



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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### First Sunday of Christmas

December 26, 2021

#### Tree of Life

On the first Sunday of Christmas we find the boy Samuel and the boy Jesus, both in the temple, both growing in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and humankind. We too have returned to the house of God “to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God,” who has gifted us with a savior. As the festival continues, “let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts.” It is Christmas, still.

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.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmi̓ñəṃ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 148)

We gather this day from the safety of our homes yet together in Spirit, gathered with all the angels and the hosts of heaven; with sun, moon, and shining stars; with lands, seas, and skies; with all creatures from the earth and in the deeps; with fire and hail, snow and fog; and with all people who worship this day; to praise the name of the Lord our God in the heights of heaven, whose name only is exalted, whose splendor is over earth and heaven.

God has given us the strength and faith to be called people of God, through Jesus Christ our accessible and relatable Lord.

**Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG:** Away in a Manger (#277) verses 1, 3

### GREETING

The available grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the approachable love of God, and the accessible fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, into a realm of power mongering and class divisions you sent your son to teach the wise and show the world the power of gracious love. Keep us vigilant to hear the voices of those who speak your truth and reveal your ways, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: 1 Samuel 2:18-20, 26

A reading from 1 Samuel.

*Having dedicated her son Samuel to God's service, Hannah visits him every year when she and her husband Elkanah come to the temple to offer sacrifices. God grants Hannah more children, and Samuel himself gains favor in the sight of all.*

<sup>18</sup>Samuel was ministering before the LORD, a boy wearing a linen ephod. <sup>19</sup>His mother used to make for him a little robe and take it to him each year, when she went up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice. <sup>20</sup>Then Eli would bless Elkanah and his wife, and say, "May the LORD repay you with children by this woman for the gift that she made to the LORD"; and then they would return to their home.

<sup>26</sup>Now the boy Samuel continued to grow both in stature and in favor with the LORD and with the people.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### SECOND READING: Colossians 3:12-17

A reading from Colossians.

*Just as newly baptized Christians in the early church were clothed with new garments upon arising from the baptismal waters, so all who have received God's gift of life in Jesus Christ are covered with the character of Christ.*

<sup>12</sup>As God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience. <sup>13</sup>Bear with one another and, if anyone has a complaint against another, forgive each other; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. <sup>14</sup>Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. <sup>15</sup>And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. <sup>16</sup>Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God. <sup>17</sup>And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (p. 10)

**GOSPEL: Luke 2:41-52**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus grew up in a family that went to the Passover festival each year. It was in this environment of faithful adherence to the law that Jesus grew into spiritual maturity and an understanding of his identity and mission.*

<sup>41</sup>Now every year [Jesus'] parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. <sup>42</sup>And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. <sup>43</sup>When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. <sup>44</sup>Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. <sup>45</sup>When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. <sup>46</sup>After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. <sup>47</sup>And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. <sup>48</sup>When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, "Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety." <sup>49</sup>He said to them, "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" <sup>50</sup>But they did not understand what he said to them. <sup>51</sup>Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

<sup>52</sup>And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

O God by the breath of your Spirit, may we be inspired by your Word and filled with new understanding and fresh desire to serve you and neighbour, through Jesus Christ our lost but found Lord. **Amen.**

So, how was your Christmas yesterday? I know you can't answer me, so I guess I'll have to tell you how mine went. All things considered, I'd have to say not bad, not bad. This was our second Christmas day in pandemic, so you'd think we'd be good at it. Normally, every

Christmas would basically be the same. I'd wake up early by myself to come to church and lead a service, then I'd go home and open gifts with the kids and maybe grab a bite to eat. Then we'd get ready for the large extended and somewhat stressful Fong family gathering at my aunt's house.

Now, I should say that I belong to pretty big family. We're talking about 70 people crammed in the house when we gather for Christmas. So you could imagine that it would get pretty hectic. Lots of food, but very hectic. And that was always Christmas for us and we were used to it.

Last year though, all that came to a halt. The pandemic kept us from meeting so we tried to cram all 70 people on Zoom. And when you have 70 people on this app that allows everyone to talk all at once, well that was pretty hectic too. Hectic, but oh so familiar. Not to mention that my wife also tried to make a big Christmas dinner for just our small family, and maybe perhaps she made a little too much, which perhaps added to the stress of the day.

This year though, this year we had it a lot simpler. We still had church, and opened the gifts, but for dinner? We had frozen udon. I mean we didn't eat it frozen, it was warm when my wife served it. I just mean that it wasn't fresh and just something that we had still in the freezer. Udon. On Christmas.

My wife was feeling kind of bad about it too, as this is our Christmas dinner. The day that we remember the birth of our Lord and Saviour. The day that we're used to gathering with a plethora of people surrounded by even more food. This was supposed to be the meal to end all meals but we had udon. Frozen udon, at that. Not much of a celebration, from the looks of it.

So, that's nice and all, but what does that have to do with today, the First Sunday of Christmas? Well, this story that we get out of our gospel lesson has young Jesus misplaced by his family. Poor Jesus, am I right? He was like what, born yesterday and his parents had already lost him? I don't know what's worse, the fact that they lost him or that it took a whole day before they even realised that he was gone.

But I do know the feeling that his parents must have felt. The guilt, the embarrassment, the bewilderment around how this could have happened to them. And then, of course, the anger that came from all of that, directed solely on the one responsible, 12-year-old-born-yesterday Jesus, of course. I mean, it couldn't have been their fault, they're the parents. If a kid gets lost then they shouldn't have been running around. If a child goes missing then they shouldn't have been breaking the rules. If Jesus is nowhere to be found, then I guess he really just wanted to worry his parents and cause them great anxiety.

That's what Mary says when she finally finds Jesus. That's what a lot of parents say when they find their lost kid. That's perhaps what we say when we look and look for Jesus in our lives but we can't seem to find him anywhere.

"Where were you, Jesus?" or "Why are you hiding from me?" or even "Don't you know that not being able to find you causes me great anxiety?"

So I guess Mary is understandably angry. I would be too if my kid ran off without me and I couldn't find them for a while. In fact, I *was* angry at one of our kids at 3 years old ran off without me at the mall and I couldn't find him for like 15 minutes. That's scary stuff. But what

it seems like to me though, was that Jesus' parents, and me in that situation, were putting the blame on the wrong person. It's like we don't see our own role in the situation. We aren't realising our responsibility in it all. We aren't comprehending that it wasn't Jesus who was lost, but it maybe it was us.

You might have seen the Christian meme or t-shirt with a graphic of Jesus standing behind a love seat with the caption "I found Jesus... he was hiding behind the couch". While this is quite humourous and honestly I own the t-shirt myself, theologically it isn't exactly accurate. See while Mary and Joseph might have thought that they found Jesus, it was actually them who needed to be found. They were the ones who were lost. They were the ones who hid their face from the living God. They were the ones who finally realised that Jesus would be exactly where he was, in plain sight among God's people found in God's Word.

See Jesus wasn't hiding. He wasn't playing hard to get. He wasn't testing his parents to see if they could figure out where he was after like 3 days of looking. No, Jesus was where he says he always will be, in his Father's house, in prayer, in worship. Jesus was there waiting to give counsel, to grant understanding, and to guide and direct in the ways of God. Jesus was there among the people, in the community, within relationships.

So in our "Christmas celebration" yesterday, my wife was feeling bad that it wasn't great, that it wasn't anything special, that it wasn't what we were used to when it came to Christmas. But you know what? It was kind of great. Our kids for once in like, ever, weren't eating super fast so they could go play on their screens. I wasn't super tired because I was actually able to sleep in a bit because our Christmas service was online. And we were able to just be there with each other to eat around the table on Christmas without having to battle like 70 other people for the best food or even a place to sit. And best of all? We were able to hear each other speak as normally we'd all have to yell over all the other voices just to get a word into our conversations.

I realised in this simple meal and family gathering that Jesus finds us where we are. Jesus finds us not just in the extravagant, but also in the simple. Jesus is seen not just in the larger community but also in the one-on-one relationships that we cherish. Jesus is present not just in the hectic busyness we often find ourselves in, but also in the stillness and quiet in our lives.

And so I ask all of you on this First Sunday of Christmas, just as we're fresh from our own various variety of celebrations either online or in person, where has Jesus found you? In what ways do you feel the leading and guiding of the Spirit? Where in your life do you see God most clearly?

Wherever it might be, I encourage you to hold onto it, don't let it go. Allow it to remind you how you are cherished by the God who created the universe. Allow it to empower you for service knowing that the Christ has saved you through grace and mercy. Allow it to comfort you in that the Spirit, our promised counsellor, continues to be with us, walk alongside us, and love us whoever we may be, wherever we might find ourselves, and however we might have celebrated this joyous occasion.

So even though this Christmas was different than what we were used to, even though we here in this congregation have chosen to meet online again throughout this Yuletide, even though it feels like this pandemic keeps holding us back, we can know that Jesus resides among us, with

us, and in our hearts as we continue to gather in his name, in God's kin-dom, by the empowering of the Spirit.

So in this season of Christmas, a season of hope and joy in the Christ child who isn't lost but rather who finds us, may we see God working in and around our lives, leading us on new and even old paths, present in our large and at times hectic communities as well as in our small and loving relationships, and calling us into new heights of ministry and service, for the sake of a world in need. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (#288) verses 2, 3

**APOSTLES' CREED** (p.11)

With all those present with Christ, let's 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**

Led to see Jesus in our midst, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your accessible mercy, O Lord," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your accessible mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Ever-present God, you come to us in acts of justice and forgiveness. Open our hearts to forgive one another, without permitting injustice. Supply us with the wisdom to be clothed with love, binding all things together in perfect harmony. By your accessible mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

Ever-loving God, you come to us in gatherings of your church across the globe. Unite us with those who celebrate the birth and life of your Son, even when we must do so physically apart. May our services and worship be pleasing to you. We remember in prayer 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 our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Coquitlam and their pastor Eric Krushel; Trinity Lutheran Church in Delta and their pastor Jennifer Wilson; and

Intern Pastor Elina Singh as she serves and learns at both those congregations. By your accessible mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Ever-creating God, you come to us in the diverse splendor of the universe. Grant us the humility to trust our place in the network of creation, that we live in service to you and the natural world. By your accessible mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Ever-relational God, you come to us through relationships of many kinds: families, friendships, communities, and nations. Guide us in these relationships, that we recognize the Christ child in one another and show your love to those most vulnerable. We pray especially for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu; Selam Haile, and their children; that they all be allowed to travel out of danger soon. By your accessible mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Ever-caring God, you come to us through people whom the world might forget and cast aside. Poor shepherds and an imprisoned Paul announced your good news. Send your Spirit to all who are imprisoned, struggling with addiction, or in any need this day. And we also pray for those in our midst who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely. Especially we remember Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Owen; Amika; Chris; those who have contracted or been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...  
By your accessible mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Ever-lasting God, you come to us through those who have died yet live forever with you. Remind us of their faith and proclamation of your love, that we be inspired to live and do the same. By your accessible mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the wisdom of your Word made flesh among us, Jesus Christ, our Savior.

**Amen.**

## **PEACE**

The peace of Christ be with you always.

**And also with you.**

## **MEAL**

### **DIALOGUE (p. 14)**

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 is made known to us through your grace and accessible by his love, that we might follow and praise you for your mercy and forgiveness.

For on the night that he was betrayed, our Saviour Jesus joined 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."

And after they had eat, Jesus took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave it to his friends 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 food given to us that we see Christ in our midst, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

All honour and glory be to you, O God, for allowing us to see and experience your graciousness and glory in the world, through your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

#### **LORD'S PRAYER (p. 17)**

Gathered into God's presence 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 how God loves and provides for us all.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 17)**

#### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for all that you do and all that you give us, especially for the gift of your Son Jesus, God with us, seen and felt in this food and community. As we have shared in this love, strengthen us to share it with all the world, through Jesus our Lord.

**Amen.**



## SENDING

### **BLESSING**

May God our Shepherd uphold you,  
God our Saviour inhabit your heart,  
and God the Spirit sustain your faith and your lives,  
now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** Joy to the World (#267) verses 1, 2, 4

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus.

**Thanks be to God.**

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