



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 25, 2022

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

Consideration of and care for those in need (especially those “at our gate,” visible to us, of whom we are aware) is an essential component of good stewardship. It is in the sharing of wealth that we avoid the snare of wealth. It is the one whom death could not hold—who comes to us risen from the dead—who can free us from the death grip of greed.

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 hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 146)

We gather in praise of our Lord and to sing hallelujah to our God while we have our being. Our trust is in God who is eternal and everlasting, immortal and immutable, forever forgiving and boundlessly believing, who has made the heavens and earth, the seas and all that is in them, and whose promises know no end. The Lord sets us free.

With our eyes opened and lifted up, may we see God's love and care for us all, as we are sustained by God's hand of graciousness and mercy. May God reign forever throughout all generations. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Gather Us In (#532)

GREETING

The immovable grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the firm love of God, and the solid fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 204)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving God, you are the giver of all good gifts and you have created us for life together. Through Christ you reveal to us the true riches of our faith and you move us to generosity and service. Strengthen us in our pursuit of righteousness and love for all neighbours, that we might take hold of the life that truly is life, in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Amos 6:1a, 4-7

A reading from Amos.

The prophet Amos announces that Israel's great wealth is a cause not for rejoicing but rather sorrow, because God's people have forgotten how to share their wealth with the poor. The wealthy will be the first to go into exile when judgment comes.

^{1a} Alas for those who are at ease in Zion,
and for those who feel secure on Mount Samaria,

⁴ Alas for those who lie on beds of ivory,
and lounge on their couches,
and eat lambs from the flock,
and calves from the stall;

⁵ who sing idle songs to the sound of the harp,
and like David improvise on instruments of music;

⁶ who drink wine from bowls,
and anoint themselves with the finest oils,
but are not grieved over the ruin of Joseph!

⁷ Therefore they shall now be the first to go into exile,
and the revelry of the loungers shall pass away.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 146

¹Hallelujah!

Praise the LORD, O my soul!

²**I will praise the LORD as long as I live;**

I will sing praises to my God while I have my being.

³Put not your trust in rulers,

in mortals in whom there is no help.

⁴**When they breathe their last, they return to earth,**

and in that day their thoughts perish.

⁵Happy are they who have the God of Jacob for their help,

whose hope is in the LORD their God;

⁶**who made heaven and earth, the seas, and all that is in them;**

who keeps promises forever;

⁷who gives justice to those who are oppressed, and food to those who hunger.

The LORD sets the captive free.

⁸**The LORD opens the eyes of the blind; the LORD lifts up those who are bowed down;**

the LORD loves the righteous.

⁹The LORD cares for the stranger;

the LORD sustains the orphan and widow, but frustrates the way of the wicked.

¹⁰**The LORD shall reign forever,**

your God, O Zion, throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

SECOND READING: 1 Timothy 6:6-19

A reading from 1 Timothy.

Timothy is reminded of the confession he made at his baptism and of its implications for daily life. His priorities will be different from those of people who merely want to be rich.

⁶Of course, there is great gain in godliness combined with contentment; ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; ⁸but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. ⁹But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.

¹¹But as for you, man of God, shun all this; pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, gentleness. ¹²Fight the good fight of the faith; take hold of the eternal life, to which you were called and for which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. ¹³In the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession, I charge you ¹⁴to keep the commandment without spot or blame until the manifestation of our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁵which he will bring about at the right time—he who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords. ¹⁶It is he alone who has immortality and dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see; to him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

¹⁷As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with

everything for our enjoyment. ¹⁸They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, ¹⁹thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Luke 16:19-31

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells a parable in which the poor one is “lifted up” and the rich one is “sent away empty.” Jesus makes it clear that this ethic of merciful reversal is not new but is as old as Moses and the prophets.

[Jesus said:] ¹⁹“There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and who feasted sumptuously every day. ²⁰And at his gate lay a poor man named Lazarus, covered with sores, ²¹who longed to satisfy his hunger with what fell from the rich man’s table; even the dogs would come and lick his sores. ²²The poor man died and was carried away by the angels to be with Abraham. The rich man also died and was buried. ²³In Hades, where he was being tormented, he looked up and saw Abraham far away with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴He called out, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue; for I am in agony in these flames.’ ²⁵But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that during your lifetime you received your good things, and Lazarus in like manner evil things; but now he is comforted here, and you are in agony. ²⁶Besides all this, between you and us a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who might want to pass from here to you cannot do so, and no one can cross from there to us.’ ²⁷He said, ‘Then, father, I beg you to send him to my father’s house—²⁸for I have five brothers—that he may warn them, so that they will not also come into this place of torment.’ ²⁹Abraham replied, ‘They have Moses and the prophets; they should listen to them.’ ³⁰He said, ‘No, father Abraham; but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent.’ ³¹He said to him, ‘If they do not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.’”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Nurturing God, you give life to all things and you satisfy the needs of your people as you grant us your healing and wholeness. Send your Spirit upon us this day, that we be able to hear your word and see Jesus present in our lives, the one in whom all hungers are fed. Amen.

So the other day I was briefly in Central Park dropping off our kids at a birthday party. And one thing that I always notice when I’m there are the millions of squirrels just everywhere. This time was no exception, everywhere we walked we could just hear the squirrels running about in the bushes or around the trees and even crossing our path. They were literally everywhere.

Seeing the squirrels do their squirrel thing reminded me of this time as a kid when we were down in Sacramento for a family trip. We were walking around some park or government property or something and it was absolutely wall-to-wall orange trees. My brother and I were wandering around while our parents were chatting with their friends and as we walked my brother just randomly kicked one of the many oranges that littered the grounds. It wasn't a hard kick, it was more like he hit the orange with one of his regular walking strides. But it sent the orange rolling real quick anyway. I think we must have been on a slope or something because that orange kept rolling and rolling for 35-40 feet... before it slammed directly into a squirrel that was just sitting there. It was a complete fluke, my brother wasn't aiming for anything and just randomly hit this orange with his foot. I saw the squirrel before it got hit too, but I totally thought it'd jump out of the way because c'mon, it's a squirrel. They always get out of the way of stuff headed in their direction. I know because I've tried to catch one many a time but to no avail.

And I hate to say it, but watching that squirrel just get beamed by an orange was like one of the funniest things I've ever seen. Not because I'm cruel to animals, mind you, but because the chances of it getting hit like that are miniscule. Like I said, they always seem so alert, like little ninjas with bushy tails. So the shock of it getting caught so off guard like this, well my brother and I just couldn't hold in our laughter.

Honestly, how on earth did this baseball sized orange catch this squirrel by surprise? Maybe it was blind or deaf or had some other kind of disability that blocked one or more of its senses. But more likely in my opinion, was that it was distracted by something else. You know, like how my kids or almost anyone at the mall are super distracted with their screens and devices. I do remember the squirrel was holding a nut or something in its hands, so it was probably focussed so much on that food or whatever that it just didn't notice the danger immediately to its right. That makes the most sense to me because food is essential for survival and so if it was a nut that it was holding, then that nut probably had this little squirrel's undivided attention. Because really, if it's survival that it was worried about at that moment, then nothing else would matter.

The irony here is that what didn't seem to matter in this case was something else that put that survival at risk. Funny how that works. But that survival instinct is strong in all living things really, we are just wired to want to prolong our life for as long as possible. But sometimes that instinct gets in our own way as we might focus on the wrong thing at the wrong time.

And that brings us to this parable that we get from Jesus today. We know this story, and we probably know where I'm going with it already. Jesus is giving us a commentary on what heaven and hell are like, and how it's permanent once we're there and there's no going back, right? And maybe in light of this squirrel story is that we need to focus more on what saves us rather than what will send us to hell, right? That sounds really nice and tight and all, but honestly not really where I want to go with this. I mean, nowhere in this story do we hear that the rich man was evil. A bit self-absorbed, but we don't hear anything else about his character. And Lazarus? We don't hear about him being righteous at all, just that he was extremely poor. So I don't think that the parable is about focussing on the right things in order to get us into heaven, as we often might think.

Because really, the rich man's focus was on saving himself. His riches, fancy clothes and house, and all that food that he'd eat is about survival. His survival instinct even led him to talk

directly with Abraham, the father of faith, the perpetual patriarch of all Jews, because he is the one with the power. The rich man wanted to leverage that power for his own survival. And when that doesn't work, he still tries to leverage Abraham's power to help to save his family. He acts instinctively in the story, focussed on survival.

And to be honest, I can't fault him, we would all be worried about our survival too. It's just in us. It's like to win at this game of life is to live as long as possible. It is to be able to do whatever we can to be able to add those extra years, months, and days, and anything that promises us that draws our attention and focus. So I get that the rich man was focussed on his survival.

But the problem is that his focus was too great on his way of survival that he missed out on the life that truly is life. He thought that the respect he commanded would be enough. He thought that his prestige and privilege were what mattered. He thought his money and power were what would save him.

And like the poor squirrel who had that unfortunate encounter with a runaway orange, focussing too hard on a single thing for survival distracted him from what truly saves. Buying completely into the notion that he will be saved by his money or the squirrel be saved by the nut allowed them to be caught off guard by other impending dangers. These dangers might seem like a surprise, but the point of these parables are to warn us about them.

See, this deep chasm that Abraham mentioned is the deep divide that we ourselves dig to put between us and those that we choose not to care for. This chasm is the barrier we put up to separate us in our comfort zones from those that unfortunately fall outside of them. This chasm isn't hate per se, but it's the decision we make to not love as we have first been loved.

And this love that we've first been given is where our focus needs to be on. Not for the sake of our souls, mind you, but for the sake of community, right relationship, and the kingdom of God in the world. Salvation, in my opinion, isn't so much eternity in heaven that we can earn, but the eternal love that we can receive and share with all people that we meet. This is what lasts in our lives, this is what people remember about us, this is what brings all of God's people together as the one body of Christ.

So our focus need not be on our own survival by our own understanding and means, but on the survival of God's truth of love and grace on our lips. Our instincts need not be around how can we be saved, but how we can be present for each other in community. Our lives need not be steered by the need to redeem ourselves by what we can gain or how much we can be respected, but by looking out for and loving our neighbours, and grabbing a hold of that life that truly is life, a life that is full of love, joy, and a deep connection with God's kingdom in the world.

The good news here is that God has given all of this to us already, it is all laid out for us in that the love that had been first given to us can be reflected back to God and onto others, motivating us in our humble service and righteous community, granting us the will to be God's hands and feet in the world. All we really need to do is accept this love, show this love, and be this love, that our regard for ourselves and each other changes from isolated individuals surviving by their own means to partners and common members of the body of Christ, together journeying through this thing called life.

May we, in our continued service to God and each other, always know of the love that God so freely gives, that we might see all people as our siblings in Christ, focussed on the good news of God's salvation. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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

CREED (p. 104)

With all of God's beloved people, 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 abundant mercy, O God," and you are invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your abundant mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we praise you with all of our soul and being, and in you we find joy and security. Lift us up to see the needs of the world, that we might meet them with compassion and empathy when we can. By your abundant mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we put our trust in you as you have been our help and give us hope. May the ministry of the church in the world reflect this truth that all might find that hope in you. We pray especially for 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 Living Faith Lutheran Church in Sechelt and their interim pastor Richard Hergesheimer, and for Lord of Life Mission in Sandspit and their interim pastor Jim Whaley. By your abundant mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you made the heavens and the earth, the seas and all that is in them, and your promises are seen forever in your creation. Help us in our stewardship and care of this planet, that its beauty will proclaim your truth and grace always. We pray for those areas of the world

facing harsh weather and natural disasters, that those affected may find relief. By your abundant mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you give justice to those who are oppressed and you give food to those who are in need. Instill in all people the desire to serve with equity and impartiality, and allow us all to see the value in every person of every tribe and nation. 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 in the midst of pandemic and wars might begin soon. By your abundant mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you care for the needy and lift up the lowly, and you sustain us all with your healing hand. Continue revealing your love to us all and grow our trust and faith in you. Especially we pray for Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; the Hahn family; Paula; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie: Thomas; Cindy; Linda; William; Chris; Amika; Jack; Walter; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
By your abundant mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you shall reign forever, throughout all the generations to which we belong and beyond. Remind us of the lives of the faithful, that they continue to serve as inspiration for us in our community with you and each other for all time. By your abundant mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending grace, shown to us by 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.

PREFACE

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 has shown us the way of grace and mercy in community and your kingdom, joining us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth, in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 207)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Yes Lord, you are holy and mighty, and in you we see true love and grace, for you have joined us together with you and all the saints to be your people in the world, revealing to all the abundance of your great mercy.

For on the night that he was betrayed, our Lord Jesus sat with his disciples for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it with them and said, "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 cup that we see our togetherness in your name, spanning across all barriers and chasms, even as we declare this mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

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

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Gathered into one love by the Holy Spirit, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name,

your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins

as we forgive those

who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial

and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,

and the glory are yours,

now and forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see that God unites us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)

Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service (#712)

O God of Every Nation (#713)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you have again fed us with the bread of life and shown us the depths of your love. Continue to fill us with your Spirit that we be moved to love you and neighbour throughout our days, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING**BLESSING**

May the sovereign God bless you,
The saviour God keep you in mercy,
And the Spirit of God sustain you in this life and the next, now and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Canticle of the Turning (#723)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.
Thanks be to God.

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