



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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### Christ the King Sunday

November 21, 2021

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

Even after Israel had experienced the vagaries of kings, the people still longed for a true king to set things right. He would have the king's title of Anointed One (Messiah); he would be the "one like a human being" (Son of Man) given dominion in Daniel's vision. Jesus is given these titles, even though he is nothing like an earthly king. His authority comes from the truth to which he bears witness, and those who recognize the truth voluntarily listen to him. We look forward to the day he is given dominion, knowing his victory will be the nonviolent victory of 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 hən̓q̓əmiñəm (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 93)

We gather in the name of the Lord our King, robed in majesty and armed with strength, the one who created the world that cannot be moved. For since the world began, God's everlasting throne has been established. Even the crashing waves of the mighty waters don't compare to God's might. The Lord our God is true and sure and holy, forever and forevermore. **Amen.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** Guide Me Ever, Great Redeemer (#618)

### GREETING

The reigning grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eye-opening love of God, and the compassionate communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Eternally ruling God, Jesus taught that true power is made known in service. We are to love you, our neighbours, and ourselves as your reign of peace is revealed through us. Give us the will to have our barriers torn down and our assumptions challenged, that we be open to see you more fully and clearly, through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14

A reading from Daniel.

*To the community for whom this passage was written, it seemed as though the oppression they were experiencing would never end. Daniel's message is: It shall end. The Ancient One, who is judge, will call all nations to account and will give dominion to "one like a human being," the Messiah.*

<sup>9</sup>As I watched,  
thrones were set in place,  
and an Ancient One took his throne,  
his clothing was white as snow,  
and the hair of his head like pure wool;  
his throne was fiery flames,  
and its wheels were burning fire.

<sup>10</sup>A stream of fire issued  
and flowed out from his presence.  
A thousand thousands served him,  
and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him.  
The court sat in judgment,  
and the books were opened.

<sup>13</sup>As I watched in the night visions,  
I saw one like a human being  
coming with the clouds of heaven.  
And he came to the Ancient One  
and was presented before him.

<sup>14</sup>To him was given dominion

and glory and kingship,  
that all peoples, nations, and languages  
should serve him.  
His dominion is an everlasting dominion  
that shall not pass away,  
and his kingship is one  
that shall never be destroyed.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND READING: Revelation 1:4b-8**

A reading from Revelation.

*The book of Revelation begins by celebrating the Almighty God, who spans all of time. Similarly, Jesus is celebrated as the firstborn from the dead who rules over the world's rulers. He is the one whose return we eagerly await.*

<sup>4b</sup> Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne, <sup>5</sup> and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To him who loves us and freed us from our sins by his blood, <sup>6</sup> and made us to be a kingdom, priests serving his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

<sup>7</sup> Look! He is coming with the clouds;  
every eye will see him,  
even those who pierced him;  
and on his account all the tribes of the earth will wail.

So it is to be. Amen.

<sup>8</sup> "I am the Alpha and the Omega," says the Lord God, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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

### **GOSPEL: John 18:33-37**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*In John's gospel, the story of Jesus and Pilate presents two different ways of exercising power: through force or with love.*

<sup>33</sup> Pilate entered the headquarters again, summoned Jesus, and asked him, "Are you the King of the Jews?" <sup>34</sup> Jesus answered, "Do you ask this on your own, or did others tell you about me?"

<sup>35</sup> Pilate replied, "I am not a Jew, am I? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me. What have you done?" <sup>36</sup> Jesus answered, "My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my followers would be fighting to keep me from being handed over to the Jews. But as it is, my kingdom is not from here." <sup>37</sup> Pilate asked him, "So you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice."

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

### **SERMON**

Holy God, open our hearts this day to receive your Word and set us free to follow your truth, that by the power of your Spirit we can faithfully follow you and your love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

I'm going to be honest with you, I had this sermon all written and ready to go a few days ago. I had a big weekend planned and I didn't want to be worried about sermon writing through it all. So I talked about the floods around here that happened this past week, and pondered the question, "how can a good God let bad things happen". I was proud of myself for having it done earlier than usual, and was able to get some rest in the form of a full day off, which have been a bit scarce for me lately.

But then this past Friday happened, the day that I was taking off to rest and do things around the house, the day that a kid was found not guilty for shooting and killing two people and seriously injuring another. And I was moved to change my sermon. I'll admit that I hummed and hawed about it for a good day, mostly because I legitimately was busy and had other things to take care of, but also because I was emotionally spent and didn't know if I had it in me to rewrite it completely.

But then yesterday happened. Yesterday was supposed to be day 2-ish of my weekend although I was scheduled to be at a joint meeting with all the task forces of the ELCIC, whose work is around being a more inclusive and welcoming church, combatting issues around racism, ableism, and homophobia. And in this meeting we heard the work of the other task forces and their philosophy around what they do, and basically a number of them drew back on the aforementioned case and not guilty verdict, the floods, and the very clear political and social unrest in our country, our Western society, and around the world.

And so, I decided to rewrite my sermon. Granted it might not be as polished, but I do feel that it would be more faithful to the time that we're in, and more able to perhaps catch a glimpse of whatever God might be up to in the chaos and turmoil of this current context. Because as I sat back and watched all these things unfold, from the floods of BC and the story of Sumas Lake, the police arresting the pipeline protestors for protecting their land, to this kid able to divide a nation on the definition of self-defence, and I've come to a bleak realisation that there are but two kinds of people in the world: those who think they're right all the time, and those who can never see or admit when they're wrong.

I know, that's just one kind of person. And that is why it is bleak.

As I watched the news, read the posts, even scrolled through the comments, it was so clear to me that everyone on every side you could imagine truly believed that they were on the side of justice, decency, and righteousness. Aside from the obvious trolls that just want to get a rise out of people, those who were really vocal about these issues were speaking from their hearts, standing up for what they believe to be true, and defending themselves and their view from the opposition. And so as someone in a position privileged to speak on what we can do about this dichotomy, all I can say is "I don't know".

But I do know that these notions of “being right,” regardless of what your “right” is, all come from a place of entitlement. I’m not saying that everyone is just acting like spoiled brats, but what I’m saying is that everyone seems to be acting and speaking from a place where they *deserve* what they’re talking about. Sure, many people have worked hard to be where they are. Many people have sacrificed much. Many people literally bled to have what they have... but does that make it theirs?

At this point I’m reminded of the gospel lesson for today, a portion of the story more suitable for Good Friday than Christ the King. But then, I suppose with all that is going on, it does sort of feel like a death has occurred. The part of the story that we get today is just the short back and forth between Jesus and Pilate. Pilate, who is a Roman governor charged with watching over Judea, was trying to get to the bottom of the Jews’ problem with Jesus. Actually, I don’t know if he really cared about what the Jews even thought, it seemed more that he was trying to figure out if Jesus was a foreign and invading king in order to protect the Roman Empire. You know, the group that from Pilate’s perspective was definitely in the “right”.

I mean, Rome worked pretty hard to be Rome and to have all the power it had at the time. They had to be organized, smart, and super tough in order to conquer all the other lands and claim them as their own. Because of their determination and ability to stand on the backs of lesser people, it was in their rights to protect what was “theirs”, which in this case, was their kingdom against a potential threat.

In Pilate’s eyes, Judea belonged to Rome, and Jesus was an invader trying to take what Rome already and rightfully took. So to Pilate, all those in Rome, and any who sympathize with them would see Pilate having Jesus crucified as, you guessed it, “self defense.”

Now, I’m not trying to discount the world of the American judicial system or that particular jury from the case I spoke of earlier, I’m just saying that this is why our world is so broken now. I’m saying that the reason there even was a case to begin with was because of the hopeless fallen nature of all people regardless of what side they stand on of any issue. I’m saying that this case and frankly almost everything that has happened in the past few years has been so telling of how we are such a sinful people in desperate need of a Saviour.

A Saviour that has come, a Saviour that continues to save, but a Saviour that for whatever reason, we refuse to listen to.

“So, you are a king?” Pilate’s words here echo our confusion as we continue to wrestle with what it means that the first will be last and the last will be first, or that to come to Jesus we must be like the little children, or that to be Jesus’ followers we need to pick up our crosses and deny ourselves. Although we’ve heard and even had explain to us these words of Jesus time and again, they are still foreign and in some way, almost offensive to us. Because we have what we have and we own what we own, so we should have the right to protect and defend it.

But the thing is, Jesus as King, has a kingdom that isn’t from this world. He says that if it were, then his people and followers would have fought to keep him from being arrested. You know, like how Peter cut the ear off of that soldier, how the crusades of a thousand years ago shaped the history of our world, how we continue to this day to thump our bibles and claim we have exclusive knowledge and insight on what is right and wrong for and in the world.

I don't think this is what Jesus meant. Rather, I think he meant that all kingdoms of the world will eventually fall. Rome did. Israel essentially did. Even our Western society, not exactly a kingdom per se, but the way of life and organization seems to be falling. And what I think Jesus is saying is that since these kingdoms will eventually fall, they aren't what our faith should be in. They aren't where we should hang our morals and ethics and relationships on. They aren't really worth protecting if protecting it means that we lose our way and our sight of God's truth.

See Jesus is saying that because his kingdom isn't of earth, his kingdom will last forever. His kingdom of love, grace, and mercy. His rule of community, right relationship, and service. His Sovereignty over forgiveness, redemption, and salvation. These will never go away, even as the lands flood, governments fall, and basic justice is ignored, we will continue to be God's people in this broken world, living in the hope of God's healing and peace, strengthened by God's promises and truth to humbly serve and be served in and around the church, the body of Christ.

So the next time we think of something as ours, let us be reminded that all we have belongs to God and we are but stewards of it all except for the one thing that has been truly given to us. And that is our unwavering identity as God's people, forgiven and saved, redeemed and healed, cherished and loved, now and always.

As we close off this church year and move into Advent, may we always remember our position in God's love and kingdom, that whatever might happen in the world around us, that God will always regard us as God's people, integral and crucial parts of Christ's own body in the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name (#634) verses 1, 3, 4

#### **CREED**

With all 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 into God's kingdom as faithful servants, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "in your merciful reign, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. In your merciful reign, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord our King, you are robed in majesty and we stand in awe of you. Continue to open our minds to your truth, and may we see the world through your eyes of love and grace. In your merciful reign, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord our God, you are mighty and armed with strength, and you give to us a gospel message to proclaim to the world. Guide us in our ministry, that our work be faithful and pleasing in your sight. 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 for our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Grace Lutheran Church in Dawson Creek and their interim pastor from the United Church Marilyn Carroll; and for Deo Lutheran Church in Salmon Arm and their pastor Erik Bjorgan. In your merciful reign, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord our Creator, the world you have made is sure and it cannot be moved as it serves as your throne. Be with all areas of this planet that is facing severe weather and natural disasters, especially those in Abbotsford and Merritt as they continue to deal with the flood waters, and continue teaching us good stewardship and care for all that you've entrusted to us. In your merciful reign, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord our Sovereign, you are mighty as you dwell on high, watching over us and showing us compassion and grace. Grant this compassion and grace to all world leaders and politicians, and allow them to see you as a source of wisdom and strength. We pray for all areas of the world facing political turmoil and violence, and we especially pray for those who we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. May their journey out of danger be swift and begin soon. In your merciful reign, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord our Saviour, we testify to the truth of your healing and wholeness as you bring us together as one community and body in your name. We pray for all those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love and strength be reflected in us all. Especially we pray for Diana; Marie; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Paula; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Oliver; all those who have been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... In your merciful reign, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord our Spirit, you are holy and whole and we await the day we can rest with you and all the saints in your eternal house. May we draw from the strength and faith of those we've loved and lost until that day, that our time in this house be pleasing to you. In your merciful reign, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your eternal reign in our hearts through 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 to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, Holy God, through our Saviour and King Jesus Christ, by the power of your Spirit, that as we worship and praise your name, your love and peace might ring through our hearts and penetrate our souls, lifting us up into your truth, into your grace, and into your promises of salvation.

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

Then 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 in this heavenly food that we can tangibly see your heavenly promises and tangibly feel your heavenly love, even as we together declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

It is by your love that we may love, it is by your grace that we may be saved, and it is by your wisdom that we might know the truth of it all, that all honour and glory belong to you, through Jesus Christ who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into God's kingdom 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 reign in our hearts.  
**Thanks be to God.**

#### **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 208)  
Beautiful Saviour (#638)  
Ubi caritas et amor (#642)

#### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, you have called us from every tribe, language, people and nation, to be together as one body in your everlasting kingdom, to be fed by your Word and truth, and to serve you and one another as brothers and sisters in the faith. We give you thanks for fulfilling your promises and we humbly ask for strength and the will to follow in your ways, through Jesus Christ our Lord and King. **Amen.**

#### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May God the Alpha, Almighty, Adonai, bless you and keep you,  
God the Omega, Omnipotent, and Omniscient shine on you and be gracious onto you,  
God the Sovereign, Saviour, and Spirit, look upon you with favour and give you peace.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** The Church's One Foundation (#654) verses 1, 4, 5

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, love and serve our King.  
**Thanks be to God.**

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