



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost

October 16, 2022

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

Pray always. Do not lose heart. This is Christ's encouragement in the gospel today. Wrestle with the word. Remember your baptism again and again. Come regularly to Christ's table. Persistence in our every encounter with the divine will be blessed.

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 Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in worship with our eyes lifted to the hills, knowing that our help comes from God, maker of heaven and earth. For our God watches over us, stands us fast against turmoil and tirelessly preserves us from all evil.

And so we worship and praise this God who watches our going out and coming in, in whom we put our faith this time forth and forevermore. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Day by Day (#790)

GREETING

The providing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the expansive love of God, and the holistic fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 204)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Eternal God, you are our constant throughout our journeys of life, and you are patient with our ceaseless prayers. Bring to us your wisdom, justice, and blessing, for our own sakes and for the sake of the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Genesis 32:22-31

A reading from Genesis.

Returning to the home he had fled many years before after stealing his brother's birthright and his father's blessing, Jacob wrestles all night long with a divine adversary who ultimately blesses him and changes his name to "Israel," a name that means "he wrestles with God."

²²The same night [Jacob] got up and took his two wives, his two maids, and his eleven children, and crossed the ford of the Jabbok. ²³He took them and sent them across the stream, and likewise everything that he had. ²⁴Jacob was left alone; and a man wrestled with him until daybreak. ²⁵When the man saw that he did not prevail against Jacob, he struck him on the hip socket; and Jacob's hip was put out of joint as he wrestled with him. ²⁶Then he said, "Let me go, for the day is breaking." But Jacob said, "I will not let you go, unless you bless me." ²⁷So he said to him, "What is your name?" And he said, "Jacob." ²⁸Then the man said, "You shall no longer be called Jacob, but Israel, for you have striven with God and with humans, and have prevailed." ²⁹Then Jacob asked him, "Please tell me your name." But he said, "Why is it that you ask my name?" And there he blessed him. ³⁰So Jacob called the place Peniel, saying, "For I have seen God face to face, and yet my life is preserved." ³¹The sun rose upon him as he passed Penuel, limping because of his hip.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 121

- ¹I lift up my eyes to the hills;
from where is my help to come?
- ²**My help comes from the LORD,
the maker of heaven and earth.**
- ³The LORD will not let your foot be moved
nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.
- ⁴**Behold, the keeper of Israel
will neither slumber nor sleep;**
- ⁵the LORD watches over you;
the LORD is your shade at your right hand;
- ⁶**the sun will not strike you by day,
nor the moon by night.**
- ⁷The LORD will preserve you from all evil
and will keep your life.
- ⁸**The LORD will watch over your going out and your coming in,
from this time forth forevermore.**

SECOND READING: 2 Timothy 3:14- 4:5

A reading from 2 Timothy.

The writer of this letter continues his instruction of Timothy, his younger colleague in ministry, by emphasizing the importance of faithful teaching despite opposition.

¹⁴But as for you, continue in what you have learned and firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it, ¹⁵and how from childhood you have known the sacred writings that are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶All scripture is inspired by God and is useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work.

^{4:1}In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I solemnly urge you: ²proclaim the message; be persistent whether the time is favorable or unfavorable; convince, rebuke, and encourage, with the utmost patience in teaching. ³For the time is coming when people will not put up with sound doctrine, but having itching ears, they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own desires, ⁴and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander away to myths. ⁵As for you, always be sober, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, carry out your ministry fully.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Luke 18:1-8

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells a parable of an unjust judge who is worn down by a widow's pleas. Jesus is calling God's people to cry out for justice and deliverance. For if an unethical judge will ultimately grant the plea of a persistent widow, how much more will God respond to those who call.

¹Then Jesus told them a parable about their need to pray always and not to lose heart. ²He said, "In a certain city there was a judge who neither feared God nor had respect for people. ³In that city there was a widow who kept coming to him and saying, 'Grant me justice against my opponent.' ⁴For a while he refused; but later he said to himself, 'Though I have no fear of God and no respect for anyone, ⁵yet because this widow keeps bothering me, I will grant her justice, so that she may not wear me out by continually coming.'" ⁶And the Lord said, "Listen to what the unjust judge says. ⁷And will not God grant justice to his chosen ones who cry to him day and night? Will he delay long in helping them? ⁸I tell you, he will quickly grant justice to them. And yet, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?"

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

SERMON

O God, speak to us. By the power of your Spirit, equip us as your messengers and proclaimers of your life-altering, world-changing, blessing filled Word and promises, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

You ever have one of those days when pretty much nothing goes your way? I have, more than once, in fact. Come to think of it, I had about 7 of them just this past week. ..

But you know what I mean, don't you? Those days where you might have woken up on the wrong side of the bed or can't seem to get your hair right, or you just have nothing to wear. Those days when something unexpected happened that completely throws you off, or traffic was extremely bad and caused you to be late, or your bus didn't come on time and started a chain reaction of missed busses. Those days where you were too distracted by all the things going on in your life, or a particular task ended up taking way more time than anticipated, or you were just too tired from too little sleep and all your productivity got tossed out the window. Whatever it was, I think we can all say that we've experienced these horrible, no good, very bad days.

And often when these days happen, and I know for some they happen more often than they don't, we feel bad. Not just bad because the situation is bad, but also bad for ourselves, because we don't like being caught up in these days. We don't like feeling bad, or sad, or even mad. We don't like to be victim of our circumstances, or subject to other people's mistakes or poor judgement, or even trapped by the follies of the world. We don't like it when we aren't in control.

Perhaps that is the core of these bad days. Something happens that is out of our control, and then we put it on ourselves to maybe fix it, solve it, or at very least get it back under control. Because when we have control over the situation, then things should go better, right? When we have a handle on things and we're able to call the shots, then things would probably run smoother, won't they? When we are the ones who can accurately look at and assess the

matter at hand, then things will just get done in the way that is most beneficial to all... at least from our perspective.

Because like it or not, we're always the protagonist of our stories, we are always the ones who deserve more justice, we are the ones worthy of blessing. At least that is how we see things, this is the lens that helps us understand the world, this is the paradigm through which we interpret life.

This isn't a bad thing or a good thing, but I think we're all just wired to do this from the day that we're born and we cry out for sustenance, attention, and love. And as we grow older we continue to cry out for the things that we want, need, and have to have because we've been so good and we deserve it. Even as adults, we might not cry out overtly but we might complain, whether it be verbally or written on a slip for a complaint box or a post on an internet review site. We might put into motion different situations that will get us the recognition that we've earned. We might even wrestle with God and demand a blessing.

That's what Jacob did in our first reading for today. Or at least, that is what he understood to have happened. As the story goes, Jacob is just chilling by this stream and starts to wrestle a stranger. If this isn't odd enough, the stranger dislocates Jacob's leg in an unsuccessful attempt to get Jacob off his back. These two guys didn't even know each other's names but they wrestled each other all night. I don't know if any of you have ever watched a wrestling match like on WWE or whatever, but they usually don't turn out like this one did.

But in the end, Jacob got what he wanted, a blessing from God. He also got a name change which he wasn't really looking for, but hey it stuck anyway. Stuck on him like a limp on a bum hip.

Jacob sought after this blessing so hard that he wrestled a stranger all night for it. We might not engage in physical violence like this, but we might metaphorically wrestle like this to get what we think we deserve. We might fight and work the system to get the justice that is rightfully ours. We might persist for the blessings that are due to us.

That's what we should do, according to Jesus, right? In his parable that we get today, Jesus tells us to say persistent in our prayers so we can change God's mind to bless us. Or, that's what it sounds like at first glance. But upon closer inspection we see that Jesus actually says that God isn't like this judge who openly admits has no fear of God for respect for anyone, but will grant justice and blessing after only a little bit of persistence.

So still, we have to be persistent. We have to work hard to earn what we deserve. We have to control God's mind through our nagging and whining until we get what we want. It might be faster than with the unjust judge, but the process is the same.

Or it's the same if we take that interpretation of this story, that is. Because if I'm honest with you, that doesn't sound right to me. I don't think we are to be the ones that decide who and how God blesses. I don't think we're the ones that get to determine when justice is served. I don't think we get to have that kind of control over life and life's situations.

I mean we can try, but I don't think we'd be successful.

Rather, I think what Jesus is telling us here is that we needn't be as persistent as the widow because God isn't as hard-hearted as the judge. We don't have to wrestle all night and limp away like Jacob-turned-Israel did, because God has already promised to be our help and our guide, not our opponent and adversary. We don't have to grasp for control in order to have a good life full of blessings and justice because God, full of grace and mercy, gives that to us anyway.

We just might not see it, or feel it, or recognise it.

But that isn't on God, you see, that's on us. In our times of trouble, hardship, on those horrible, no good, very bad days, it's easy for us to play the victim and say that our life sucks and nothing good ever happens to us. On any normal day, it's easy to point out all the ways that life has yet failed us again and talk about how hard it is for us. Throughout our lives it's easy to complain and complain because we don't have control over our situations.

So I think Jesus here in this parable is speaking to that. At the time this gospel was written, Luke was speaking to people who have been waiting for the coming Christ for like 70 some odd years. They were beginning to think that Jesus wasn't coming. They were starting to feel like they were abandoned. Discouragement was setting in and they were losing heart.

Luke then reminds them of the story of Jesus and how he specifically tells them *not* to lose heart, even after 70 years of waiting. Instead, pray persistently. Not to expedite God's actions or to take control of the situation, mind you, but rather to soften their hearts to turn their eyes away from the hardships and the bad days and onto God and God's grace and blessing already given. The persistent prayer that Jesus asks of his followers isn't for them to get what they want but for their eyes to be opened to what God is already doing. Jesus asks them not to lose heart not because their day is coming and all their wants and desires would be met, but because their heart is in God's hands and by God's love and care, they will be changed from within, understanding and seeing God more in the world, and finally feeling and seeing how God never left them from even before they were born.

And so it is with us. We too, can find encouragement in the reassurance of Jesus. We can find hope in knowing that God is always with us, blessing us and granting us the justice that allows us to see others in need in and around our community. We can *not lose heart* in our persistent prayers that open our eyes and ears to all that God continues to do in our lives and in the world, showing us that even on our worst days, we are God's beloved, welcomed into God's kingdom, and saved by God's unending grace.

So as we continue through this time after Pentecost, may our faith be strengthened and our prayers be persistent, that our hearts might continue growing in God's grace and love and we see all that God does in us, through us, and even in spite of us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Precious Lord, Take My Hand (#773)

CREED (p. 104)

Together with the whole church residing in the heart of God, 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 faith and trust, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "by your faithful mercy, O God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your faithful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, as our eyes are drawn to our hardship, we trust that our help comes from you. Grant us the peace that comes from this truth, that our faith might be strengthened and inspire us more into your love. By your faithful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you watch over us and guard us from evil. You are the source of our worship and proclamation. Be with us in our ministry, and may our witness to your goodness be fruitful. 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 First Lutheran Church in Vancouver and the pastors and leaders that are providing them ministry and support; and for the Lutheran Campus ministries across our province and country. By your faithful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you have made heaven and earth and your love is revealed to us through all that you have created for us. May our stewardship of this planet be pleasing to you, and may its beauty and resourcefulness remain throughout the generations. We pray especially for those areas that face harsh weather and natural disasters, that all affected might be safe and secure. By your faithful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you keep watch over us and you lead us away from evil, but in our collective folly we turn away from you and strive for our own selfish gain. Give a humility to all world leaders, politicians, and people of influence, that their leadership be a more accurate reflection of your justice. We pray for all areas of the world that face turmoil, violence, and strife, that your peace and community might reign. We also pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country that their journey might begin soon: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. By your faithful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you keep us and preserve us, and you bring us healing when we are ill. Be with those among us who are sick, mourn, or feel lonely, that your love be apparent to all. Especially we pray for Paula; Diana; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; 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 faithful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you watch over us in all that we do, and from beginning of time and forevermore you connect us with you and all the saints in your kingdom. Remind us of the faith of the past and present, that we be inspired to further the faith of the future. By your faithful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the full and wondrous love of 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, to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who shows us and reminds us of your faithfulness and love, joining us with all 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

O Lord, you are merciful and kind and you move us to put our faith in you. You remain with us even when we lose heart, and you lift us up out of our troubles and unrest and you help us forevermore. And in the fullness of time, you sent to us your Son Jesus, who came to us as one of us and showed us the ways of your truth and life, revealing to all the boundlessness of your grace and mercy.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it with all, 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 cup, gave thanks, and gave 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."

For it is in this bread and cup that we are reminded of God's presence among us, connecting us as a community, and welcoming us in love, even as we proclaim this mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

For it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, for all that you have done and continue to do for the good of all people through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Gathered in faith and trust in God's promises, 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 goodness and grace.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)

Lord of All Hopefulness (#765)

O Lord, Hear My Prayer (#751)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, your love is seen and felt in this place, and we give you thanks for being present and meeting us where we are, feeding us with your truth and nourishing us with your grace.

Strengthen us in all that we do, that your promises and welcome be revealed through us into all the world, in Jesus we pray.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May God our Shepherd bless you and keep your going out and coming in,
God our Saviour shine on you and bestow gracious help unto you,
God the Spirit look upon you with favour and give you peace, this time on and forevermore.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: What a Friend We Have in Jesus (#742)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be persistent in your faith.
Thanks be to God.

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