



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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### Reformation Day

October 31, 2021

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

Rooted in the past and growing into the future, the church must always be reformed in order to live out the love of Christ in an ever-changing world. We celebrate the good news of God's grace, that Jesus Christ sets us free every day to do this life-transforming work. Trusting in the freedom given to us in baptism, we pray for the church, that Christians will unite more fully in worship and mission.

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 hən̓q̓əmi̓nəm̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together both here in the space and online to hear God's freeing Word and to freely worship in response. **Amen.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** God is Here! (#526) verses 1, 3, 4

### GREETING

The liberating grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the redeeming love of God, and the freeing fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, we give you thanks for pouring out your Holy Spirit on your faithful people, renewing the church in every age. Keep us steadfast in your word, protect and comfort us in times of trial, defend us against all enemies of the gospel, and bestow on the whole church your saving peace, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and Lord.

**Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:31-34

A reading from Jeremiah.

*The renewed covenant will not be breakable, but like the old covenant it will expect the people to live upright lives. To know the LORD means that one will defend the cause of the poor and needy (Jer. 22:16). The renewed covenant is possible only because the LORD will forgive iniquity and not remember sin. Our hope lies in a God who forgets.*

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, "Know the LORD," for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM: Psalm 46

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup>**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,  
and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**

<sup>3</sup>though its waters rage and foam,  
and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.

<sup>4</sup>**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.**

<sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken;  
God shall help it at the break of day.

<sup>6</sup>**The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake;  
God speaks, and the earth melts away.**

<sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

<sup>8</sup>**Come now, regard the works of the LORD,  
what desolations God has brought upon the earth;**

<sup>9</sup>behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;  
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.

<sup>10</sup>**“Be still, then, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”**

<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

## **SECOND READING: Romans 3:19-28**

A reading from Romans.

*Paul's words stand at the heart of the preaching of Martin Luther and other Reformation leaders. No human beings make themselves right with God through works of the law. We are brought into a right relationship with God through the divine activity centered in Christ's death. This act is a gift of grace that liberates us from sin and empowers our faith in Jesus Christ.*

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup>But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup>since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup>they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup>it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup>Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup>For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)**

### **GOSPEL: John 8:31-36**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus speaks of truth and freedom as spiritual realities known through his word. He reveals the truth that sets people free from sin.*

<sup>31</sup>Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, “If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” <sup>33</sup>They answered him, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, ‘You will be made free?’”

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, “Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

<sup>35</sup>The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

Lord, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be pleasing in your sight, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

So for Halloween tonight, our daughter had decided to wear a red rain jacket with the hood up, red pants, and an all-black dome-like mask with just a white square on it. Any guesses on what she’s trying to be? You may or may not know, but she is dressing up as one of the guards from the very popular Netflix series Squid Game. A series, by the way, that none of our kids even watched, they just know all about it from the multitude of internet memes and the myriad of YouTube parody videos. You know a show is popular when kids who haven’t even seen it are huge enough fans to dress that way for Halloween.

If by chance you don’t know what I’m talking about, Squid Game is this Korean-based thriller drama that follows a fellow whose name I can’t remember nor pronounce who is in financial dire straits because of his uncontrollable gambling habits. Then he randomly meets a stranger in a subway station that offers him the chance to win a ton of cash by playing these schoolyard games against 450ish other contestants who are also in financial dire straits. Seems like a no brainer. So this forgettable named guy agrees to play, thinking he has nothing to lose but with everything to gain. These are kid’s games, for goodness sake. But then it’s revealed that the losers of the games are brutally shot and killed. This little helpful tidbit of information was revealed when close to half of the contestants that lost the first game were brutally shot and killed.

Of course, this strikes fear and doubt in the remaining contestants. Is all that money really worth their lives? The masked organizers of the games confused them even further by telling them that every “eliminated” contestant adds the equivalent of about \$100,000 CAD in the pot. So with already 200ish people eliminated, the pot was over 2 million. So if you do the math, a sole victor could stand to win over 40 million dollars. Sure, that isn’t Jeff Bezos kind of money, but it sure could solve a lot of debt issues.

So the story of Squid Game is built around the tension between one’s desire to live over their desire to be rich, their loyalty to the relationships they built in the game over their competitiveness against those same people, their morals that determine what is right and wrong over winning the money at all costs, as it would for sure save them from their own crippling and debilitating debt. It caused quite the conundrum.

I know, this story is totally fantastical, like there is no way that all the contestants could just die unnoticed like that or that there would be some sort of secret organization that would bother to create such high risk games. But what struck me about the whole series and why I think it's so popular, was how the show touches on the very relatable feeling among the contestants of being completely and utterly trapped. Trapped in their debt, trapped in their life circumstances, trapped in their not-so-great decisions of the past.

And that's scary. So scary in fact that they'd be willing to put their lives on the line just to be free from whatever is holding them down. If you watch the show, you would understand their desperation and desire to play, as many of the contestants felt like their lives were already on the line, even from before the games began.

We might not have felt this level of trapped before, where our actual lives were at stake, but I'm sure we've felt it some shape or form in the past, or maybe even now. It doesn't have to be financially but of course it totally could be, but also it could perhaps be feeling trapped in a bad or abusive relationship, trapped in a toxic job environment or position, trapped by our own guilt and shame of the past. That last one is one that I struggle with particularly, and it appears that I might not be the only one.

In today's gospel lesson, part of the readings we get for every Reformation Sunday, Jesus promises us that we will be free. And I admit, that much like those listening to Jesus in the story, I wonder "free of what?" because being born and raised in a "free" country, I don't really know any different. But Jesus was clear in his explanation: they, and we, are slaves to sin.

I know, I know, it's hard to not get defensive when we're accused of something that we might not agree with, as did Jesus' original hearers when they thought they were being called slaves. But what I understand Jesus to mean by "slave to sin" isn't that we are controlled or ruled by the sin itself, but that we're controlled, trapped even, by the circumstances that hinder our relationship with God. We are trapped in the systems that oppress us and condition us to oppress others. We are trapped in the perpetual stream of information that inundates our brains to the point where we can't even tell what is true or fake anymore. We are trapped in the stifling selfishness of the world, teaching us to only aim up but never to look down, stripping us of all compassion and humility toward those less fortunate than us.

We are trapped in this sin.

Or at least, it could feel like we are. Like those contestants on Squid Game we could sometimes feel like we have nowhere to turn, nowhere to run, nowhere to find rest and sanctuary. It can be so overwhelming, causing us to take desperate action, frantically grasping at whatever could save us from this shame. And it wasn't just the Squid Game contestants that did this, all throughout history we have people acting in ways to alleviate the guilt, trying to find the magic formula that would wash it away or the divine checklist that would prove themselves worthy. We see it in our time, we see it in Old Testament times, and we of course see it in Jesus' time

And we also saw it just over 500 years ago when a Benedictine monk by the name of Martin Luther was so led to engage and deep study and prayer in hopes to understand how a "good God" could ever let this be. And in his studies he came to realise that this being trapped? Well it isn't God's doing at all. Instead, it's ours. In our depravity we have set up these systems to

alleviate our guilt at the expense of others. In our imbalanced sense of self we have created structures and rules that measure our worth as people. In our (dare I say) sin, we have been trapped in our own judgments of ourselves and others, not being able to see and understand the width and breadth of God's grace and love.

So Luther came to understand Jesus' words in today's gospel to mean that we have indeed been set free from rigorous rat race that we call "normal" life. In own guilt, he felt liberated by the truth of God's gospel, that because of God's forgiveness, we are continually loved by God and welcomed into God's kingdom and community. In Luther's own sin, he saw God's grace freeing him from that shame and lifting him up to reform the church to be more faithful to God's love, more receptive of God's grace, and more compassionate to others who might not yet see it through that lens.

And so for us, in our own feelings of being trapped and guilty, we can rest in God's promise of forgiveness and redemption. In our feeling excluded and shamed, we can trust that God restores us and brings us back into wholeness. In our stifling and overbearing sin controlling us, we can have faith that there is freedom in God's Word, allowing us to let go of our worries and concerns of greatness, allowing us to see others as God sees them, allowing us to truly believe that we too, are beloved children of God.

See the Reformation as it started just over 500 years ago wasn't to protest against the church. It wasn't to stick it in the face of the church and call it out for being so wrong for so long. It wasn't even to alleviate the guilt and shame that was put on the people by the systems that were prevalent at the time. Rather, it was meant to do just as its name suggests, to *reform* the church to be more faithful, to be more loving, and to be more open to accepting God's grace that comes to us freely, God's mercy that is granted without condition, and God's love for us all that will never change, never falter, never trap us into thinking that we are slaves to anything.

On this day of Reformation, may we remember and recognize God reforming us ever in God's love, that we might live in joy and freedom, liberated from the shame and guilt of sin and empowered to display the compassion of Christ, now and always. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (#504) verses 1, 4

### **CREED**

With the whole liberated people 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 be reformed by God's grace, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "God, by your liberating mercy," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. God, by your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you are our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. You free us by the truth of your Word and you bring us to the joy of your community and salvation. Allow us to continually see you present in our lives and world and be inspired by your freeing grace. God, by your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, in you we have nothing to fear, even as the world around us seems to fall into ruin. Strengthen our hope and our ministry, that those whom we encounter be inspired by the truth of your Word and promises. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church in Canada; our bishop Greg, assistant to the bishop and bishop elect Kathy; and national bishop Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for St. Peter's Estonian Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their pastor Algur Kaerma; Peace Lutheran Church in Vernon and their pastor David Hunter; and all our pastors serving Anglican congregations under the 2002 Waterloo accord. God, by your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, the mountains of the lands and the waters of the seas reveal your majestic glory, and through them you provide for us a home and resources to sustain life. May our care for all that you've created be pleasing to you and effective in displaying our gratitude for all that you've first given us. God, by your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you are in midst of our communities, cities, and countries, and your justice shall not be shaken. Grant all world leaders and politicians knowledge of your grace and wisdom, that their judgements can be fair and for the good of all. We pray especially for the areas of the world facing political turmoil and strife, and we particularly remember those that we've sponsored to enter into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. God, by your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we know that you are with us as you are our stronghold and you bring to us healing and wholeness. Be especially with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that we all might feel the freedom found in your name. In particular we pray for Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Diana; Marie; Bev and family; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; those who have been affected by COVID-19; and all we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

God, by your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we are stilled and in awe of your greatness and we acknowledge that you are God, exalted among the nations and all the earth. You join us with you and all the saints, living

together eternally in your freedom. Remind us always of our part in the one body of Christ, that we be confident in our unchanging position in your love. God, by your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer.**

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

### **PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you 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, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, almighty God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who teaches us the truth about your freeing grace and liberating love, and reforms us to live as your faithful people.

For on the night that he was betrayed, our Saviour Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, 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 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 through this food that we see how God's redemption and liberation are for all, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

For you, O God, have given us all joy in believing, knowing that you form and reform us to ever walk faithfully in your way and truth, relying on your unending grace. So all honour and glory be to you through your son Jesus, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Brought together into freedom 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 liberating love.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 208)

Here Is Bread (#483)

Eat This Bread (#472)

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, you have again given us again a taste of your redeeming grace and liberating love, freeing us to unabashedly be your people in the world. Strengthen us by your Word of truth, and give us the confidence to reform again and again by your unending and steadfast mercy and faithfulness, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May God our Creator bless you and abide with you,  
God the Christ shine on you and redeem you,  
God as our Counsellor reform you and set you truly free, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** We Know That Christ Is Raised (#449) verse 1, 3, 4

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, live in freedom.

**Thanks be to God.**

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