



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

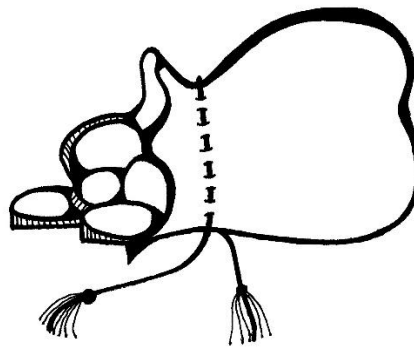
Phone / fax: 604-433-1515

Website: www.graceburnaby.com

Email: office@graceburnaby.com

pastor@graceburnaby.com

Follow us on Twitter! @GraceLutBurnaby



Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 18, 2022

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recognize that we are bought with a price. "Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all." Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing—we are nothing. By God's gracious favor we have everything we need.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and 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 hən̓q̓əmi̓n̓əm (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 113)

We gather in praise of the Lord, singing hallelujah as God's servants. Let the name of the Lord be blessed from the rising of the sun until the time that it goes down. For the Lord is high above all nations, God's glory above the heavens.

Who is like our God, enthroned on high but full of grace and mercy? Our Lord brings healing and redemption and welcomes us into the joyful community with all the saints as the one body of Christ in the world and beyond. So we come and we worship. We praise. We bow down and give thanks to the Lord our God. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Let Streams of Living Justice (#710)

GREETING

The equitable grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the just love of God, and the open fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Faithful God, we give you thanks that in Jesus Christ you have entrusted us with the richness of your glory and the treasure of your grace. Make us faithful stewards of your good gifts, that your love be seen by all and your welcome into your kingdom be revealed, where we can all live in harmony and peace with you and each other always, through Jesus Christ our Saviour.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Amos 8:4-7

A reading from Amos.

Amos was called by God to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Peace and prosperity in Israel led to corrupt business practices and oppression of the poor. The prophet declares that God will not tolerate such a situation.

⁴Hear this, you that trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
⁵saying, "When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain;
and the sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah small and the shekel great,
and practice deceit with false balances,
⁶buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals,
and selling the sweepings of the wheat."
⁷The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

SECOND READING: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

A reading from 1 Timothy.

The pastoral epistles offer insight into how early Christians understood many practical matters, such as church administration and worship. The church's focused prayer for others is an expression of the single-minded passion God has toward us in Jesus.

¹First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ²for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³This is right and is acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, ⁴who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵For

there is one God;

there is also one mediator between God and humankind,

Christ Jesus, himself human,

⁶who gave himself a ransom for all

—this was attested at the right time. ⁷For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth, I am not lying), a teacher of the Gentiles in faith and truth.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Luke 16:1-13

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells the curious story of a dishonest manager who cheats his employer and then is commended by him for having acted so shrewdly. Jesus wonders why his own followers are less creative and diligent in their stewardship given that they are managers of a far more valuable household.

¹Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ²So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management, because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ ³Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ ⁵So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ ⁷Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ ⁸And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly; for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone, they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

¹⁰“Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much; and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹If then you have not been faithful with the dishonest

wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

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

SERMON

God our Saviour, send your Spirit to us, that we might faithfully hear your Word spoken and realise your call for our lives and community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

So I guess tomorrow is a day off for many of us here in BC so we can properly mourn Queen Elizabeth on the day of her funeral. Personally, I think I'd be sleeping when the funeral is actually happening at something like 3am for us, so honestly I don't think it makes much sense that the kids get this extra day off school. Don't get me wrong, I think it's a good time to talk about the Queen and how all that stuff works, but then that means I'll have to learn it myself in order to teach it to our kids properly.

Because I'll admit it, I don't really keep up with the news around the Royal family other than the really big front page stuff. So last week when I made a quick remark about the queen being “pretty cool,” I probably should have qualified that with “from what I heard” because I honestly don't really know if she is or not at all.

But then this past week on Twitter I saw a video clip of an interview with Prince Harry where he talks about why he and his family stepped down from their Royal duties and all the hate he received because of it, and it's all pretty sad. Basically he explained how they were facing hate way before they decided to leave, mostly because his wife Megan, comes from a mixed ancestry and isn't in any way British. They have been hounded because of her background since they started dating. If this sounds racist, it's because it is. Being one who has faced a fair amount of racism in his life, I know the frustration and difficulties that come when people can't see past your ethnicity and everything you do is under a different kind of scrutiny.

So they really left for her sake, in fears that history would repeat itself and she'd be killed like how his mother was from the pushy and intrusive attitudes of the paparazzi and the drama-hungry media consumers. Apparently Megan was already acting severely depressed and even suicidal at times although she kept her composure from what I saw, and Harry did what he could to protect her and their children by leaving the Royal family.

And many might be thinking, that's what they signed up for as celebrities. Paparazzi and media meddling is expected for any member of the Royal family. Some might even say that it's their duty to endure that limelight and fame.

But at what cost? This prince had already lost his mother to this, and I would imagine that he wouldn't want to lose his wife as well. He saw that the system was broken and he knew that even with all the supposed power of royalty, he couldn't fix it. So he did the next best thing, he removed himself from it.

And that takes guts. It takes guts to stand up for your spouse like that. It takes guts to stand up against the system and protect the ones you love. It takes guts to stand up above the crowd and the “way things have always been” and move for real change toward justice for all.

This interview with Prince Harry actually helped me to see this parable that Jesus gives us today in a new light. This parable, which has always confused me in the past, seems really uncharacteristic of Jesus as at first glance it seems like he is commending us to cheat our bosses for our own gain. Of course that kind of dishonesty would be frowned upon in pretty much any organization and would very likely be grounds for termination or at very least a public shaming of some sort. But instead, Jesus was like, “way to go, shrewd manager, you did the right thing!”

Weird, huh?

Well, maybe not so much if we understand what the manager was really doing. Sure, the story sounds like he was just looking out for his own butt as he wasn’t strong enough to do any kind of physical work and too proud to do any panhandling work. So if he were to be fired, he knew he had no way of sustaining himself so he had to rely on the kindness of others to take him in and maybe even give him a job that didn’t involve physical labour or panhandling. So yeah, it sounds like his motives were selfish.

And maybe they were at the beginning. But I think something clicked in the manager when he got fired. He understood what was happening to him and how corrupt and unfair the system that we’re all a part of is. See, the manager’s job was to shake down payments from the farmers to the rich man for “protection” so to speak. So, extortion basically. The manager made the farmers pay or they’d lose their farm. The manager would likely collect more than required and take a “commission” for himself, and the rich man, well, all he had to do was sit there and get richer.

We are all part of this system and maybe even buy into it, thinking that the rich are rich because they deserve it for their hard work and smarts and the poor are poor because they don’t work quite as hard or aren’t quite as smart. But the thing is I’m pretty sure those farmers worked hard too and plenty smart. But they aren’t given the same opportunities as those who were just born with certain privileges, such as the colour of their skin, their gender, or behind what borders they happen to have been born.

The manager might have thought that he was above the system as he worked for this rich guy, but he was still fired for doing his job. He saw how he also was a victim of the system, and suddenly he saw how this system that he so bought into was hurting others and ruining lives. He didn’t want to be part of that anymore. Ironical though, that it took him losing his job for him to want to quit.

With his newfound insights, he wanted to rectify the situation, maybe make a difference in some way. Shake up the system a bit. So instead of collecting everything he was supposed to, he charged the people a more reasonable and fair price, something that wouldn’t break the bank for them. He did what he could in his limited and temporary power to foster relationships, create community, and instill hope.

See Jesus wasn’t commending this manager for ripping off his boss, he was commending him for no longer ripping off the poor farmers. He was commending him for standing up for what is

right and good and acceptable. Jesus was commending this shrewd manager siding with justice, looking out for the least of these, and working towards serving God rather than the system which is run by the greed of money.

And this is what I see Prince Harry doing by stepping down from the Royal family. Yes, it looks bad like he's deserting his family but he is actually removing himself from a corrupt system that doesn't accept outsiders and shuns those that it doesn't like. A system that exploits people for profit until there is nothing left to take. A system that took his mother and nearly his wife away from him and sensationalized it as entertainment for the masses.

This broken system that plagued biblical times continues to plague us today. Even in this day and age we still face the evils of greed and the love of money, on top of a whole bunch of other injustices that we can't even count. We continue to exploit the land and resources and even other humans in the form of unfair wages and treatment. It is often so overwhelming just to think about all the ways we completely and utterly fail God's vision of community and unity in God's kingdom. It is deflating to see how this world is so run by selfishness and the want of more and more material gain. It is heartbreaking to see how quickly people in general would serve money over God.

We can see the difference in our motivations. We can tell who we serve by the way we treat each other. We know God's love in our lives when we love others as brothers and sisters in Christ, made equal by God's grace, and together welcomed to live in community and right relationship.

See by God's grace, we look for what is good, right, and acceptable in God's eyes. We can, by God's strength, exercise our own influence and privilege to make small changes here and there. We can, by God's love and mercy, make a difference perhaps not for all of society bound by this system, but for the individuals that we meet, both known and unknown, with our counter cultural kindness and compassion we can instill hope in others, showing everyone that there is another way of grace and mercy where we all can strive to live in harmony.

I know, still overwhelming. But we can rejoice in that a lot of the work has already been done through cross and the promises of Christ. We have been granted the Spirit to guide us and our hearts to love our neighbour and proclaim God's grace. We have been taught, equipped, and anointed to be God's people in the world, not to be perfect but to reveal just how big and wide God's grace can be for us and all people of all times and places.

So in this season after Pentecost, may we continue seeing the church in the world and our participation in it, and find new ways of revealing God's love and peace for the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love (#708)

CREED (p. 104)

With all God's people made equal by 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 humble service to God and each other, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, “by your humbling mercy, O God,” and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we give praise to your name as you have blessed us again and again with your equitable love and grace. Remind us always of the community that you join us all together in that we might treat each other with dignity and respect. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we spend our waking hours from sun up to sun down praising your name. May our song ring to the ends of the earth that the world might hear of your unending grace. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishop Kathy, assistant to the bishop Rebekah, and national bishop Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for St Paul’s Lutheran Church in Prince Rupert and their pastor Diana Edis; and Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Richmond and their pastor Christoph Reiners. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your glory is high above the nations and the heavens that you’ve created by your love. Strengthen our care and stewardship of this planet, that your love can be more revealed through its beauty. We pray especially for the areas of our province and country that are affected by wildfires, that all who have been impacted by them find healing and restoration. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, there is none like you, for you are enthroned on high yet you choose to come to us with a hand of grace and mercy. Give all world leaders, politicians, and people of influence a sense of your love, and grant all people the peace found in your name. We pray for all areas of the world affected by wars, violence, and turmoil, that your love might shine even in the darkness. We also pray for those that we’ve sponsored to come to our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their family; that their journey to Canada might begin soon. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you lift us up out of the dust and ashes of our lives and bless us with your grace. Be with all who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely that your promise of grace and community be reflected in all that we do. Especially we pray for Bev and family; Paula; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Diana; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; William; Chris; Amika; Jack; Walter; the Hahn family; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you remind us of the joy in your name by joining us together always with you and all the saints of all times and places. May their lives of faith be examples for us that we can be effective beacons of your hope and grace. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your everlasting welcome and redemption, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PEACE (p. 106)

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 shows us the ways of true community and relationship, that we are all made equal by your grace and mercy.

For on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus sat with his friends (the betrayers) for a meal where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it with them saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And 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 heavenly food that we see how we are made equal as your children, fallen but lifted up, broken but healed, sinners but forgiven by your name. May you bless this food and us, and show us always the joys of your unending promises and love, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Gathered into community 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 love and welcome.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)

When Pain of the World Surrounds Us (#704)

We Are an Offering (#692)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you have again fed us with your love and your Word, and revealed to us how your grace is always present in our lives. Bless us as we go out into the world as your people, and may our encounters with others be reflections of your unending welcome and mercy, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING**BLESSING**

May the God of hope sustain you,
the God of our salvation keep you,
and the God of all relationship and community walk with you, today and every day.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Rise Up, O Saints of God! (#669)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, seek what is good and acceptable and right in God's eyes.
Thanks be to God.

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