



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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### Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost

November 14, 2021

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

November begins with All Saints Day and ends in or near Advent, when we anticipate Christ's coming again. It is fitting, then, that the readings today tell of the final resurrection and the end time. In the turmoil of hope, fear, and disbelief that these predictions provoke in us, Hebrews sounds a note of confident trust. Christ makes a way for us where there is no way, and we walk it confidently, our hearts and bodies washed in baptismal water, trusting the one who has promised forgiveness. The more we see the last day approaching, the more important it is to meet together to provoke one another to love.

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 hən̓q̓əmiṇəm̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 16)

Protect us, O God, for we take refuge in you. We recognize and acknowledge that you are our Lord, our good above all other. Our delight is in your work that we see in the lands and among its peoples.

O Lord, you are our portion and our cup, and you uphold our lot. Our inheritance from you is full of goodness and grace and you continue to teach us night after night. You are indeed set before us and in you we shall not be shaken.

And so our hearts are glad and our spirits rejoice in the hope we have in you. For you do not abandon us, but you give us wholeness, showing us the path of life and granting to us the fullness of joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind (#400) verses 1 & 4

### GREETING

The life changing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the emboldening love of God,  
and the strengthening fellowship of the Holy Spirit  
be with you all.

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, you have made all things and all that is to come and you have called it good. But by our own doing, what you have made has been exploited, used, and wasted. Bring to us the wholeness of your gospel, the restoration of your grace, and the redemption of your love, that our hope found in Christ in the world support us through the birth pangs of your new creation in our communities and in our lives, through Jesus our brother and Saviour. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Daniel 12:1-3

A reading from Daniel.

*The book of Daniel is an example of apocalyptic literature, which is full of strange visions and symbolism. Arising during times of great persecution, apocalyptic literature is concerned with God's revelation about the end time and the coming kingdom of God, when God will vindicate the righteous who have been persecuted.*

<sup>1</sup>“At that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise. There shall be a time of anguish, such as has never occurred since nations first came into existence. But at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. <sup>2</sup>Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. <sup>3</sup>Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SECOND READING: Hebrews 10:11-14, 19-25**

A reading from Hebrews.

*Images of worship and sacrifice are used throughout Hebrews to highlight what Christ has uniquely accomplished through his death. Because we have received forgiveness through Christ's death, we live with sincere hearts by trusting in God's promises and encouraging love and good works from each other.*

<sup>11</sup>Every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," <sup>13</sup>and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." <sup>14</sup>For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

<sup>19</sup>Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, <sup>20</sup>by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), <sup>21</sup>and since we have a great priest over the house of God, <sup>22</sup>let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. <sup>23</sup>Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. <sup>24</sup>And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup>not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)****GOSPEL: Mark 13:1-8**

The holy gospel according to Mark.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*In the last week of his life, Jesus warned his disciples concerning trials that were to come upon them and upon the world. He exhorts the listener: Do not be alarmed.*

<sup>1</sup>As [Jesus] came out of the temple, one of his disciples said to him, "Look, Teacher, what large stones and what large buildings!" <sup>2</sup>Then Jesus asked him, "Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone will be left here upon another; all will be thrown down."

<sup>3</sup>When he was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked him privately, <sup>4</sup>"Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign that all these things are about to be accomplished?" <sup>5</sup>Then Jesus began to say to them, "Beware that no one leads you astray. <sup>6</sup>Many will come in my name and say, 'I am he!' and they will lead many astray. <sup>7</sup>When you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be alarmed; this must take place, but the end is still to come. <sup>8</sup>For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom; there will be earthquakes in various places; there will be famines. This is but the beginning of the birth pangs."

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON

Almighty God, speak your Word to us and guide us in our understanding that we might be hearers and doers and proclaimers of your love through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

Anyone here ever give birth to a baby? I haven't, of course, but I come from a family that has a long history of childbirth. And throughout that history, the parts that I know of at least, and being present in the room when my own below-average sized wife gave birth to 3 above-average sized babies, I can tell you that childbirth isn't exactly easy or pleasant.

I don't mean the children that come out, mind you, not all of them anyway. But I mean the actual act of a baby of almost any size passing through what seems to be impossible passageways. Yeah I know in these days of modern medicine we have methods and techniques and substances that can help with the whole process, but we can't deny that it still is an ordeal on the mother's body either way. Childbirth, by design, is just difficult. It's painful, it's uncomfortable, and it could maybe even make you faint. However, those three times that I've witnessed it with my own eyes, it was also the most beautiful thing that I've ever seen.

However, I do want to be sensitive to those who haven't had kids or can't, or those who had bad experiences with child bearing that continue to be bad for them and their families. I know sometimes child birth isn't the beautiful thing that I'm making it sound to be, and there are real dangers and lasting hurts that could come from it. But I think in its purest sense, we can all agree that children being born is a great and beautiful miraculous gift from God to allow us to live beyond our time and extend all the goodness of humanity for generations. So what I'm saying is that even in the bad experiences or non-experiences, God is still present and with us through it all.

And I get that my wife and I are lucky that all 3 times went without a hitch, really. I mean the whole labour process was relatively short for her, and she more or less came out of it all unscathed. An extra kid to care for, for the rest of her life, but pretty unscathed. And if I'm honest, I feel as though I love her more for having gone through the process, being with me as we started this family that can by trying at times, but a family that I would ever change for the world. A new car, maybe, but not the world.

That's the thing about this childbearing business, it's not easy. It's unpleasant. And the work of being a parent for most mothers continues on well after the event of birthing that child. I know for my wife and me, our lives have never been the same as before having children and I can't see it ever going back to how it was, and I imagine that to be the case for most other parents out there. So it is life changing, world shaking, reality altering for all those involved.

Yet, people still choose to have kids. Even after the first one, people decide to have another or more. It is life changing and difficult, yes, but it is also beautiful and life giving... like literally.

So I wonder if this is what Jesus is trying to allude to when talking to his disciples in today's Gospel lesson. The band had just left the temple, fresh from Jesus pointing out the imbalance of wealth in their society and the injustice of a widow offering her last three copper coins to the temple treasury to feed this building that was built on the backs of slaves and paid for by unfair taxation to be completely grandiose, over the top, and awe inspiring. And what do the disciples do? They are awe inspired by the building.

And really, we probably would be too if we were to see the temple in all its glory. It was massive, covered in gold, and used the finest engineering the world had ever seen at that point, and perhaps ever did since then. About this temple we could honestly say that they don't make them like they used to. It was a marvel of their ancient world and it continues to be a marvel to this day, as it was that great, that amazing, that absolutely awe inspiring.

And Jesus said it was going to come down.

He wasn't wrong, you know, as by the time the Gospel according to Mark was written, the temple had either already been destroyed or at least it was clear that it inevitably would be soon. This would have been heart breaking news to anyone who heard it at the time. I mean, like I said the temple was an engineering marvel. But not just that, it was the center of Jewish worship and life. To say that this unfellable building would eventually fall would shatter the faith of everyone in everything.

But to this, Jesus says that it is but the beginning of the birth pangs. The wars, the rumours of wars, the earthquakes, the famines, the utter destruction of all we've known and loved will be taken away but that would just be the beginning? What would be next? We might shudder at the thought.

So I wonder if Jesus was very intentional in his use of words here. I know, some of you might have doubts on the historical accuracy of every syllable that is recorded coming out of Jesus' mouth, and that is ok. But whatever the case, what if the term "birth pangs" was to hold a specific message for us? What if there is a deeper meaning to these wars and rumours of wars than just difficult times? What if we needn't be afraid of what is to come?

Now, I'm not talking about the end of the world or anything as many might see this as, but I'm talking about the possible and perhaps probable end of *our* world. I'm talking about the inevitable change that will come to society, to our communities, and in our own individual lives. I'm talking about the difficulties and discomforts of some sort of event that could and perhaps would happen to us, one that is life changing, world shaking, or reality altering... like the fears and anxiety that being a new parent can be.

But this event in our lives doesn't have to be a baby per se, I'm sure many of you, especially the younger ones, are hoping it isn't. But perhaps it's a change in jobs or professions. Maybe it's a move to a different area code or time zone. It could be a death of a loved one. Or it could be something like a global pandemic.

The thing is, change happens to us all the time. Change happens in the world. Change happens to our countries and policies and how we do things. Sometimes this change is uncomfortable. A lot of times this change is unwanted and resisted. Some might even think that the change is wrong. But the fact remains that change will happen regardless of whether we welcome it or not, whether it makes us comfortable or not, whether we think it's the right kind of change or not.

So then I wonder if Jesus chose to use the term "birth pangs" here not just to highlight the discomforts and difficulties, but also to instill in us hope in the midst of this change. I wonder if he's saying that he understands that the change can be difficult, like something like the destruction of their beloved temple, and compares it to the difficulties of giving birth to a child

and reminding us that like giving birth there is something beautiful in that change. I wonder if he is telling us to not lose heart even when the change doesn't seem to be going anywhere good, because he is with us among the change, guiding us, comforting us, and helping us to manage the pain and disorientation of the whole ordeal.

One commentator on this passage I've heard called Jesus a "cosmic midwife" in that he has been and is with us every step of the way. He has equipped us and prepared us, he has taught us and strengthened us, and he stays with us in birth pangs and reminds us to breathe.

See as scary and wrong as change can feel, good can come out of it. As much as we want to resist the change and force things to go back to how we thought they were best again, we can open our minds and have faith that God is present in the possibilities and guiding us into a better future. As much as change can disrupt our lives and bring about so much disarray, we can believe and trust that God can make it into something beautiful.

As we approach the end of this season after Pentecost and look ahead to Advent, may we embrace the change set before us by God through the Spirit and see the gifts and blessings in them, that we may be filled with the hope of Christ for the salvation a world in need of a Saviour. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** My Lord, What a Morning (#438) verses 1 & 3

#### **CREED**

With all the church in Spirit, 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 reborn and reformed, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "by your nurturing mercy, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your nurturing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you protect us as our refuge above all other. Even in our fear and confusions, you lead us by your wisdom and grant us hope. Remind us of this promise and strengthen us for your service. By your nurturing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we delight in the numerous siblings we have in your name, connected to each other by your amazing grace. Guide us in our ministry to help all people to feel this connection to you and each other, that we all learn to live in community and peace. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishop Greg, assistant to the bishop and bishop elect Kathy, and national bishop Susan; and all our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Grace Lutheran Church in Victoria and the pastors and leaders that serve there; Mount Olive Lutheran Church in South Surrey and their pastor Peter Hanson; and all the prison ministries and their chaplains in and around our Synod. By your nurturing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you have created for us pleasant lands and seas, full of rich beauty and wonder, in which we can live and for which we can care. May our stewardship of this planet be pleasing to you and all that you have made may flourish and continue to house life. By your nurturing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you give us counsel and teach us your ways of truth and love. Grant this wisdom to all the peoples of the world, that we might all learn to live in harmony and peace. We pray also for those whom we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. May their journey toward safety and security be swift. By your nurturing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, in our distress you hold our hands and we shall not be shaken. Be we all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that all of us might see the gladness of heart in you and have our spirits rejoice in your name. We pray especially for Marie; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Paula; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Owen; all who have been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your nurturing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, at the end of our time, we know that we shall rest in hope for even in death you do not abandon us. Remind us always of those we've loved and lost and remain with you in your eternity, that their lives of faith continually be for us a source of inspiration and strength. By your nurturing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your life-changing mercy, taught 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, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who reveals to us your truth of gracious forgiveness and everlasting life, that we might see how we are joined together with you and all the saints of all times and places as the one body of Christ.

As it was on the night that he was betrayed that 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."

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 by this food that we get a glimpse of God's providence and our connectedness to each other, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

To you, O God, be all honour and glory for all that you do and give, through Jesus Christ, our risen Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### LORD'S PRAYER

Brought together in a new birth, 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 love and care covering us all.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 208)  
One Bread, One Body (#496)  
Eat This Bread (#472)

#### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give thanks for you have again fed us with your truth and love, and given us hope for the world. Continue to strengthen us in our ministry and proclamation of your Word, that the hope that you give can be shared and live on through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May our Merciful God bless you and keep you,  
our Messiah God shine on you and be gracious onto you,  
our Mothering God look upon you with favour,  
and give you peace.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** Drawn to the Light (#593)

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, hold fast to hope.

**Thanks be to God.**

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