



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Fourth Sunday after Epiphany

January 30, 2022

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

The glory of God is often revealed when and where it is least expected. God uses our lips to declare that glory, inexperienced and hesitant though they may be. God uses our love to demonstrate that glory and so urges us to exercise it. God uses Jesus of Nazareth, water and the word, bread and wine, to reveal God's glory where and when God chooses. Take heed, lest the glory of God slip through our midst unnoticed.

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 hən̓q̓əmi̓nəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 71:1-6)

In our gathering together while yet still apart, we worship the Lord our God who is our refuge and in whom we are never put to shame. In God's righteousness, we are delivered and set free, listened to and saved. For God is our strong rock, a crag to keep us save, our castle and stronghold. So we are delivered from the hand of the wicked and the oppressor, and we are given hope and confidence in God's promises of strength and sustaining, and the praise of God shall always be on our lips, through Jesus Christ.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: Rise, Shine, You People! (#665)

GREETING

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

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of life, death, and resurrection, we are grateful for life and all its gifts. Increase in us your divine love and strengthen our faith and hope, that we might experience more fully the life that truly is life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 1:4-10

A reading from Jeremiah.

God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet and consecrates him in the womb. Jeremiah's task is to preach God's word amid the difficult political realities of his time, before the Babylonian exile. He is to make God known not only to Judah, but also to the nations.

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying,

⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you;
I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

⁶Then I said, "Ah, Lord God! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy." ⁷But the LORD said to me,

"Do not say, 'I am only a boy';
for you shall go to all to whom I send you,
and you shall speak whatever I command you.

⁸Do not be afraid of them,
for I am with you to deliver you,
says the LORD."

⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me,

"Now I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms,
to pluck up and to pull down,

to destroy and to overthrow,
to build and to plant.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

Christians in Corinth prided themselves on their spiritual gifts. Paul reminds them that God gives us many gifts through the Holy Spirit, but the purpose behind all of them is love, the kind of love that God showed us in Jesus Christ.

¹If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Luke 4:21-30

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

People in Jesus' hometown are initially pleased when he says that God will free the oppressed. Their pleasure turns to rage when he reminds them that God's prophetic mission typically pushes beyond human boundaries so that mercy and healing are extended to those regarded as outsiders.

²¹Then [Jesus] began to say to [all in the synagogue in Nazareth,] “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, “Is not this Joseph’s son?” ²³He said to them, “Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, ‘Doctor, cure yourself!’ And you will say, ‘Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.’” ²⁴And he said, “Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet’s hometown. ²⁵But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months,

and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.” ²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

God of love, Spirit of life, open our hearts and abide in us, that we might follow your calling for us to be your people in the world, loving you and neighbour in faith, through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

Undoubtedly you have heard of the “Freedom Convoy” that is going on right now, which is basically a protest organised by a group of truckers who feel like the vaccine mandate put on them is too much. Regardless of how you feel about this or any protest, it is their right to do so and I hope that the situation remains peaceful and comes to a mutually satisfactory conclusion.

However, I don’t think that is what will happen. Sure, it has been peaceful so far as I know at least, but I personally never believed that such protests like these ever really work. They don’t incite the change that they want, they don’t accomplish their goals, they don’t have their demands met. All that happens from my observation, is that innocent bystanders are inconvenienced, people on the opposing sides of the issue get angrier at each other, and unfortunately, violence seems to creep its ugly head in there somewhere. There is no room for dialogue between the opposing sides, rather it becomes a test of wills to see who can hold off longer. And even if one side gives in, there isn’t really a victory in that as it’s just a surrender. It isn’t a change, it isn’t a shift in paradigm, it isn’t actually peace.

Don’t get me wrong, I do support the right to protest as I’ve mentioned before. And there are many protests out there that are about things that I do feel need to be talked about. What I’m questioning are the methods of protest, and what the true goals of the protest even are. Like do the protestors actually want dialogue and change? If so, I see them going at it in completely the wrong way. Or do they just want to act out of their anger and indignation over whatever the situation they are protesting and mess things up with violence and hurt? If that’s the case, then really, mission accomplished.

I get it though, people want to be heard. Everyone does. But also in many of these protests I see “being heard” only happens through violence and rioting. So the protest is heard, alright, but the message that is given might not be the one as originally intended. All that happens is a strengthening of the divide between us and them. Nothing changes. Again, don’t get me wrong, I’m not saying people should stop protesting or they shouldn’t have the right to do so, I just think that we shouldn’t fool ourselves in thinking that these kinds of protests could actually do anything to change anyone’s mind. In my opinion, such things only bring out more anger and hatred and probably frustration when things don’t get anywhere, which *could* then lead to that violence that ironically so many protests try to avoid. It doesn’t always happen that way, but whenever you get a group of people together all hyped up, it becomes a real possibility. It’s just part of the protest’s DNA.

Case in point, we see this in the protest that we read about in our gospel lesson today, where the people fighting for what they thought was best for Israel trying to throw Jesus, their new enemy, off a cliff.

Well, maybe it wasn't an official registered protest that was organized on social media per se, but the idea was the same. The people were protesting against what Jesus was teaching, and what they now find that he's about. And what that is about apparently is peace, grace, and love. I know right, the horrors. No wonder they want to throw him off a cliff.

Of course, the protestors would probably say that it's more than that and that I'm not seeing the bigger picture and that I'm just listening to what the mainstream media is saying and not thinking critically for myself, I get that kind of deflection and justification all the time. But when it really comes down to it, all Jesus actually said to them was that God's love is bigger than just the small nation of Israel.

Today's text starts exactly where last week left off, with Jesus telling them that the scripture was fulfilled in their hearing. The scripture of being called to preach good news and freedom, and proclaim the year of the Lord's favour, remember that? People liked what they heard up to that point as today it sounds like they were impressed with Jesus' wisdom and oratory skills.

I mean, what's not to like? Good news? We can handle that. Freedom? You know we'd welcome it. Year of the Lord's favour? Heck yes that sounds like it'll be really beneficial for us.

But unfortunately Jesus wasn't done. He continued with how Elijah and Elisha, the great prophets of the Old Testament, were called also to the Gentiles to bring to them good news and God's blessing, just as they were called to the Israelites. And that is where the people lost it. *You mean to tell me that this passage out of Isaiah, the one about the good news, freedom, and the Lord's favour wasn't just for us? You're telling us that we aren't special and God's only people? You said you're here to preach good news and freedom, but that is more good news and freedom for the others, to us it is bad news and oppression.*

Sheesh, no wonder they wanted to throw Jesus off a cliff. He was changing everything, their way of thinking and seeing the world, their way of living as privileged people, their way of arranging the hierarchy within God's love by putting themselves right on the top. And above all, this Jesus has the audacity to suggest that we can love those who we otherwise would deem unlovable.

But just as they were ready to toss Jesus overboard, in some hilarious way, Jesus just walks through the crowd and peaces on out of there. I know, right? It's like, what? But it's to show us how even in the people's raging anger, Jesus isn't stopped. In their protest against any change that doesn't suit them, the message of Jesus walks away unscathed. In their effort to silence Jesus to keep things status quo in terms of their privilege, the grace that Jesus preaches is extended even to them: those who don't listen, those who don't want to understand, those who will resist any kind of variation to their current narrative and would even fight against it.

See this grace extends even to them just as it extends even to us. This grace extends to the Gentiles just as it does to the Israelites. This grace extends to those we don't like and agree

with, just as it extends to those who they don't like and agree with (i.e. us). This grace covers all, whether we want it to or not.

And while that might seem unfair and uncomfortable and maybe a bit awkward because there are a few folks out there that we might not want to see forgiven, it is actually a gift in that serves as a reminder of how nothing is big enough to remove any of us from the love of God through the grace of Christ.

We're reminded in our second reading for today, the "love chapter," how this love is revealed by God, through us, and by the power of the Spirit. While we often associate this with a married couple, it was written to describe the love we have for each other, our friends and family, our neighbours around the world. Putting it that way, if we are in a place and are strengthened to give and receive this kind of love, well, it really changes things, doesn't it? Because honestly, we kind of like to hate people.

But if we were to remember how God's grace covers us all, how God's welcome into God's kingdom is extended to us all, how God's love reaches us all, then perhaps we can be motivated and empowered to love our neighbour like that as well.

So regardless how we feel about protests, whether specific ones or just in general, let's look for the love that might be embedded in them or seen through them or in spite of them. When we look at our neighbours that we don't agree with or find a little pleasure in not liking, let's try to see them through eyes of grace and God's love. When we hear about the broken world and the mess we find ourselves in, let's try to understand that God continues to be in our midst and on both sides of that coin, that we might be able to see how God isn't out to divide us, but to bring us together in peace and, you guessed it, love.

As we continue through this season after the Epiphany, may we see the grace of Christ covering us all, that our defenses against each other might come down a notch, enough to allow us to maybe, just maybe, *love*. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Although I Speak with Angel's Tongue (#644)

CREED

Together with all of God's beloved children, 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

Led to experience God's divine and gracious love, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your empowering love, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your empowering love, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, in you we have taken our refuge and you never let us be put to shame. Remind us always of the grace you show us and the love you call us into, and strengthen us in our faith and hope. By your empowering love, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, in your righteousness you deliver us and save us, freeing us to proclaim your good news in the world. May the message we share fall on open ears, that the world might be changed to be more loving and caring for all people. 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 Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Langley and their pastor Kristen Steele; and Hope Lutheran Shared Ministry in Mackenzie and the pastors and leaders that serve there. By your empowering love, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your creation has been for us a stronghold, where we are kept safe and secure. Strengthen us in our care for this planet, and may our faith be reflected in our stewardship. By your empowering love, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you deliver us from the hands of the wicked and you save the oppressed from the evildoers. May all people of all nations continue to look out for each other and be concerned more for the wellbeing of the human race rather than borders and the pursuit of power. We pray especially for those that we've sponsored to come into our country and out of the threat of danger: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Hailie, and their children. By your empowering love, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you are our hope and our confidence is in you and your promises of peace and wholeness. Be especially with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love might continue to be apparent to us all. In particular we pray for Paula; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; 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...
By your empowering love, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you sustain us with your love throughout this life and the next, as you remind us of our eternal connection with you and all the saints. May the faith of those we've loved and lost remain in our hearts, that they continually inform us of our lives and strengthen us to praise you always. By your empowering love, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending truth and grace, 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, to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who showed us the resilience of your truth and strength of your grace, and joining us together in the confidence of your love.

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

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 food given to us that we see our connection to each other by God's love and through even this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

It is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, through Jesus our Lord and Saviour, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one love 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

Taste and see the love of God for us all.
Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you strengthen us with your love and call us into your service. Increase our understanding of your grace that we might more faithfully follow you by the power of your Spirit, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May God our Creator help you bear all things,
God the Christ enable you to believe all things,
and God as Spirit inspire you to hope all things,
that you might abide in faith, hope, and especially love,
this day and always.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (#631)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be empowered by God's love.
Thanks be to God.