



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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### Third Sunday after Epiphany

January 23, 2022

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

God's glory is revealed in the reading of scripture. People stand at attention. People weep. People prostrate themselves in prayer. The unity of the church is another reflection of God's glory. Most gloriously, the promises of God are fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ. Gather round. Listen up. Glimpse the glory of God.

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 hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 19)

We gather together in spirit and online to together with the heavens declare the glory of God, that while we are physically apart, we remain connected through the love and grace given to us all. For God's teaching is perfect our souls are revived as we are given wisdom and joy and our eyes are made open to see God's unending truth and righteousness.

And so we are gathered in the name of this God, whom we desire more than fine gold and prestige, and whom we serve in faith and as recipients of this grace and forgiveness. Let the words of our mouths and the meditation of all our hearts be acceptable to God our Lord, our strength and our redeemer. **Amen.**

**GATHERING SONG:** One Bread, One Body (#496)

### GREETING

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

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy one, we give you thanks for the gift of your Word, that calls us, convicts us, and comforts us with your grace and welcome. Open our hearts to the voice of your Spirit, that we can serve you and neighbour with confidence and love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10

A reading from Nehemiah.

*The exiles have returned and rebuilt Jerusalem. Now Ezra, the priest, reads the law of Moses to them in the public square. When they hear it, they weep for their sins and for the long years in exile, but Ezra reminds them that "the joy of the LORD is your strength."*

<sup>1</sup>All the people [of Israel] gathered together into the square before the Water Gate. They told the scribe Ezra to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the LORD had given to Israel.

<sup>2</sup>Accordingly, the priest Ezra brought the law before the assembly, both men and women and all who could hear with understanding. This was on the first day of the seventh month. <sup>3</sup>He read from it facing the square before the Water Gate from early morning until midday, in the presence of the men and the women and those who could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive to the book of the law. <sup>5</sup>And Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people, for he was standing above all the people; and when he opened it, all the people stood up. <sup>6</sup>Then Ezra blessed the LORD, the great God, and all the people answered, "Amen, Amen," lifting up their hands. Then they bowed their heads and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground. <sup>8</sup>So they read from the book, from the law of God, with interpretation. They gave the sense, so that the people understood the reading.

<sup>9</sup>And Nehemiah, who was the governor, and Ezra the priest and scribe, and the Levites who taught the people said to all the people, "This day is holy to the LORD your God; do not mourn or weep." For all the people wept when they heard the words of the law. <sup>10</sup>Then he said to them, "Go your way, eat the fat and drink sweet wine and send portions of them to those for whom

nothing is prepared, for this day is holy to our LORD; and do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

*The apostle and pastor Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to describe how intimately connected we are in the church. For this struggling congregation in Corinth, Paul delivers a vital message of unity that is a mark of the church today.*

<sup>12</sup>For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. <sup>13</sup>For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

<sup>14</sup>Indeed, the body does not consist of one member but of many. <sup>15</sup>If the foot would say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>16</sup>And if the ear would say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. <sup>17</sup>If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be?

<sup>18</sup>But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. <sup>19</sup>If all were a single member, where would the body be? <sup>20</sup>As it is, there are many members, yet one body. <sup>21</sup>The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.” <sup>22</sup>On the contrary, the members of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, <sup>23</sup>and those members of the body that we think less honorable we clothe with greater honor, and our less respectable members are treated with greater respect; <sup>24</sup>whereas our more respectable members do not need this. But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, <sup>25</sup>that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. <sup>26</sup>If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it.

<sup>27</sup>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup>And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers; then deeds of power, then gifts of healing, forms of assistance, forms of leadership, various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup>Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup>Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31a</sup>But strive for the greater gifts.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)**

**GOSPEL: Luke 4:14-21**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Near the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry, he visits his hometown of Nazareth. In the words of Isaiah, he states and claims his identity, purpose, and mission.*

<sup>14</sup>Then Jesus, filled with the power of the Spirit, returned to Galilee, and a report about him spread through all the surrounding country. <sup>15</sup>He began to teach in their synagogues and was praised by everyone.

<sup>16</sup>When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, <sup>17</sup>and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

<sup>18</sup>“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,  
because he has anointed me  
to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives  
and recovery of sight to the blind,  
to let the oppressed go free,

<sup>19</sup>to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”

<sup>20</sup>And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. <sup>21</sup>Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

O God, give us attentive ears and understanding, that by the power of the Spirit we be moved to speak words and have meditations in our hearts that are pleasing to you, through Jesus Christ our Rock and Redeemer. **Amen.**

So I’m going to be honest with you, I had a hard time writing this sermon. Not because the texts are particularly hard, or that my week was particularly busy, or my natural tendency to procrastinate was particularly in the way (it was just a little in the way). It wasn’t any of those things this time around, but what made this sermon so hard to write was the fact that, well, sermon-writing is hard. It’s hard to come up with new ways to present these texts that we hear over and over again in church. It’s hard to look at this crazy world that we live in and try to decipher where God is present and working within it. It’s hard to examine the texts and interpret them so they make some sort of sense for us today.

I mean, even after 4.5 years of bible college paired with 4.5 years of seminary and then add almost 13 years of experience of preaching nearly every week, for some strange reason, it still isn’t any easier. I know, in the past I’ve had some decent sermons, some of you have told me so, you know, “not bad, pastor.” But I’m also aware that I’ve had some less decent sermons, as some of you have also told me that as well, you know, “not your best, pastor.” It’ll always be a mixed bag as not every pastor can be a perfect preacher with perfect 10/10 sermons every week.

And it seems that Jesus is no exception here either. \*dodge lightning bolts

Last week we read about Jesus’ first recorded miracle, turning water into wine. That gave a lot of people great joy. Today, we read about Jesus’ first recorded sermon. This gives just confusion and perhaps a bit of disagreement and indignation, as we’ll see next week what happens in the story (no spoilers, but feel free to read ahead if you like). I mean this is what is happening here. While we might not recognise this as a sermon, because it’s like one line that

would have taken 18 seconds while my sermons are a tad longer and much more dragged out than that, but this was the custom of the day. Whoever was up to preach and teach, would read the scroll just as Jesus did. And after the reading the preacher/teacher would go back to their seat and interpret the text with the people whilst sitting among the people. And so when we're told how the people's eyes were fixed on Jesus as he walked back to his seat, it wasn't about what he read, it wasn't about food in his teeth or toilet paper stuck to his shoe or his fly was down, it wasn't even about him taking someone else's seat which you know would normally cause an uproar in church, but it was because that was just the custom as they prepared themselves for Jesus' exposition of what he just read.

And his exposition was just that one line, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

That's it. Not much of a sermon. Maybe he had a hard time preparing too, and his just 40 days and 40 nights of seminary training in the wilderness is starting to catch up to him. It's like the sermon my friend always tells me to preach when I'm having a hard time, he says I should just walk up there, go to the mic, say "Jesus loves you. Amen." and then sit down. While that wouldn't be a bad sermon per se, I don't think you'd want to keep paying me if that was all I could deliver week after week.

But Jesus sermon seems to be just as basic, as simple, as perhaps obvious. Or at very least, it's just as short. But it was what was needed to be heard, by those present in the synagogue that day, by those who read this passage again and again over the generations which includes all of you, and quite frankly, by me as I was preparing this sermon. See this sermon in saying that the scripture has been fulfilled reminds us of the anointing that Jesus receives and then passes on to us, to preach good news, freedom, grace, and love to the poor and oppressed.

Wait, this anointing is passed onto *us*? That wasn't part of his sermon. Let's not put words in the Son of God's mouth, yeah?

Because this calling that is spelled out in the Isaiah passage that Jesus read seems like kind of a tall order. It won't be easy for any of us to do all these things. It's overwhelming when we look at this work and think that it has been shovelled it all onto our plates. So us anointed with Jesus to do this? Thanks, but no thanks. Seriously, no thanks.

But the good news is found in our second reading for today, and that is that while yes this is a tall order, we aren't at it alone. While we might not feel that we're not skilled or trained or talented enough to do it all, know that there are others in our community and beyond that fill the gaps that we leave behind just as we fill the gaps that they leave. While our initial reaction might be to shun this call and turn and run in the other direction, we are reminded that we are united in the Spirit, energized by God's love, and uniquely equipped to be God's specific child in our own unique specific context.

So I know that the world can seem to be a crazy place, especially in this crazy time of pandemic. I know that being a beacon of hope and God's love is something that sounds down right daunting and scary. I know that our calling to be God's people might not be something that we really even want.

But I also know that this calling doesn't come to only us. I know that our mission isn't to do this alone. I know that while we are unique individuals, we are designed to work together, collectively sharing our gifts and talents, and using them for the greater good as the one body of Christ.

We can be confident in this promise, even when we are intimidated. We can rest assured that the Spirit will guide us even when we feel uncertain. We can trust in the promise that we will not be alone, for Christ is with us as we together, as God's church, make up Christ's body in the world, working in God's mission, building each other up in our shortcomings and faults, and declaring God's love for a world in need.

So in my preparation for this sermon, as I reflected on these texts and Jesus' own sermon, I came to the realisation of how my sermons aren't just me talking. The words that come from this mouth aren't just from me alone. These thoughts and ideas aren't always properly credited to their rightful owners. But this sermon, all my sermons actually, are a culmination of our interactions, our collective learning, our joint wisdom to reveal just where this good news resides. And so I am reminded that no matter what the words from my lips are, it's the meditation of all our hearts that continues to join us together and allows the Spirit to move through us all, empowering us not to be pleasing to God, but empowering us because God has already decided to be pleased with us, through the work and ministry of Jesus Christ in and around and throughout our lives.

So thank you, all of you, for being who you are as the body of Christ. Know that your role, while perhaps small and seemingly insignificant to you and perhaps to others, matters in the bigger picture that we might not always see. At the same time, know that all the other roles that we see in this body matter just as much as yours, just as you matter just as much as them. And above all, know that the love of God shines in you and strengthens you in your role and reforms you as God's own child forever. We are, by God's grace and mercy, the one body of Christ, working together to bring about a better world, full of love, peace, and joy, for the good of all.

In this season after the Epiphany, may we continually have our minds opened by the power of the Spirit, that we might see our joint mission and call to be God's people, equally connected and valued as the one body of Christ in the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** We All Are One in Mission (#576)

### **CREED**

With the whole body of Christ, 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 and gifted to be part of the body of Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “Lord our strength and redeemer,” and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord our strength and redeemer, **hear our prayer**.

God, we declare your glory and proclaim your handiwork. You invite us all into your community and welcome us as the one body of Christ. Fill us with the confidence of your love, and move us in our service to you and our neighbour. Lord our strength and redeemer, **hear our prayer**.

God, we gain wisdom from your Word given to us throughout history, and we proclaim its message to the ends of the earth. May the ears that hear your Word be receptive, and may our proclamation be faithful. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishop Kathy and national bishop Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Faith Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Brian Krushel; and for Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in North Vancouver and their interim pastor Vida Jaugelis. Lord our strength and redeemer, **hear our prayer**.

God, you have made the skies, the heavens, and all the ends of the world, and you house the sun in your glory. Give us an appreciation for the beauty of your creation, and may our care for it be pleasing to you. Lord our strength and redeemer, **hear our prayer**.

God, your teachings are perfect and revive our souls as they are clear and give light to our eyes. May your teachings reach all world leaders and politicians, that the nations be governed with justice and equity. We pray for all areas of the world that face political turmoil and unrest, and especially pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country and out of the threat of violence: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. Lord our strength and redeemer, **hear our prayer**.

God, you enlighten us with your truth and love and you bring us into wholeness with you and each other. Be with those among us who are sick, mourn, or feel lonely, that we all might see how your love cleanses us and refines us. Especially we pray for Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Owen; Amika; Jenny; 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...  
Lord our strength and redeemer, **hear our prayer**.

God, you invite and welcome us into your kingdom and recreate us as acceptable in your sight, even joining us together to be the body of Christ. May we always remember our connection to you and all the saints, informing us of our faith and life as your children for eternity. Lord our strength and redeemer, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the strength and gifts of the Spirit, bestowed on us through the work and ministry of 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 is called to bring good news to all and joins us together with him in that mission through grace and forgiveness.

Shown to us on the night that he was betrayed, where our Saviour Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, and 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, Jesus took their 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."

So it is in this food given to us that we see our unity as the one body of Christ, joined together to proclaim God's gospel, and declaring to all the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

For all this and more, may all glory and honour be to you, O God, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one body and mission 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.**

**COMMUNION HYMN:** Lamb of God (p. 191)

**INVITATION TO COMMUNION**

Take, eat, be one with Jesus.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**COMMUNION**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for once again feeding us with your Word and nourishing us with your truth, leading us with your teaching and statutes. Continue to strengthen us as the one body of Christ, proclaiming your gospel of love and forgiveness to all the world, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

**SENDING**

**BLESSING**

May God our Shepherd hold us and keep us,  
God our Saviour bless us with joy and peace,  
God the Spirit join us all together and call us into service, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** Christ, Be Our Light (#715)

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, proclaim the good news.  
**Thanks be to God.**