



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Sixth Sunday after Epiphany

February 13, 2022

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

Blessings and curses abound on the sixth Sunday after Epiphany. We would do well to listen closely to whom the “blessed are” and the “woe tos” are directed and to find our place in the crowd among those who desire to touch Jesus. The risen Christ stands among us in the mystery of the holy supper with an invitation to live in him, and offers power to heal us all.

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 hən̓q̓əmiñəm (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 1)

We gather together, some in person and most online, to delight in our Lord and meditate on God's teachings, as we are held as righteous and upright, saved and forgiven, healed and brought into the life that truly is life. So let us walk together in faith like trees planted by streams of water. Let us be God's children in the world strengthened by God's grace to bear the fruits of God's love. Let us worship our God as we prosper in God's community with each other and all the saints.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: Day by Day (#790)

GREETING

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

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of new life, in Christ you reveal the gift of resurrection. Raise us from death into life, that we be reformed to bear witness to your love and grace abundant in our lives, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 17:5-10

A reading from Jeremiah.

These verses compose a poem that is part of a larger collection of wisdom sayings that contrast two ways of life. Life with God brings blessing; the power and vitality of God is active in our life. Life without God brings a curse, the power of death.

⁵Thus says the LORD:

Cursed are those who trust in mere mortals
and make mere flesh their strength,
whose hearts turn away from the LORD.

⁶They shall be like a shrub in the desert,
and shall not see when relief comes.

They shall live in the parched places of the wilderness,
in an uninhabited salt land.

⁷Blessed are those who trust in the LORD,
whose trust is the LORD.

⁸They shall be like a tree planted by water,
sending out its roots by the stream.

It shall not fear when heat comes,
and its leaves shall stay green;
in the year of drought it is not anxious,
and it does not cease to bear fruit.

⁹The heart is devious above all else;
it is perverse—
who can understand it?
¹⁰I the LORD test the mind
and search the heart,
to give to all according to their ways,
according to the fruit of their doings.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:12-20

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

For Paul, the resurrection of Christ is the basis for Christian hope. Because Christ has been raised, those who are in Christ know that they too will be raised to a new life beyond death.

¹²Now if Christ is proclaimed as raised from the dead, how can some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead? ¹³If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; ¹⁴and if Christ has not been raised, then our proclamation has been in vain and your faith has been in vain. ¹⁵We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ—whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. ¹⁷If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have died in Christ have perished. ¹⁹If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

²⁰But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have died.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Luke 6:17-26

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

After choosing his twelve apostles, Jesus teaches a crowd of followers about the nature and demands of discipleship. He begins his great sermon with surprising statements about who is truly blessed in the eyes of God.

¹⁷[Jesus] came down with [the twelve] and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea, Jerusalem, and the coast of Tyre and Sidon. ¹⁸They had come to hear him and to be healed of their diseases; and those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹And all in the crowd were trying to touch him, for power came out from him and healed all of them.

²⁰Then he looked up at his disciples and said:

“Blessed are you who are poor,
for yours is the kingdom of God.

²¹“Blessed are you who are hungry now,

for you will be filled.

“Blessed are you who weep now,
for you will laugh.

²²“Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man. ²³Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, for surely your reward is great in heaven; for that is what their ancestors did to the prophets.

²⁴“But woe to you who are rich,
for you have received your consolation.

²⁵“Woe to you who are full now,
for you will be hungry.

“Woe to you who are laughing now,
for you will mourn and weep.

²⁶“Woe to you when all speak well of you, for that is what their ancestors did to the false prophets.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O God, your Word is like water to the root of the tree, nourishing, strengthening, and giving life. May your Word flow into us that we might flourish in bearing the gospel fruit of healing and resurrection for a hungry and hurting world. In Christ we pray. **Amen.**

I have been *so tired* lately. It's been a combination of work and little sleep, parenting and little sleep, and of course, staying up late watching Fast and Furious movies on Netflix which leads to little sleep. But even if all those factors were removed, I have a feeling that I'd still get little sleep. Because to be honest, lately this pandemic has been keeping me up at night. It's like it's really gotten to me.

I didn't think it would at first, as I was actually excited to try new things by being online, tweaking and perfecting our worship videos, and learning how to be really good at selecting virtual backgrounds for all the video conferencing. I actually welcomed the forced time at home, saving money on car insurance and gas, and not having to worry about waking the kids early in the morning for school. But the weeks turned into months and is now turning into years. We have a better grasp on the virus but we aren't really out of the woods yet in spite of what some people would want us to believe. And while the numbers were looking good, then bad, then really good, then really bad to the worst we've ever seen, there was still hope. It felt like we were looking at the end right in the eye.

But then this Freedom Convoy started, and it feels like we went backwards like 5-6 steps.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that they shouldn't be allowed to protest as I mentioned a couple weeks ago, but I think we can all safely say that this has escalated to beyond a protest. And whatever side of the fence you sit on with this whole thing, know that everyone and I mean everyone, just wants this pandemic to be over. I mean if a naïve little punk like me who was actually excited at the beginning of this thing can now just be done with it all, then I think everyone else would be in way beyond just the same boat. They're like in the boat and already sailed to their destination while I'm still just here raising the anchor.

The thing that has me about this Freedom Convoy though is how divisive it has gotten. Sure, other big sensationalized protests in the past have always been divisive, but this one just feels different. This one feels like there is more at stake. This one just hits a lot harder for me than any of the others before.

And I wish it didn't. But it does. And I think I know why. Like I said earlier, we all want this to be over. We're all tired. We're all fed up. We're all in pain and scared.

This is where it gets hard. It's hard to admit our fear. Some of us might stick out our chests, beat it a couple times and be like, "I ain't afraid of nothing! It's everyone else who's afraid" when maybe you're afraid of change, afraid of losing even more control, or maybe just afraid of looking afraid. Or some of us might stick up our chin and say, "I'm not afraid, I'm just being cautious" when you might be afraid of not having done enough, haven't saved enough people, or perhaps were the cause of someone else's pain and suffering. Or, maybe yet, you admit to being afraid but just have no idea where it's coming from or how to articulate it. But I do honestly believe that we are all afraid. Afraid of the future, afraid of the past no longer being the present, afraid of things not going as prescribed in our heads. And maybe afraid of that person over there that we completely despise possibly being right.

And in this collective and unadmitted fear is where the knee-jerk reaction of protecting our individual pride jumps into action and we start outsourcing the pain. "No, they're the ones who are wrong, they're the ones who are the problem, they're the ones that need to be stopped." So in our fear and now pride, our "fight or flight" instinct activates and we end up right where we are now, people polarized in what they believe in and leaving no room for any kind of dialogue whatsoever.

I get it though, why waste our time talking to *them* when we know they're so stubborn that they'll never open their eyes and change their mind, right? Well maybe that's why we *should* talk to them, you know, to have *our* eyes opened a bit, and to broaden *our* own horizons. Now, I'm not talking about just us vs them, right vs left, red vs blue here, I'm talking human to human, sibling to sibling, child of God to child of God. We need to put down our weapons, break down our walls, open our hearts and learn to *listen*.

Because in that, in that squashing rivalry between fellow humans, in that cultivating unlikely communities, in that opening ourselves to the other and perhaps even learning to love them is where we find *resurrection*.

I know, it's not Easter yet, but today's second reading gives us a lot about resurrection, and how pivotal it is in our faith. Resurrection is fundamental to who we are, our identity as God's people, our place in this hurting, hurting world. See, resurrection happens when a broken body is healed. Resurrection is when even in death we can see life. Resurrection is found in forgiveness, mended relationships, and flourishing communities. Resurrection turns our woes into blessing. And resurrection is what my hope and prayer is for the situation that we are in.

But I don't think it is something that we can force. It isn't something that we can coerce into happening. And it certainly isn't a manipulative tactic to get the other side to change their mind and join us. Rather, it is something within us that fundamentally shifts. Something that humbles us enough to be just a bit more open to the opposing side. Something that allows us

to see God even in the other, the ones that we so very much despise, and recognise their need of grace is just as great as ours.

See we aren't all so different, us and them, them and us. We all bleed the same, we all fear the same, and as we are reminded of every week during communion, we all eat and are nourished the same. And we all are blessed the same and face woes the same. None of us are completely good or bad, but we all have good and bad in us. None of us have all the answers, but we all have a wide range of opinions that come from our shared as well as our unique experiences. None of us can accurately predict the future so all we can do is learn to work together to do our best to not repeat the mistakes of the past.

I know this doesn't sound easy and maybe not really pleasant for many of us. Maybe those fears of ours run so deep that we actually like hating those we hate. Maybe our tolerance threshold for those with whom we disagree wasn't exactly high to begin with but it keeps going lower with every passing day. But I do believe that by God's grace, we can find it within ourselves and each other the love that has been so freely shared with us and allow it to motivate us, strengthen us, and reform us in our faith and in our interactions with God's people.

We aren't called to be the same in every way. We aren't called to hail the same ideologies and flags. We aren't called to always agree. But we are called to love. Called to love mercy and act justly. Called to walk humbly with our gracious God. This God who leads and guides us into new heights of relationship and service, this Saviour that holds us with resurrecting grace and mercy, this Spirit that brings to us healing out of brokenness, love out of hate, blessing out of woe.

Then maybe, just maybe, we are able to move forward into the future, however the post-pandemic world might look like, living the life that truly is life, full of love, community, and resurrection, and being reformed to not be on this side or that side of history, but on the side of God's peace, and joy, and goodwill to all.

As we continue on in this season after the Epiphany, the season of learning where we see Jesus in the world, may we recognise him not just by the blessing that leads to joy, but also in the woe that leads to resurrection. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: When Peace like a River (#785)

CREED

With all recipients of God's blessing, 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.

INSTALLATION OF THE 2022 CONGREGATIONAL COUNCIL

The following people have been appointed to positions of leadership by our congregation at our Annual General Meeting last week. We give thanks for their willingness to serve in this capacity as we remember our welcome into the body of Christ and our mission as God's people. Now let us rejoice in this soon to be installed council who will lead us in our common life and communal ministry as a congregation.

A reading from First Corinthians: There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

You have been appointed to positions of leadership and trust in this congregation.

You are to see that the words and deeds of this household of faith bear witness to God, who gathers us into one together with the whole church.

You are to seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support, so that the mission of Christ is carried out in this congregation, in the wider church, in this community, and in the whole world.

You are to be faithful in your specific area of serving, that the Spirit who empowers you may be glorified.

You are to be examples of faith active in love, fostering peace, harmony, and mutual understanding in this congregation.

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ, I ask you:
Will you accept and faithfully carry out the duties of the offices
to which you have been appointed
I will, and I ask God to help me.

People of God, I ask you:
Will you support these, your *elected* leaders,
and will you share in the mutual ministry
that Christ has given to all who are baptized?
We will, and we ask God to help us.

I now declare you installed as the Grace Lutheran Church Congregational Council.
Almighty God bless you, and direct your days and your deeds in peace,

that you may be faithful servants of Christ.

Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Led into a life of abundant resurrection, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "God of gracious blessing," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. God of gracious blessing, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your wisdom makes us glad as we strive to follow it and its promises. Continue to give us the hope in resurrection, that our lives together be full of healing and joy. God of gracious blessing, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we delight in your law and meditate on your teaching, and endeavour to live faithful lives pleasing to you. Bless our ministries and service, both in this congregation and beyond, that the world might come to know you and the promise of resurrection. We pray for our newly installed council; 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 Hope Lutheran Church in Nanaimo and their pastor Terry Richardson; and all institutions in our church that care for the elderly. God of gracious blessing, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your creation reminds us of how you provide for our needs and allow us to flourish with life. Strengthen our stewardship of this planet and reveal your presence within it. God of gracious blessing, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you alone judge the wicked, but you give us wisdom and discernment in our interactions and communities. May all the nations of the world learn to live with each other, within their borders and otherwise, and bring your peace to lead and guide us all. Especially we pray for those that we've sponsored to come to our country and away from the threat of danger: Solyana Amanuel; and Mikele Kiflu, Selam Hailie, and their children. God of gracious blessing, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you take away our iniquities and like chaff, they blow away in the wind of your grace. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and bring to all the hope of resurrection. Especially we pray for Diana; Bev and family; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charlotte; William; Jenny; Chris; those who have been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... God of gracious blessing, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you provide the way into righteousness and you welcome us all into eternity with you and all the saints. Remind us of this righteousness always, that our lives be uplifted and uplifting, and our community in you might flourish. God of gracious blessing, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the promise of resurrection, seen in 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 brings us hope and healing through the resurrection, showing us how life can be full of blessings and woe, but nothing can take us away from your love.

For on the night that he was betrayed, 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 after they ate, Jesus took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave that 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 that we eat that we are reminded of your abundant blessing and given hope in resurrection, just as we together proclaim this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

For to you, O God, be all honour and glory, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Reformed into God's 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.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see God connecting us together as one.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 191)

Have No Fear, Little Flock (#764)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have shown us the truth of your resurrection, provided to us through this heavenly food, the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Continue to equip us with your blessing, that we might serve you and neighbour with confidence and love, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the blessing of God,
Shepherd, Saviour, and Spirit,
nourish and sustain us,
surprise and reorder us,
and strengthen us in faith and hope for this life and the life that is to come.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: My Life Flows On in Endless Song (#763)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, know that you are reformed by God's blessing.

Thanks be to God.

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