Day of Truth and Reconciliation is a bit different. Actually, it's a lot different. And it's something that needs to be addressed and talked about.

And it isn't exactly comfortable.

I mean I was trying to talk to my kids about the Residential School system and the horrors that came from it earlier this week. They've learned about it in school, of course, which is more than I can say for the generations before them. But just talking to them about it resulted in one giving out this frustrated groan and another just sitting there crying at the thought. And honestly, I think that reflects how many of us feel when faced with this topic, in that the whole situation is incredibly sad and perhaps on the guilt inducing side, so we might get frustrated just hearing about it.

I mean, it wasn't us. It wasn't our denomination. We had nothing to do with it and besides, it's pretty much ancient history now, right? There isn't much we can do about the past, so is there really any need to dwell on it now and cause our kids to groan and cry?

Truth be told, I might have had that attitude around it all like 10 years ago when I first really learned about residential schools. I already knew that the system was broken, but I thought that all that can be done for the Indigenous community had and continues to be done. I didn't really get the nuances of the relationship and the reluctance around reconciliation. I didn't want to dig deeper into the difficulties around how the whole situation could ever be rectified. I wanted to just conveniently brush it under the carpet and hope it just blows itself over, then we wouldn't have to worry about it anymore.

But it didn't, of course, and I'm actually glad it didn't. Because for any kind of reconciliation, any *real* reconciliation, there needs to be a deep hard look at the wrong. There needs to be an admission of guilt. There needs to be a realisation that something even needs to be reconciled in the first place.

And if you bear with me, this does relate to the gospel lesson that we read for today, which of course, is about divorce. Yikes, another sticky subject that we don't like to talk about. However, that isn't exactly the connection here that I'm talking about. Rather, the reason why divorce is such a sticky subject is because divorce cuts so deep into a person's life that the trauma of that could last generations. We all know divorcees and on the surface they might seem fine now, but it's a well-known fact that the divorce rate in North America is super high,

and that number is even greater among those whose parents are divorced. That trauma is inadvertently passed down to the generations and affects the views and outlooks on relationships, unless that trauma is properly dealt with. So while divorce happens and at times I do believe it needs to happen, it is something that should not be taken as lightly as it is in our society, and its real trauma perhaps not as glossed over and written off. This isn't to say that all divorcees just jumped into divorce without thinking, but I am saying that more consideration in general needs to be put into us as people. I mean when it comes to relationships and community, we need to think more about the individuals that make up that relationship and community. When we try to even contemplate any kind of reconciliation, we must not forget our *humanness*. Not just our own, mind you, I don't know if that would ever be in question deep down, but rather the humanness of those across from us, those who are calling us out for the atrocities of the past, those with whom we enter into these relationships that end tragically, and in fact, all people whom we encounter.

Because forgetting the humanity of the other is the easiest thing to do when we want to ease our own pain and hurt around these things. We effectively *dehumanize* them. It is a tool that is used to justify our actions, to alleviate our guilt, to ease our own conscience. It is easier to harm an object than a person. It is easier to feel no remorse for breaking a thing than a child. It is easier to attempt genocide when those who are being killed aren't even human but just a sequential number arbitrarily assigned to them.

And that is where Jesus' teaching for us today comes in. Back in those days it was really easy for the men to dehumanize the other "non-men". So all women were but tools for a man's convenience, and all children were but inconveniences. It was easy for men to divorce women for whatever reason his hardened heart could think of and dismiss any children that still needed a bit of growing up to do. Life was tough if you weren't born a fully grown man of the appropriate ethnicity. It sounds almost like our current times, doesn't it?

But Jesus goes and lifts up the humanity of the women and children. He points out to the men their folly of hardened hearts. He reconciles that relationship by reminding us all that God welcomes each and every one of us as God's own beloved.

I know I remind you all of this pretty much every week. But how quickly we forget it. Again, we don't often forget it for ourselves, no, we know we're God's chosen people. But we forget how the other is also equally welcomed and loved.

The other such as those who don't fall into our same demographic. The other such as the marginalized and outcast of our society. The other such as those whom we don't agree with or don't agree with us. The other such as the Indigenous victims of the Residential School system that we held in our thoughts and prayers this past Thursday, the Indigenous people and lands that we honour today in this service, the countless Indigenous women who go missing under the radar every year, and the Indigenous children that we just can no longer push aside and label them as inconveniences.

Jesus invites us all into that reconciliation of Spirit and our recognition of the humanness of us and each other, lifting and honouring all people not just in spite of our differences but because of them, and drawing a bond between us all that is fuelled with the richness of God's blessing and abundance of God's love.

And that is why we need to talk about this. That is why that as uncomfortable the conversation might be, we still need to be reminded of our past. That is why we wear this orange to be reminded that all children do indeed matter.

Mind you, I didn't say only children matter. Nor did I say others don't matter. But we need to be reminded that just as God loves us, so God loves the little ones, the marginalized, and the other that we so often and so easily brush aside.

So in our journey toward truth and reconciliation, let us not forget the humanity of the other. Let us not forget the love that God has for them and us. Let us not forget that we are all together welcomed to be the one body of Christ in the world, full of grace and forgiveness, looking for ways to best serve and love. For we are all collectively God's beloved, and because of that, we can learn to love and respect each other, not expecting special treatment over others because of our ancestry or skin tone, but moving towards a life of peace with our fellow humans and all living creatures.

May we, the bearers of this gospel, actually bear the gospel and proclaim it to all whom we encounter through our words, actions, and humanity. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Healer of Our Every Ill (#612) verses 1, 3, 4

LITANY FOR NATIONAL DAY FOR TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

by Ron Flaming, Truth and Reconciliation Action Group, Waterloo North Mennonite Church

In gratitude to God who healed our broken relationship
by reconciliation through Jesus Christ
we receive a call to the Ministry of Reconciliation
as a paradigm for healing broken relationships.

Today we acknowledge:
a dark side to the history of Canada.
We settler peoples have reaped the benefits of the land
by pushing aside Indigenous people in order to seize their land.

Today we lament:
the attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples by Canada
through the Indian Act which criminalized the practice of traditions and cultures,
and mandated the seizure and indoctrination of children in residential schools.

Today we acknowledge we have no appropriate words,
so we stand respectfully in silent lament:
for the children who died while in custody of residential schools,
died of active abuse,
died of lonely hearts and separation from family.

Today we acknowledge we have no appropriate words,
so we stand in silent respect:
for the families and communities who mourn,
mourn their children who did not come home from residential schools,

mourn the disruption of family and way of life,
mourn the exploitation and desecration of their traditional lands.

Pause in silence

In gratitude to God who demonstrated the way of reconciliation with us,
we commit to walking together in a new way,
acknowledging the true history and place of Indigenous Peoples on this land,
living with respect, listening and learning as we move forward
on the path of true reconciliation.

Amen

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you, with all the Indigenous people of Canada, and with all the saints of the past and present, always.

And also with you.

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.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

It is indeed right, our duty and our joy, to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, Almighty God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who remains with us through the most difficult times of life, reminding each and every one of us that we are human, we are loved, and we are regarded as your children, welcomed and living in your steadfast love.

And so, on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus displayed this unending love by sitting 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."

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

It is in this bread and cup that we see this providing love and feel our connection to all the saints of the past, present, and future, trusting that all live in God's welcoming arms, as we declare the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God in our remembrance of the atrocities of the past, as we honour the lives that were lost, and by lifting up the ongoing reconciliation with our Indigenous siblings, may we continually see

you in our midst, giving us identity as your children, strengthening us by your grace, and nurturing us with your Word of peace. For you have looked upon us all with favour, and brought forth your glory that we might lean on you and your wisdom for the age to come, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one people and one body 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 living in us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)
Abide with Me (#629)
Ubi caritas et amor (#642)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have fed us with your nourishing Word, that gives us hope and comfort in a time such as this. Remind us always of the connection we have with you and all people, bringing light to the promise of welcome as the one body of Christ, where every child truly matters. May our lives continue to be a testament of the truth in your grace as we keep travelling on the road toward reconciliation with our Indigenous siblings and all people, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May the grace of God our Creator lift you up,
the love of God the Christ hold you close,
and the blessing of God as Counsellor be with you, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: When Pain of the World Surrounds Us (#704)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, remember that every child matters.

Thanks be to God.

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