



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Baptism of Our Lord

January 9, 2022

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

Today's festival rejoices in God's blessings. We recall and celebrate our adoption as God's children, the gift of the Holy Spirit, and the promised company of almighty God when we "pass through the waters . . . the rivers . . . fire." On this day the heavens open again for this assembly, and we receive the gift of God's Beloved, Jesus, in bread and wine.

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 29)

We gather together online with a few of us in person, to see and recognize all that God has done and ascribe the glory due to God's name. For the Lord our God has a powerful voice that speaks all creation into being, speaks truth that pierces our souls, speaks a love that goes beyond any understanding. And so we are here to worship, to praise, and to be strengthened by God and blessed by the peace given to us through our Lord Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG: Shall We Gather at the River (#423) verses 1, 3, 4

GREETING

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

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, when Jesus was baptized in the Jordan, the heavens opened and the Spirit descended on him as your voice affirmed your love in Jesus for the healing of the human race and all of creation. By water and word you lovingly invite us into this same life-giving mission. May your Spirit, moving like a stream of water flowing from its source, work in us this day to realise your vision of a world made new in Christ, with and through whom we pray. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 43:1-7

A reading from Isaiah.

Near the end of Israel's exile in Babylon, God promises to bring the people home. They need no longer be afraid, because the one who formed, created, and called them by name now redeems them from all their enemies. God declares them precious and honored, and God loves them.

¹But now thus says the LORD,

he who created you, O Jacob,

he who formed you, O Israel:

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

I have called you by name, you are mine.

²When you pass through the waters, I will be with you;

and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned,

and the flame shall not consume you.

³For I am the LORD your God,

the Holy One of Israel, your Savior.

I give Egypt as your ransom,

Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you.

⁴Because you are precious in my sight,

and honored, and I love you,

I give people in return for you,

nations in exchange for your life.

⁵Do not fear, for I am with you;

I will bring your offspring from the east,
and from the west I will gather you;
⁶I will say to the north, "Give them up,"
and to the south, "Do not withhold;
bring my sons from far away
and my daughters from the end of the earth—
⁷everyone who is called by my name,
whom I created for my glory,
whom I formed and made."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: Acts 8:14-17

A reading from Acts.

Peter and John are sent to support the new Christians in Samaria, a group that was recently baptized after hearing the good news of Christ through the preaching of Philip. Here the Samaritans receive the gift of the Holy Spirit in the laying on of hands.

¹⁴Now when the apostles at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had accepted the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them. ¹⁵The two went down and prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit ¹⁶(for as yet the Spirit had not come upon any of them; they had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus). ¹⁷Then Peter and John laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The reading opens with questions about the identity of the Messiah. John the Baptist insists that he is not the Messiah; instead he points ahead to one who is coming. And whether the voice of God was heard by all or only by Jesus, God settles the matter: Jesus is God's beloved Son.

¹⁵As the people were filled with expectation, and all were questioning in their hearts concerning John, whether he might be the Messiah, ¹⁶John answered all of them by saying, "I baptize you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. ¹⁷His winnowing fork is in his hand, to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

²¹Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heaven was opened, ²²and the Holy Spirit descended upon him in bodily form like a dove. And a voice came from heaven, "You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Glorious God, open the heavens and let your grace shine down on us, as you anoint us with your Spirit to hear your Word, see your face, and feel your love as you've shown us through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Can you believe that it's 2022 already? I know, technically it was 2022 last week, but I was on holidays so I couldn't really talk about it then. But for some strange reason, it feels like 2021 didn't even happen. I mean, you know how usually at the start of any new year, it takes a few weeks or maybe a month to get used to writing that new year on cheques or whatever it is that you might have to put the year on? For me, I never got used to it being 2021. I remember thinking in like November that summer of 2019 wasn't that long ago, when in actual fact, it really was. It was weird. But regardless of how my brain does or doesn't work, that doesn't change the fact that it's 2022, a whole new year for us to look forward to, to live in, and perhaps regret in the future.

That got me to thinking about time and the way we classify it. Yes, the year now is 2022, but only by the system that was set up by people. Earth people, to be exact. Years, months, days, are all just earth things and the new year is just another trip around the sun. It's not 2022 on Mars, for example. It isn't January on Jupiter. A day isn't 24 hours anywhere else in the universe. And what even is an hour, by the way?

Still, we make a big deal of the New Year. We celebrate the passing of time. We are almost relieved when an old and perhaps bad year has ended, like suddenly just because January 1st passes things will change. It all seems kind of silly.

Don't get me wrong, I'm all for celebrating years and months and whatever else gives us reason to celebrate. I do believe that every day is a gift and so it stands to reason that every new year is a 365 ¼ gifts. But it just got me thinking about time and the passing seconds of our lives. Not exactly for theological reasons, mind you, but also because lately our daughter has been totally into the Back to the Future movies and not to mention how the MCU has been dabbling in time travel recently. And so I've been pondering how time even works and how it fits in the continuum of space and if travelling into the past would even be possible. Of course there are a lot of theories around the concept and many many movies and media outside of the MCU and Back to the Future have tried to tackle it, but they all seem so conflicting and nonsensical that most of us would just stop thinking about it because really, who cares?

The fact of the matter is, we live linear lives. A second comes and goes just as fast, and those seconds pile on to each other and we only move forward through it. Not backward, not sideways, only forward. That is how we understand the world. That is how we understand life. That is why we even count the years when they are just arbitrary moments in this planet's organization and classification of time.

Ok, but still, who cares, right? Let the people care about what year it is and how many of those years they have lived. What we're wondering is what on earth does this have to do with today, the Baptism of our Lord Sunday? Well, as I thought about baptism and what it means, I realised just how much we understand the whole thing through that linear lens. Of course we would though, as mentioned we are linear beings, we see and understand everything through a "happened, happening, and will happen" filter and we can't really help that.

But I wonder, what if baptism, or at least the effect and meaning around baptism, happens in a non-linear way? I know it's weird to think of it like that, like wouldn't that just mean that it's one loooooong baptism that just never ends? I mean that'll be a lot of water.

But that's not what I mean. What I mean is that while we are baptized in a certain point in time, what if what baptism is for, as in the baptism of the Holy Spirit that John the baptizer describes, is something that is eternal? That is something that is before us and is after us and is during us. Something that isn't bound by the hands of time but somehow transcends it, is beyond it, yet is all around it. Something that gives us a clearer picture of the mysterious nature of God, the I AM.

See what struck me this time when I read this account of Jesus' baptism, is how direct God speaks to Jesus. As the Spirit descends on Jesus like a dove, a voice from heaven says right to Jesus, "*You are my Son, the Beloved; with you I am well pleased.*"

Not saying that anytime when the term "I am" is used means that it is God speaking, but this time around I was really struck by the tense of what is being said. "You are" and "I am" are very present tense. It's not "you were" or "you will be" or "I was" or "I will in the future", but "you are" and "I am".

So what I see here is that God's love for Jesus, God's love for us, God's love for all people is not a linear thing. Rather it is timeless, not bound by our concepts of past, present, and future, but is the main constant throughout history. And baptism is a symbol of that.

Just as water has no beginning or end, so is God's love for us. Just as water is physical yet not really, so is God present with us even when that presence is at times inconceivable. Just as water is somewhat linear but also transcends that, so is God's grace for us, in that God doesn't love us because we are baptized or after we are baptized, but God loves us past, present, and future. It isn't that God loved us or will love us, but God loves us then, God loves us now, and God loves us in the future.

See while you might have learned that baptism is a sort of initiation rite, or a cleansing of sorts, or even a kind of anointing, I see baptism as a sign of welcome for us having entered into this non-linear kingdom of God, a kingdom that isn't "was, is, and is to come," but a kingdom that is here, now. A kingdom that is here, back then. And a kingdom that *is here* even in the future and all time.

And so now you might be thinking, huh? I didn't sign up for this science fiction theatre or philosophical babble, what on earth is going on here? Too confusing for a Sunday morning or whatever time it is that you might be hearing this. But the good news here for me in this is the reminder that God's Word, God's promises, God's grace is not something that happens here and there and can be taken away from one second to the next. God's presence in our lives doesn't depend on what happens before or after whatever is happening. God's love for us, identifying us as God's own children, doesn't expire from year to year. Instead, God is the constant in our lives. God is the foundation upon which we can rely on. God is the strength that is with us, casting out fear and trepidation and even shame, calling us God's beloved children, here, now, with whom God is well pleased.

We are still in this time of continued pandemic, this time of frustration and perhaps hopelessness in the world, this time of irritation and maybe even fear. And in this time, we can remember that even when God seems scarce, or that godlessness is running rampant, or that God was sooo 2019, God is actually with us, God is actually loving us into being us and being God's children, God is the I AM.

In a few moments we will be witnessing the baptism of our new sister in Christ Mii Keng. It's important to remember that while this will happen in this moment in time, it doesn't mark the beginning of God's presence in her life. Rather, it is the sign that God has always been and will always be present, filling her and all of us with love, and showing us all the timelessness of grace, mercy, and peace.

In this season after the Epiphany, may we remember the gift of baptism and how it symbolizes and solidifies God's unchanging, steadfast, and timeless love. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Arise, Your Light Has Come! (#314)

HOLY BAPTISM

PRESENTATION

God, who is rich in mercy and love, gives us a new birth into a living hope through the grace and peace that surpass understanding. And now, by the waters of baptism and the Word God, we can see and be reminded of how God delivers us from sin and death and raises us to new life in Jesus Christ. We are united with all the baptized in the one body of Christ, anointed with the gift of the Holy Spirit, and joined in God's mission for the life of the world.

Judith: I present Mii Keng for baptism.

Mii, called by the Holy Spirit, trusting in the grace and love of God, do you desire to be baptized into Christ?

I do.

Judith, do you promise to nurture and help Mii in the Christian faith as you are empowered by God's Spirit, and to help her live in the covenant of baptism and in communion with the church?

I do.

All of you people of God watching online, do you promise to support Mii and pray for her in her new life in Christ?

We do.

PROFESSION OF FAITH

I ask you all to profess your faith in Christ Jesus, reject sin, and confess the faith of the church. Do you renounce the devil and all the forces that defy God, the powers of this world that rebel against God, and the ways of sin that draw you from God?

I renounce them.

Do you believe in God the Father?

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ, the Son of God?

**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.**

Do you believe in God the Holy Spirit?

**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.**

THANKSGIVING AT THE FONT

The Lord be with you.

And also with you.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

It is right to give our thanks and praise.

Blessed are you, holy God. You are the creator of the waters of the earth. You are the fire of rebirth. You poured out your Spirit on your people Israel. You breathe life into our dry bones. Your Son Jesus promised to send the Spirit to us that the world may know your peace and truth. Pour out your Holy Spirit, and breathe new life unto all of us, your people. By your Spirit adopt us all as your children, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

BAPTISM

Mii, I baptize you in the name of God the Shepherd,
and of God our Saviour,
and of God the Spirit.

Amen.

Blessed be God, the source of all life,
the word of salvation,
the spirit of mercy.
Alleluia.

Let us pray.

We give you thanks, O God, that through the symbol of water and by the grace of your Spirit, you give us all new birth, cleanse our sin, and raise us to eternal life.

Sustain Mii Keng with this gift: the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord, the spirit of joy in your presence, both now and forever.

Amen.

Mii, child of God, you have been sealed by the Holy Spirit and marked with the cross + of Christ forever.

Amen.

WELCOME

Jesus said, I am the light of the world.
Whoever follows me
will have the light of life.

Let us welcome the newly baptized.

**We welcome you into the body of Christ and into the mission we share:
join us in giving thanks and praise to God
and bearing God's creative and redeeming word to all the world.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called into oneness with Christ and each other, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "great and glorious God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Great and glorious God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you are full of glory and strength and we ascribe to you all that is due to your name. We give you thanks for the gift of baptism, where we can see just how much you love us and join us with you and each other in community. Ring this truth through and around our lives always, that our very being be testament to your grace. Great and glorious God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your voice calls us through the waters of baptism and thunders truth into our lives. May our service to you and neighbour always be pleasing in your sight. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our newly ordained bishop Kathy and national bishop Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for St. Peter's Shared Ministry in Hudson's Hope, Christ Lutheran Church in Kelowna, and all the pastors and leaders that serve those two communities. Great and glorious God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your voice called all of creation into being: the waters of the oceans, the trees of the wilderness, and hills and plains of all the lands. May we as inhabitants of this planet be faithful in our stewardship, that we do not exploit what you have made for our own gain, but care for it for the good of all. Great and glorious God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your voice is powerful and shakes the strong and makes the mighty writhe in fear and humility. Instill your wisdom in all world leaders, governments, and politicians, that all might work toward peace in spite of difference. We pray for the areas of the world that are facing

political turmoil and violence, that your presence and calming grace be seen and felt by all. Especially we pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; that their journey out of violence and through this pandemic be smooth and full of hope. Great and glorious God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we all cry out the glory of your name, for your might and grace fill our lives with healing and hope. Be with all who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love might bring us all back into wholeness. Especially we pray for Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Own; Amika; Chris; Jenny; all those who have contracted or been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
Great and glorious God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you sit enthroned as king forever, eternally ruling in our hearts and communities as our God. Remind us of our connection to you and each other through the gift of baptism that we all might lean on your strength and truth. Great and glorious God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the inviting grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. **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 reminds us time and again of how we are all connected with you and each other by the grace of your holy name.

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."

And then after they had eaten, Jesus 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 all you and all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in these heavenly signs of God's grace that we are reminded of God's providence and truth, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

It is to you, O God, that we ascribe all glory and honour due to your name, through your Son and our brother Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into one 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 welcome for us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 191)

Eat This Bread (#472)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God of glory and grace, we give you thanks for this heavenly food that fills our souls and nourishes our spirits. Bring to us the strength of your Spirit, that we might serve you and neighbour with the faith that moves mountains, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May the grace of God our Shepherd who calls us beloved, uphold you,
the love of God our Saviour who joins us together as one, bless you,
and the power of God the Spirit who descends upon us like a dove, give you peace,
now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: We Know That Christ Is Raised (#449)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, live in the joy as God's beloved children.

Thanks be to God.

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