



## 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)

Follow us on Twitter! @GraceLutBurnaby



### Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 4, 2022

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

Called to contemplate the cost of discipleship, we might be helped by translating Paul's request to Philemon into our prayer of the day: Refresh my heart in Christ. Strengthened by the company and forgiveness of Christ in holy communion and recalling God's grace in remembrance of baptism, we can be strengthened in this hour to "choose life"—to choose life in God as our own.

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 hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP (Paraphrase of Psalm 1)

We gather in delight of the law of the Lord to meditate on God's teachings and Word as God brings us to prosperity in Spirit and righteousness. And so together we sing and we worship for God is worthy of our love and our lives as we are lifted up out of wickedness and into God's salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

### GATHERING HYMN: Lift High the Cross (#660)

### GREETING

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

**And also with you.**

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Let us pray.

Extravagant God, you pour out blessing upon us and lead us on the path of true life. Help us to choose your way again and again, that we might revel in your love and reflect it to all we meet, in the name of Jesus we pray. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Deuteronomy 30:15-20

A reading from Deuteronomy.

*Moses speaks to the Israelites, who are about to enter the land promised to their ancestors. In this passage, he lays out the stark choice before them: choose life by loving and obeying the LORD; or choose death by following other gods.*

<sup>15</sup>See, I have set before you today life and prosperity, death and adversity. <sup>16</sup>If you obey the commandments of the LORD your God that I am commanding you today, by loving the LORD your God, walking in his ways, and observing his commandments, decrees, and ordinances, then you shall live and become numerous, and the LORD your God will bless you in the land that you are entering to possess. <sup>17</sup>But if your heart turns away and you do not hear, but are led astray to bow down to other gods and serve them, <sup>18</sup>I declare to you today that you shall perish; you shall not live long in the land that you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. <sup>19</sup>I call heaven and earth to witness against you today that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live, <sup>20</sup>loving the LORD your God, obeying him, and holding fast to him; for that means life to you and length of days, so that you may live in the land that the LORD swore to give to your ancestors, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **SECOND READING: Philemon 1-21**

A reading from Philemon.

*While Paul was in prison, he was aided by Onesimus, a man who had run away from Philemon, a slaveowner and a Christian friend of Paul. Paul told Onesimus to return to Philemon and encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus back as a Christian brother.*

<sup>1</sup>Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother,

To Philemon our dear friend and co-worker, <sup>2</sup>to Apphia our sister, to Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house:

<sup>3</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<sup>4</sup>When I remember you in my prayers, I always thank my God <sup>5</sup>because I hear of your love for all the saints and your faith toward the Lord Jesus. <sup>6</sup>I pray that the sharing of your faith may become effective when you perceive all the good that we may do for Christ. <sup>7</sup>I have indeed received much joy and encouragement from your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed through you, my brother.

<sup>8</sup>For this reason, though I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do your duty, <sup>9</sup>yet I would rather appeal to you on the basis of love—and I, Paul, do this as an old man, and now also as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. <sup>10</sup>I am appealing to you for my child, Onesimus, whose father I have become during my imprisonment. <sup>11</sup>Formerly he was useless to you, but now he is indeed useful both to you and to me. <sup>12</sup>I am sending him, that is, my own heart, back to you. <sup>13</sup>I wanted to keep him with me, so that he might be of service to me in your place during my imprisonment for the gospel; <sup>14</sup>but I preferred to do nothing without your consent, in order that your good deed might be voluntary and not something forced. <sup>15</sup>Perhaps this is the reason he was separated from you for a while, so that you might have him back forever, <sup>16</sup>no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother—especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.

<sup>17</sup>So if you consider me your partner, welcome him as you would welcome me. <sup>18</sup>If he has wronged you in any way, or owes you anything, charge that to my account. <sup>19</sup>I, Paul, am writing this with my own hand: I will repay it. I say nothing about your owing me even your own self.

<sup>20</sup>Yes, brother, let me have this benefit from you in the Lord! Refresh my heart in Christ.

<sup>21</sup>Confident of your obedience, I am writing to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)**

### **GOSPEL: Luke 14:25-33**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus speaks frankly about the costs of discipleship. Those who follow him should know from the outset that completing the course of discipleship will finally mean renouncing all other allegiances.*

<sup>25</sup>Now large crowds were traveling with [Jesus;] and he turned and said to them, <sup>26</sup>“Whoever comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and even life itself, cannot be my disciple. <sup>27</sup>Whoever does not carry the cross and follow me

cannot be my disciple. <sup>28</sup>For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and estimate the cost, to see whether he has enough to complete it? <sup>29</sup>Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it will begin to ridicule him, <sup>30</sup>saying, 'This fellow began to build and was not able to finish.' <sup>31</sup>Or what king, going out to wage war against another king, will not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to oppose the one who comes against him with twenty thousand? <sup>32</sup>If he cannot, then, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for the terms of peace. <sup>33</sup>So therefore, none of you can become my disciple if you do not give up all your possessions."

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

### **SERMON**

God of wisdom, speak to us through your Spirit a Word of life, that we might have planted in us the power of your righteous love by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Remember back in the spring before I left for sabbatical I mentioned how it'll go really quickly and before we know it, I'll be back? Yeah well, I called it. Here I am.

But don't get me wrong, it is good to be back. Truly. Although I do admit that the last few weeks I've been dreading coming back to work because according to my generation not working will always be infinitely better than working. And truth be told I'm not sure if I ever got into that sabbatical mode, you know? Some of you know that I did a few weddings and other work related things during my time off, and I blame no one but myself and my inability to say no. So while I did have time off, it didn't always feel that way. Or at least, I didn't always feel all that rested.

But at the same time, I did. I know, weird logic. As tired and stressed as I was at times, imagine how it would have been if I still had to worry about services every week as well. So as I was trying to get back into the swing of things last week, and as people have been asking me how my time off was, I could more honestly say "not bad" instead of what I initially thought I would say, which was "horrible".

Because really, it's all relative. And depending on what we're making it relative to, things can seem way worse than they are, or they can be seen as way better.

For example, you might know that near the beginning of my sabbatical I caught COVID as many of you had as well while I was gone. And it was the worst for me. While my symptoms weren't that bad, it was like any other flu for me, it was the disruption to my life that got me. I had to cancel plans, move things around, and stay in a room by myself away from the rest of my family. I was thinking that there is no worse way to spend sabbatical than this. But then I caught hand, foot, and mouth disease. And let me tell you something, I don't think I could have wished for COVID any more than I did than last week when I had HFM because really, it was that much worse.

I know, for some people COVID was the worst thing that could have happened to them, I'm just saying for me, I realised that it wasn't as HFM (for me) was that much worse. And in fact, HFM probably won't be the worst thing to happen to me either, I mean even though I was stuck in a room in a lot of pain from these sores in my throat and on my feet, I still was able to hang out

with our son who had it too, we still were adequately fed in spite of the painful swallowing, and above all, we had a TV, our devices, and ample internet bandwidth so really it wasn't all that bad. Sure, the pain was bad and it was all we could think about, but I've had worse, and I probably will have worse yet.

It's all relative.

And that got me to thinking about this week's gospel lesson. This week's really easy to understand, feel good gospel lesson. Of course, I'm kidding. Could you imagine if this is your first time ever at church and you heard this read to you? That to follow Jesus you have to hate your parents, your family, and even yourself? Well maybe hating your parents and siblings and even spouse isn't that hard for some people, but ourselves too? That could be where some of us draw the line. I mean, isn't Jesus supposed to be about love?

For most people, if they only heard this read to them, they'd never come back to the church. If this is what Jesus is asking of us, well then thanks but no thanks. I mean, this would be enough to pull my own kids out of church... you know, if they ever came to church. But this isn't the kind of message we want to hear, this isn't the lesson that we want to be taught, this isn't the kind of life that we want to live. Sure, we can love Jesus and all that, but at the expense of our family and friends? For most people that is just too much.

But that's what I mean about it being all relative. I don't know if Jesus is really asking us to hate our families. I don't think Jesus is accusing us of being bad disciples if we continue to care for those who we care for. I'm pretty sure that Jesus isn't demanding us to stop loving just so we can love him more.

Rather, again I think it's all relative. Jesus is asking us to know a love that would blow all the other love we're familiar with out of the water. Jesus is asking us to open our hearts and feel a love that fills us and motivates us to share it with others. Jesus is asking us to explore this love that is so rich and so full, one that brought him into being, one that he centered his life around, one that drove him to the cross. Compared to this love, everything else could only look like hate.

When I was a kid, I used to look up to my brother a lot. He was older than me, smarter, faster, better in almost every way imaginable. I loved that guy to bits. But then as I grew older I started making friends of my own. And while I still love my brother, given the chance to hang out with anyone other than him? You'd better believe I'd be hanging out with anyone else. And so my friends didn't make me hate my brother per se, but my capacity for love grew. And it happened again when I met my wife. I mean I'd still die for my friends and all, but for my wife, I'd kill. Make no mistake. Dead. And then we had kids, and while I'd still kill for my wife, for my kids I'd kill you and your family and destroy all that you hold dear.

Of course, this is all metaphorical, please don't use this as evidence against me. But the point is as I've said before, it's all relative. We don't hate those at the bottom of our love hierarchy, but we just love those at the top so much more.

Still, this sounds like a lot. Can we really love Jesus more than those we love the most? Can we really pick up our metaphorical crosses and lay our lives down for the God who calls us? Can we really have the capacity to be like Christ and love like Christ?

Honestly? Probably not. People in general aren't all that loving and selfless and most of the time we're much more hateful and selfish. But Jesus calls us anyway. Jesus knows we have our shortcomings in the love department but still considers us his friends. Jesus is fully aware that we're going to fail at this, probably epically even, but gives us a provision to remain in his love, remain part of this community, and remain in his salvation.

That provision of course, is forgiveness. Forgiveness of our shortcomings. Forgiveness of our hate. Forgiveness of our sin and separation from God.

Yes, Jesus gives us a tall order of love, community, and discipleship. But by the grace of God we can catch a glimpse of this love, be strengthened by this community, and be driven to be faithful disciples of Christ, marked not by perfection, but by the salvific grace and forgiveness shown to us out of this very love that we are called to be a part of.

So while life will continue to give us ups and downs, relatively good and bad things, we can trust that the love of God remains sure, pure, and steadfast, and will bring us up out whatever it is that we face and lead us into the face of peace and joy by the grace of Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said (#667)

**CREED** (p. 104)

With all the disciples of Christ, let us together confess the Christian faith with the words of 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 to lives of faithful discipline, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "Lord of all mercy," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord of all mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we are happy to walk in your ways and in your counsel as you lead and guide us on the paths of righteousness. Strengthen us in our discipleship and allow our ministry to be pleasing to you. Lord of all mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, we delight in your laws and meditate on your teaching, as you reveal to us who we are in your love and grace. Be with all ministries and those who help others to see your love in the world, that we all might share in the joy of following you. We especially pray for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishop Kathy Martin, assistant to the bishop Rebekah Swanson, and national bishop Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular we pray for Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Penticton and the pastors and leaders that serve there; and for Trinity Anglican + Lutheran church in Port Alberni and their pastor Brenda Nestegaard Paul. Lord of all mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you plant our faith like the trees by streams of water of your creation, and you flourish it as you do with everything else that you have made. May we connect our faith with your presence in this planet, that we might be diligent in our proper stewardship of it. Lord of all mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, the wickedness of the world should be like the chaff that the wind blows away, but often it remains insidious and seeps into our daily living. Bring your justice to the world and all its leaders, that all countries and borders might learn to live in peace without the threat of violence or harm. Lord of all mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you bring to us your merciful judgement and gracious council and you reveal to us all the healing in your name. Allow those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely to feel and see your presence among us all always. Especially we pray for Robert; Sukwant; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Paula, Bev and family; Jack; Walter; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; William; Chris; Mr. Cifuentes; Jessica; Amika, and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

Lord of all mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you know all that is righteous and wicked, and in your forgiveness you welcome us all into your eternity with all the saints. May we always lean on this promise of salvation, that we might in turn be gracious with all those whom we meet. Lord of all mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your wisdom and guidance shown to us 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, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who shows us the value in following you as you are all righteous and just and your steadfast love knows no end.

For on the night that he was betrayed, our Saviour Jesus sat with his own disciples for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks and broke it, then 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 it, he took the cup, gave thanks, and shared it 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 bread and cup that we see how we are connected together through God's grace, allowing us to see the value and worth in each other as siblings through Christ and all of creation, bringing us to live in peace and community. So all honour and glory belong to you, O God, for your righteousness stands 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)**

Brought into faithful discipleship, 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 for us all.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **COMMUNION**



**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 208)

Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus (#802)

Change My Heart, O God (#801)

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Righteous and just God, you have given us the bread and cup of life and you lift us up as your people in the world. Continue to be present with us and guide us through this life and continually reveal your graciousness to us and all, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord.

**Amen.**

**SENDING**

**BLESSING**

May our God, Shepherd, Saviour, and Spirit keep you in love, challenge you in faith, and sustain you with grace, this day and always.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song (#808)

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, follow and emulate God's grace in the world.

**Thanks be to God.**

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