



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

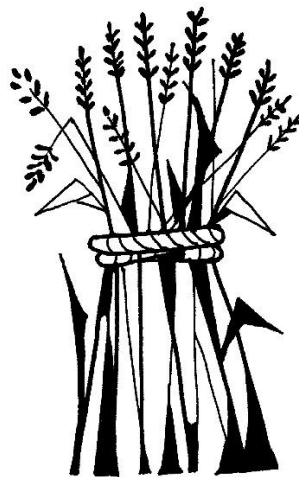
Phone / fax: 604-433-1515

Website: [www.graceburnaby.com](http://www.graceburnaby.com)

Email: [office@graceburnaby.com](mailto:office@graceburnaby.com)

[pastor@graceburnaby.com](mailto:pastor@graceburnaby.com)

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### Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

February 20, 2022

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

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 Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40)

We gather in worship, unprovoked by the evil of the world, but trusting the Lord in whom we take delight. And in our commitment and delight, we see what God does in and around our lives with grace and justice, removing us from rage and anger, and giving us hope in the Lord.

So we wait patiently and are still before the Lord, as God grants to us an abundance of peace, delivers us righteousness, and rescues us into God's refuge, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

### GATHERING SONG: I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say (#611)

### GREETING

May the merciful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the gracious love of God, and the forgiving fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of abundant mercy, you alone can turn evil into good, sorrow into rejoicing, and death into everlasting life. Teach us your way of grace—to meet hatred with kindness, to answer curses with blessing, to love without holding back, to give without thought of return; all in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

*Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.*

<sup>3</sup>Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

<sup>4</sup>Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. <sup>5</sup>And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life. <sup>6</sup>For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. <sup>7</sup>God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. <sup>8</sup>So it was not you who sent me here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. <sup>9</sup>Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me, do not delay. <sup>10</sup>You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. <sup>11</sup>I will provide for you there—since there are five more years of famine to come—so that you and your household, and all that you have, will not come to poverty.'" <sup>15</sup>And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them; and after that his brothers talked with him.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50**

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

*In the Apostles' Creed, we speak of the "resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Using the metaphor of a planted seed and the story of Adam, Paul preaches passionately about the mystery of following Christ's perfect life into eternity.*

<sup>35</sup>But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"

<sup>36</sup>Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. <sup>37</sup>And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be, but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. <sup>38</sup>But God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.

<sup>42</sup>So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable. <sup>43</sup>It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power. <sup>44</sup>It is sown a physical body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. <sup>45</sup>Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. <sup>46</sup>But it is not the spiritual that is first, but the physical, and then the spiritual. <sup>47</sup>The first man was from the earth, a man of dust; the second man is from heaven. <sup>48</sup>As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the man of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. <sup>49</sup>Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the man of heaven.

<sup>50</sup>What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)**

### **GOSPEL: Luke 6:27-38**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.*

[Jesus said:] <sup>27</sup>"But I say to you that listen, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, <sup>28</sup>bless those who curse you, pray for those who abuse you. <sup>29</sup>If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also; and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. <sup>30</sup>Give to everyone who begs from you; and if anyone takes away your goods, do not ask for them again. <sup>31</sup>Do to others as you would have them do to you.

<sup>32</sup>"If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. <sup>33</sup>If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. <sup>34</sup>If you lend to those from whom you hope to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. <sup>35</sup>But love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High; for he is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. <sup>36</sup>Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

<sup>37</sup>"Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be

condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; <sup>38</sup>give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

Merciful God, by your Word provides for all that we need, and may we be drawn close in your Spirit that we might discover your will and live by your abundant grace, through Jesus Christ.  
**Amen.**

Out of all the controversial stuff that Jesus has said as recorded in our scriptures, I would think that today's "Love your enemies" ranks right up there with other gems like, "the first will be last and the last will be first" and "your sins are forgiven." They might not sound too controversial to us in this day and age, mostly because... well... we're kind of awesome.

I mean, we know that the first will be last and the last will be first because we've heard it so, so many times before. Not to mention that we're already number one in our books, and we're humble enough to admit it, so I guess we don't have too far to go. And our sins forgiven? Well obviously, that one is easy, our sins are so minimal that we make God's job so much easier. And of course, we also know to love our enemies because that is what we do all the time, don't we? We're nice to pretty much everyone. Well, everyone that isn't too different from us, at least. But we'd still give them the time of day if they specifically asked nicely and politely exactly when we are feeling extra generous. So yeah, this isn't too controversial for us because these are things that are so ingrained in who we are as exemplary citizens already.

But back in bible times, this stuff that Jesus said, well it was unheard of. People were only loved when they were loveable and those people only had to love others who were the same. People were only forgiven by already being righteous, I mean that stuff was earned, you know. It takes sacrifice and discipline and in some cases, penance. It wasn't given away haphazardly as Jesus insinuated. And only the first were first as determined by those who were first. Oh and by the way those who were first also determined who was last, and of course that didn't include themselves, so... yeah.

So Jesus saying these things, well, it turned their lives around, flipped society right over, proposed a new way of living that was so radical, so different, so crazy. Jesus' words to these people were so out there in terms of how we can now see the world, that he was rejected by those aforementioned "firsts". Jesus telling them to just love their enemies was so atrocious that frankly it cost Jesus his life.

And we look at this from our comfy 21<sup>st</sup> century theological armchairs and we think to ourselves, that would *never* be us. We would *never* be tempted like that to kill someone over something like this. We would *never* be so unruly and angry and hateful toward our enemies, let alone a Rabbi and supposed Messiah. We would *never* kill Jesus.

Or would we...?

I mean, of course, we wouldn't kill Jesus if he were standing physically in front of us, no that would be crazy talk. Mostly because we probably wouldn't kill anyone standing in front of us or anywhere else for that matter, because literally killing someone is too much for most people to handle, in spite of what all the action movies and media tells us. So of course we wouldn't actually be like those people who killed Jesus back then. But if you think about it, they weren't really like that either.

In that they didn't actually kill Jesus. The Roman soldiers did that. The people, the religious leaders, the "firsts" of that time, just cheered it on.

And that is something that I think we might do. We might cheer on the death of Jesus and then say that it wasn't us. We might encourage those who deny Jesus in their lives and then claim that it was for the greater good. We might stand behind and rally for very unchristian values and hide behind poor theology and logic to gaslight anyone who might offer a different viewpoint or possibility in the name of being always right.

I mean, this is what got Jesus killed. Very literally so. This idea that we and those who agree with us are always right. And anything that opposes that right, however logical it can be, is automatically labelled as wrong or false or maybe even evil. It has to be, because the premise is already established that we are always right. And so we reject anything that disagrees with us, we gaslight anyone who opposes us, and we kill our enemies... mostly figuratively but sometimes unfortunately literally as well.

"Love your enemy" as Jesus said. Suddenly, maybe this is a bit controversial for us after all. Maybe this isn't as easy as we thought. Maybe we need to ponder these words a bit... or a lot... more deeply.

And I know at this point some of you out there might be thinking, "I know *exactly* who he is talking about... he's talking about *them*" with the "them" as being who you might consider as your enemy right now. They need to smarten up, *they* need to see the truth, *they* need to jump over to our side and learn to love us. And I have to say, I'm actually not. So then there could be some of you now who might be thinking, "Wait a second, that means this jerk is talking about me! How dare he think he knows me better than I know myself??" and then effectively label me your enemy. To which I say, I'm not actually doing that either. The fact of the matter truly is, that I'm talking about myself.

While I don't actually consider myself to have many enemies if any at all, there are a lot of people out there that I would rather not love. While I can openly say that I need God's forgiveness, I'd be hard pressed to be able to list out my own sins of the past 24 hours, the past month, or even the past year because I choose either to not recognise them or I justify them with my own skewed logic and worldview. While I would never ever kill anyone (I don't think), I know that I push Jesus, or at least his teachings, out of my life in more ways that I am embarrassed to admit. And I've learned to hate myself for it.

"Love your enemy" as Jesus said.

This isn't easy, you know. It isn't easy because we like to hate those who we hate. We like to disagree with those who make us feel more right because they are so wrong. We like to deny

that maybe... just maybe... we can be our own worst enemy causing us to sometimes having a hard time loving ourselves.

And I think this is what Jesus meant by loving your enemies. Love those you don't like, and also love those parts in yourself that you hate. Don't go around pointing your fingers at others saying, "See? They're not loving toward me and that is why they're my enemy" but instead think about how you may or may not be so loving towards them, perhaps because you see in them the parts of yourself that you don't like. Then perhaps we might all learn to see and recognise how all of us, and I mean *all of us*, are in deep and dire need of a Saviour.

The good news in this humbling and sobering fact is that God has already made provision for it. In that even in our sinfulness, we are freely forgiven. We have been promised this grace from the beginning of time, and that nothing can remove us from God's love. That, and knowing that while we might have thought that we were the first, but now see that we're not so much, God continues to make us like the first, equally loved and welcomed into the kingdom of God. And it's in this kingdom that we have been so lovingly welcomed into where we can perhaps learn to, as a wise friend always reminds me of, to love God and to love neighbour and to which I would add also love our enemies and maybe even ourselves.

So these controversial words of Jesus continues to be controversial even in this day and age. We might not recognise the struggle with them but it is there. However, these controversial words that perhaps fall on deaf ears are also life giving, grace inducing, and full of welcoming love. We can be lifted up by them in knowing that while we are to love, that we can also know that we are loved.

As we come near the end of this season after the Epiphany, may we continue to see God living among us and loving us in spite of our sin, showing us the ways of grace and mercy, and revealing to all the forgiveness that is stretched out to even you and me. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (#707)

### **CREED**

With all who are welcomed into God's grace, 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 into grace with God and each other, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “by your mercy, O God,” and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you remind us that evil and wrong exist in the world, and you cause it to wither and fade away by your righteousness. Help us to rely on you for grace and peace, that we might battle this evil unprovoked with justice. By your mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we put our trust in you, for you are good and show us how to love. May our ministries and service reflect your grace in our lives, that all people might see and recognize their value and worth. 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 Ascension Lutheran Church in Nelson and their pastor Brenda Nestegaard Paul; and for Mount Zion Lutheran Church in New Westminster and their pastor Marlys Moen. By your mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you have created these lands for us to dwell in and find safe pasture. You provide for our needs through all that you have made. May our stewardship of your creation be full of your grace, that our relationship with this planet might flourish and bring mutual joy. By your mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you alone judge and vindicate for eternity, but you have given us tools to discern wisely within our nations and borders. Grant all world leaders this wisdom, that they might govern justly and fairly. We pray in particular for those that we’ve sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Mikele Kiflu, Selam Hailie and their children. By your mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, in you we take delight, and we trust you to care for us and hold us. Be especially with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and shine your love and grace upon us all. Particularly we pray for Diana; Bev and family; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Paula; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Linda; Charolotte; William; Jenny; Chris; Mr Cifuentes; Min; those who have been affected by COVID 19; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you deliver us and bring us into an abundance of peace with you and all the saints for eternity. Remind us always of this connection we have with you and them and how your welcome expands to all people, that we might treat each other now, here, on this planet, with the respect and the grace that only you can give in all righteousness. By your mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your grace and mercy, revealed to us through 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 together and in peace give glory, thanks, and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who showed us how to live in love and forgiveness, revealing to us all that power is found not in might but in love.

For on the night that he was betrayed, it was your Son Jesus who, while sitting with his friends for a meal 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 had eaten, 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 that we can tangibly see God's welcome and providence, shared by grace and given in love, reminded to us in this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory be to you, for all that you have done, are doing, and will do in the future, for the sake of grace and forgiveness, and the peace that surpasses all understanding, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever.

**Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into God's peace 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 and eat the gifts of grace and redemption.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**COMMUNION**

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, you have again nourished us with your truth and love, and you have given us ears to hear your gospel message of grace and forgiveness. Strengthen us to act with grace with each other as we continue to reside in your kingdom and community, along with Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING**

**BLESSING**

May God Shepherd, Saviour, and Spirit, surround your days with a strong vision, worthy work, reconciliation, and the strength to persevere in all that you say and do, now and always.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** Light Dawns on a Weary World (#726)

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, forgive and be forgiven.  
**Thanks be to God.**