



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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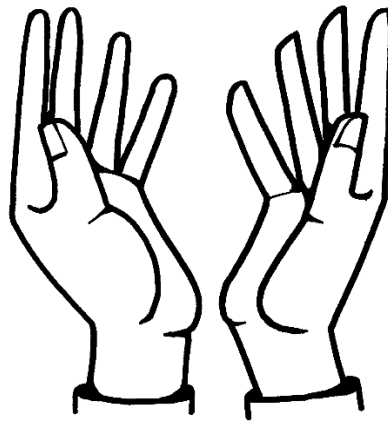
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**Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost**

**October 23, 2022**

**ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten**

Genuine repentance and pretentious piety stand in stark contrast in the gospel and all around us. All creation stands in need of God's forgiveness. Keep the faith. God's people shall be accounted righteous for Jesus' sake. Our God is merciful to sinners. For this we worship and glorify God forever.

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 hən̓q̓əmiñəm (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together in worship in the dwelling place of the Lord of hosts where our hearts might rejoice in the living God. We enter these courts in thanksgiving and with praise to the God in whom we find our strength, endless love, and the grace that knows no bounds.

May this time be blessed and reveal to us all our place in God's kingdom as God's people, beloved and saved, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** My Hope Is Built on Nothing Less (#597)

### GREETING

The forgiving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the saving love of God, and the redeeming fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**CANTICLE OF PRAISE** (p. 204)

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, you reveal to us the way of goodness and life. Humble us and our hearts that we might trust in you and your saving power rather than ourselves and our ideas of righteousness and faith, and bring us into gratitude for all that you have done, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Jeremiah 14:7-10, 19-22

A reading from Jeremiah.

*In a time of drought, the people pray for mercy, repenting of their sins and the sins of their ancestors. They appeal to God to remember the covenant, to show forth God's power, and to heal their land by sending life-giving rain.*

<sup>7</sup>Although our iniquities testify against us,  
act, O LORD, for your name's sake;  
our apostasies indeed are many,  
and we have sinned against you.

<sup>8</sup>O hope of Israel,  
its savior in time of trouble,  
why should you be like a stranger in the land,  
like a traveler turning aside for the night?

<sup>9</sup>Why should you be like someone confused,  
like a mighty warrior who cannot give help?

Yet you, O LORD, are in the midst of us,  
and we are called by your name;  
do not forsake us!

<sup>10</sup>Thus says the LORD concerning this people:  
Truly they have loved to wander,  
they have not restrained their feet;

therefore the LORD does not accept them,  
now he will remember their iniquity  
and punish their sins.

<sup>19</sup>Have you completely rejected Judah?  
Does your heart loathe Zion?

Why have you struck us down  
so that there is no healing for us?  
We look for peace, but find no good;  
for a time of healing, but there is terror instead.

<sup>20</sup>We acknowledge our wickedness, O LORD,  
the iniquity of our ancestors,  
for we have sinned against you.

<sup>21</sup>Do not spurn us, for your name's sake;  
do not dishonor your glorious throne;  
remember and do not break your covenant with us.

<sup>22</sup>Can any idols of the nations bring rain?  
Or can the heavens give showers?

Is it not you, O LORD our God?  
We set our hope on you,  
for it is you who do all this.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### **PSALM: Psalm 84:1-7**

<sup>1</sup>How dear to me is your dwelling,  
O LORD of hosts!

<sup>2</sup>**My soul has a desire and longing for the courts of the LORD;  
my heart and my flesh rejoice in the living God.**

<sup>3</sup>Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest where she may lay her young,  
by the side of your altars, O LORD of hosts, my king and my God.

<sup>4</sup>**Happy are they who dwell in your house!  
They will always be praising you.**

<sup>5</sup>Happy are the people whose strength is in you,  
whose hearts are set on the pilgrims' way.

<sup>6</sup>**Those who go through the balsam valley will find it a place of springs,  
for the early rains have covered it with pools of water.**

<sup>7</sup>They will climb from height to height,  
and the God of gods will be seen in Zion.

#### **SECOND READING: 2 Timothy 4:6-8, 16-18**

A reading from 2 Timothy.

*The conclusion of this letter to a young minister offers a final perspective on life from one who faced death. Though others let him down, Paul was sure of his faith in the Lord, who stood by him and lent him strength.*

<sup>6</sup>As for me, I am already being poured out as a libation, and the time of my departure has come.

<sup>7</sup>I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. <sup>8</sup>From now on there

is reserved for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have longed for his appearing.

<sup>16</sup>At my first defense no one came to my support, but all deserted me. May it not be counted against them! <sup>17</sup>But the Lord stood by me and gave me strength, so that through me the message might be fully proclaimed and all the Gentiles might hear it. So I was rescued from the lion's mouth. <sup>18</sup>The Lord will rescue me from every evil attack and save me for his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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

### **GOSPEL: Luke 18:9-14**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*The coming reign of God will involve unexpected reversals of fortune with judgment rooted in mercy. Jesus tells a parable in which the one who humbles himself is exalted and the one who exalts his own righteousness is humbled.*

<sup>9</sup>[Jesus] also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and regarded others with contempt: <sup>10</sup>“Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. <sup>11</sup>The Pharisee, standing by himself, was praying thus, ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other people: thieves, rogues, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. <sup>12</sup>I fast twice a week; I give a tenth of all my income.’ <sup>13</sup>But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even look up to heaven, but was beating his breast and saying, ‘God, be merciful to me, a sinner!’ <sup>14</sup>I tell you, this man went down to his home justified rather than the other; for all who exalt themselves will be humbled, but all who humble themselves will be exalted.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON**

Pour your Spirit upon us, O Lord, that we might with humble hearts hear your Word for us this day, drawing us ever near to your love and salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

As you have likely heard, Burnaby was rocked this past week by the tragic news of RCMP Constable Shaelyn Yang being fatally stabbed while serving in the line of duty. It's a really sad story and I totally feel for Constable Yang's family and friends and colleagues. But that's not what I want to talk about today, not exactly anyway. As I was reading news article after article and blog post after tweet, I wasn't surprised to find that Constable Yang was described as the perfect officer, dedicated to her work, caring for all people, and sorely missed. I'm not saying that she isn't all those things, but I'm just saying but of course she is.

Because isn't that how all victims of these tragic events are described? They're usually the absolute nicest people you'd meet, or they can brighten up the room with their smile, or the most selfless person who ever lived. Again, I'm not saying that they aren't all these things, but it seems like people are often painted in a certain way to fit our narratives of how undeserving

they are of what happened to them. Or, on the flip side, we might paint someone as worse than they are so we can feel better about them actually deserving their situations. I'm thinking about how the homeless fellow who stabbed Constable Yang is now being described online and I'm honestly a little worried about what will become of him now that his name is out there.

But you know what I mean, don't you? We often justify our assumptions by either digging dirt on someone or listing out their accolades. We like to back up our claims with cherry-picked facts to prove us to be right. We squeeze these situations into our pre-existing narratives to make them more palpable, tangible, and understandable for us.

I'm not saying this is good or bad, I'm just saying that we do this a lot perhaps without knowing it. And sometimes, doing so might cause us to lose out on some of the nuances of the story or hide some facets of the truth that could be life changing.

I'm thinking about the parable that Jesus gives us today in our gospel lesson. This is one that is super familiar and we've used it many times to help guide us and our attitudes toward a more righteous and justified lifestyle. We already know that the Pharisee, just by that title alone, is the antagonist of the story. He is pompous and arrogant and in his prayer, the original texts actually translate better to say that he's praying not just *about* himself, but also *to* himself. Yeah, it doesn't sound like this guy deserves any kind of justification. And then there's the tax collector, the protagonist as we know many underdogs are. He's humble, contrite, and penitent. He rightfully prays to God and he leaves justified.

Easy peasy, we think. The tax collector is good. Be like the tax collector. The Pharisee is bad. Don't be like him.

Except... is the Pharisee that bad? Look at what he says about himself (to himself): he fasts twice a week and gives a tenth of his income to the church. I'd say that's not that bad. I mean he's loyal, devout, and generous. He even volunteers to pray aloud in church. Maybe for the wrong reasons of course, but still. He seems to be like the perfect member of any congregation. Sure, he might be a little arrogant and boastful, but aren't we all in some way, especially in areas that we actually can be? I mean, he isn't wrong in what he says, he really does do all those things and helps out the community where he can, so can we really say that he's a bad guy?

And the tax collector, can we really say that he's good? He's a tax collector after all. He cheats and steals from his own people in order to get ahead and supports the very oppressors that they all complain about. He has chosen a profession that betrays his country and culture. He probably isn't very well liked by anyone around him. But we say sure, he's done those things, but at least he repents and turns to God. But does he? Nowhere in the text does it say that he quits his job and stops cheating people. Jesus gives us no indication that he changes his ways and plugs back into the community. All that we really know is that he admits that he's a sinner, which by all counts, he totally is. So is he really that good?

Well, the truth is, both are good and both are bad. Both have different facets of who they are and what they bring to the table. Both have their pluses and minuses that bring them up and down the notches of our own personal judgment books. So we really can't say definitively whether they are good or bad.

And so thanks be to God, it isn't up to us. It isn't up to us who is saved and who isn't. It isn't up to us who God welcomes into God's kingdom and fold. It isn't up to us who is justified and who isn't, no matter what our narrative tells us about these two characters.

Because the truth is, there is another discrepancy in our modern translations of the text, and this might ruffle a few feathers. In verse 14, Jesus says in our translation that "this man went down to his home justified *rather than* the other..." and to us, that makes sense. We say that the tax collector might not have been perfect, but at least he prayed to the right God and asked for forgiveness. So he should be justified. And that Pharisee, as good as he is he only prays to himself and doesn't seem to care about other people, and so he shouldn't be justified at all. And so we're glad with this outcome of the story. We're glad that the parable concludes in this way. We're glad that our assumptions about this Pharisee and tax collector are correct and that it is only through humble repentance that we can be saved.

Right?

Except... the original text doesn't actually have "rather than" in there. At least, in my limited Greek knowledge, I didn't see it. From what I understand, the text might be better translated as "this man went down to his home *along with* the other justified".

Huh. This is what I mean about ruffling some feathers. This is what I mean about our assumptions blocking out some of the nuances in the story. This is what I mean about our lives being changed by the truth.

I mean, if this is what the actual Greek is saying to us, that means that both the Pharisee and tax collector are justified? Both are good? Both are loved by God?

I am going to offer yes, except for the good part, sort of. See I do believe that both are justified because both are loved by God, and God's grace for any one of us isn't dependant on how good or bad we are, how devout or regular we are in our church attendance, or how well liked we are by our peers. Rather, God's grace is just that: grace. Given freely to all regardless of who we are, where we're from, and what we've done in our lives and continue to do.

So neither the Pharisee or tax collector are "good" per se. They both have their ups and downs. But their being "good" is not what determines their place in God's kingdom. Their actions hold no weight when it comes to God's salvation. Even their attitudes toward God cannot remove them from or put them in God's expansive and unending and enduring love. Instead, God loves as God loves. That is, all people of all times and all places.

This changes things, doesn't it. This might not fit with our paradigms and understanding. But this isn't to say that we can just act however we want and get away with it, but it is to say that our God is bigger and better than we could ever imagine, and that moves us to be better, more faithful, and to live more aligned with Christ. Because just as we begin to grasp how much we are loved in spite of how bad we don't care to admit that we are, we can see how we too can learn to forgive, to be gracious, and even loving toward all people in knowing that we are equally sinners and equally saved, and recreated as God's beloved people for the sake of a world in need.

In this season after Pentecost, may our outlook on life not be about the drawing of lines in society between demographics, but more on the erasing of them as we move toward a society full of God's grace, peace, and love. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** For by Grace You Have Been Saved (#598)

**CREED** (p. 104)

Together with all of God's redeemed 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 recognition of God's grace, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we long to dwell in your gracious presence, for your welcome is expansive and your forgiveness is pure. Help us to see each other as you see us, that our love and respect for all people lead us into community of faith and service. By your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we rejoice in your courts and we long to praise you with all of your people. Strengthen us in our ministry as we proclaim your truth of grace and justice to all the world. 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 Oakridge Lutheran Church in Vancouver and the pastors and leaders that help them in their journey; and for Redeemer Lutheran Church also in Vancouver and their pastor Katrina Vigen. By your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you have made the heavens and earth and everything in them, creating for all living things a home in your presence. May our care for all that you've entrusted to us be pleasing to you, and may your love for us be seen in our relationship with this planet. We pray for all those living in areas affected by harsh weather and natural disasters, that they might find relief and safety. By your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts, **hear our prayer.**

O God, your justice and peace reign in our hearts and we are glad to be citizens of your kingdom. Impart your wisdom into the hearts of all governments and leaders, and especially in our newly elected officials in our province and country, and lead us all to live in equitable service and grace. We pray for the areas of the world that face war, violence, and turmoil, that all people might one day learn to live in harmony in spite of difference. And we especially pray for those that we've sponsored to come into this country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children, that they might begin their journey soon. By your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts, **hear our prayer.**

O God, we find our strength in you as you bring into our lives the wonders of your healing and love. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your presence with us all be apparent and full of blessing. Especially we pray for Bev and family; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Diana; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; William; Chris; Amika; Jack; Walter; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...  
By your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts, **hear our prayer.**

O God, your love for us is beautiful and eternal, and we will dwell in your presence forever with all the saints. May we always be inspired by the faith of the past, that the ground might be set for the faith of the future. By your boundless mercy, O Lord of hosts, **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.**

## 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 reveals to us the vastness of your grace and welcome by 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**

Lord, you are indeed holy and mighty and we magnify your name for all that you have done. By your love, you have lifted us up into your kingdom. By your grace you have redeemed us from our transgressions. By your Son Jesus, you have showed us your boundless mercy and unending grace, saving us from the condemnation of sin and joining us with all the saints of all time.

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

And then after they had eaten, Jesus continued by taking the cup, giving thanks, and sharing it with 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."

So it is with this food and drink that our lives are sustained, our community nourished, and our connection strengthened, even as we together proclaim the mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

For it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, that you might show mercy on even us, your servants, and recreate us to be your children, together praising and serving your name inspired by the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)**

Gathered into God's redeeming 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's love welcomes all.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

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

Chief of Sinners Though I Be (#609)

I Heard the Voice of Jesus Say (#611)

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for continually feeding us with your Word and truth, and nourishing us with your blessing and peace. Grant to us the vision of your love, that we might go forth into the world praising your name and serving your people, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord.

**Amen.**

**SENDING**

**BLESSING**

May the strength of God surround you, the mercy of Christ attend you, and the peace of the Spirit be yours, today and always.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** There Is a Balm in Gilead (#614)

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, walk humbly with our God.

**Thanks be to God.**

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