



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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First Sunday of Advent November 27, 2022 Tree of Life

The new church year begins with a wake-up call: Christ is coming soon! In today's readings both Paul and Jesus challenge us to wake from sleep, for we know neither the day nor hour of the Lord's coming. Isaiah proclaims the day when God will gather all people on the holy mountain and there will be no more war or suffering. Though we vigilantly watch for the promised day of salvation, we wait for what we already have: Christ comes among us this day as the word and meal that strengthens our faith in the promises of God.

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 AND LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH:

We are gathered in the hope that God is here with us in this place, this house of the Lord. We stand in awe within the gates of the city that God has built, a city united as an assembly, a tribe, and community of God's people, where we might pray for peace, pray for our kindred and companions, pray for the knowledge to do good in the world.

And in our gathering, we praise our God for many things, and especially at this time this evergreen ring that marks our days of preparation of Christ appearing in the world. As we light this first candle on this wreath, may we be roused from sleep, may we be ready to greet our Lord with joy and may we be ready to be enlightened by God's grace.

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (#240) verse 1

God grant to us these for which we pray, through Jesus our Lord, whose coming is certain and whose day draws near. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: The King Shall Come (#260) verses 1, 3, 4, 5

GREETING

The promised grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the upcoming love of God, and the ever present fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

HYMN OF PRAISE (p. 6)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of glory, we know that you appear among us in unexpected times. Come to us now, in spirit and in truth, and reveal to us your presence in this place and in our community, readying us for your reign of peace through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 2:1-5

A reading from Isaiah.

The visionary message presented in this reading focuses on a future day when God establishes a universal reign of peace. Divine decisions will make war obsolete, and the worshipping community responds: "Let us walk in the light of that Lord now!"

¹The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

²In days to come

the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains,
and shall be raised above the hills;
all the nations shall stream to it.

³Many peoples shall come and say,
"Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob;

that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”
For out of Zion shall go forth instruction,
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
⁴He shall judge between the nations,
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares,
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.
⁵O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 122

¹I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”
²**Now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.**
³Jerusalem is built as a city
that is at unity with itself;
⁴**to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD,
the assembly of Israel, to praise the name of the LORD.**
⁵For there are the thrones of judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.
⁶**Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May they prosper who love you.**
⁷Peace be within your walls
and quietness within your towers.
⁸**For the sake of my kindred and companions,
I pray for your prosperity.**
⁹Because of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek to do you good.”

SECOND READING: Romans 13:11-14

A reading from Romans.

Paul compares the advent of Christ to the coming of dawn. We live our lives today in light of Christ's coming in the future.

¹¹Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹²the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord.
Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 10)

GOSPEL: Matthew 24:36-44

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus describes his second coming as a sudden, turbulent event that will bring about deep change to our normal, day-to-day lives. Therefore, he urges people to stay awake, be aware, and wait expectantly, because the Son of Man will come unannounced.

[Jesus said to the disciples,] ³⁶“About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so too will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰Then two will be in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴¹Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken and one will be left. ⁴²Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an unexpected hour.”

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

SERMON

God of every nation, let your Word ring out from the mountains and your Spirit shine forth in the earth, so that all may hear your teaching and see you present in all that we do, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

So anyone get any “Black Friday” shopping done? I say “Black Friday” in quotes like that because it isn’t really “Black Friday” as much as it’s “Black All Week”, am I right? I mean really, I don’t think I saw any Friday only deals, but all retailers that I looked at (or care about) started their sales as early as the Sunday or Monday before the actual Black Friday.

So early are these sales that my buddy actually ordered a dishwasher on a Black Friday sale, and the darned thing was slated to arrive on Wednesday afternoon. Not this coming Wednesday afternoon, mind you, which is what you might think for something bought on a Black Friday sale, but last Wednesday. You know, the Wednesday that happened 2 days before the actual Black Friday. I know, mind blown. It’s like we’re time travellers now.

Anyway, that isn’t the point of the story. My friend, like any one of us expecting a new and exciting major appliance, was a bit eager for this delivery. So you can imagine the annoyance he felt when the delivery window that they gave him was like 3 hours long. And then during

that 3-hour window, they went ahead and moved it on him for 2 hours later. Thankfully my friend works from home so he didn't really have to take time off for this, but still, he wasn't a happy camper.

What probably made it worse for my friend is that his home office faces out toward the street, so he could see the delivery truck as it pulls up. That's a whole different level of torture right there, as I'm sure he couldn't help but stare out the window at the street, hoping to catch a glimpse of the truck as it rolls in. But the waiting paid off as just as the loose delivery window was about to end, a Trail branded truck pulls up and parks right across the street from his house. The dishwasher was finally here. He waits for about 10 minutes but no one even leaves the truck. And just as he's about to go outside to see what's going on, he gets another text from the delivery company saying that his delivery is still delayed and won't be there for another 10 minutes. What is even happening here?

"About that day and hour no one knows." Jesus' words about his impending return hit different when we're talking about waiting for deliveries. While we're familiar with Jesus' words here, and we have probably know about and heard of all the theories and opinions of what's to come, I don't think anyone is more anxious about Jesus' coming as they are about their expected parcels. Nor is anyone more frustrated when Jesus doesn't show up than they are when Amazon doesn't. And don't even get me started on Canada Post...

I'm not saying that we should be frustrated with Jesus, but I do want to talk about what it means to be prepared for this unexpected hour. Are we to be just standing there waiting, looking out the window every few minutes, impatiently tapping our foot on the floor with a furrowed brow? Are we to be checking our watches and perhaps learn to read and interpret the signs of when it's supposed happen? Are we to thump our bibles against our chest, read every word forward and back, and decipher the code of when Jesus is supposed to show up?

I think we all might know some people who actually do these sorts of things, and honestly there isn't anything wrong with it. I'm not going to tell people to stop checking their Jesus clocks and making end time predictions. I'm not going to look down on the so-called prophets and their crystal balls of rapture and Armageddon. I'm not even going to talk about them in my sermons... oh wait.

But what I am going to say is that preparation for Jesus' arrival isn't the same as waiting for our deliveries. Our being ready for Jesus isn't the same as being ready to answer the door when that bell rings before the delivery person just leaves your stuff there as porch pirate bait. Our hope and expectation of the Messiah in our midst, the presence of Lord, God with us, isn't the same as looking out the window hoping for a glimpse of a delivery truck in the distance.

So the funny thing about my friend's delivery is that we were all guessing as to why he can literally see the truck was just sitting there outside but they claimed that it wouldn't be there for another 10 minutes. Like maybe the driver was taking their lunch break in the truck, maybe the dispatcher on break and needs to clear the delivery before they could even take it off the truck, or maybe they need to double and triple check the address, you know just in case. None of our theories made any sense and really, it's just a quick delivery so all they have to do is wheel the dishwasher over and be done with it. But as we were talking about it, *another* truck, identical to the first pulls in and parks directly in front of his house. Turns out that first truck was actually there delivering to another house on their street, and it just happened they were

there at roughly the same time. And then an Amazon delivery van showed up and we expecting an all-out turf war, but I guess that's a story for another day.

"Beware of the false prophets..." and false delivery trucks apparently. My friend was so sure that this appliance delivery company was completely bonkers from this experience, and while he was relaying it to us we also questioned their customer service, their business practices, even their competence. We read the signs and we made assumptions. We interpreted the situation and jumped to conclusions. We sized up the situation and didn't even think that we could be wrong, until we actually ended up being totally wrong.

This is the danger of "over preparing" for this coming of Christ. What happens if we read the signs of the end times but we are incorrect? What happens if we are so certain of our assumptions of the world but they are proven to be untrue? What happens if we interpret our situations and we draw life lessons from them but we are just wrong?

Again, I'm not telling anyone to stop making these predictions or thinking of these things, but I'm saying that maybe we can shift our focus. Maybe we can be humbled a bit by Jesus himself saying that about these things "no one knows". Maybe instead of looking forward at when Jesus will come back, we can look to see how Jesus is here now.

I mean, that's the promise of Advent, isn't it? God with us? Not God *will* be with us or God with us *soon* or even God will be with us *after all the signs and interpretations come to pass*, but *God with us*. Here. Now. Always.

So instead of looking ahead in anxiety of a tumultuous return of Christ, I think I'd rather be encouraged and live in hope of Christ present here and now. Instead of trying to read the signs of what might or might not happen in our lifetime, I'd prefer to see and recognise the ways that Jesus is with us now. Instead of being afraid of whether or not we are prepared enough for what is to come, I'd prefer to welcome Jesus in our midst now, leading us, encouraging us, and holding us in grace and love, lifting us up out of our brokenness and pain, and bringing us to live in community with each other and all the saints.

See to me, what is happening now is more important than what might happen in the future. How we actually treat each other now is more meaningful than how we intend to treat each other later on. How we see Christ in the world now, working in and around our lives and bringing hope to all people, is much more encouraging and humbling than how we might interpret his coming possibly could be.

The good news is that Jesus is with us. He came in the flesh and remains in the Spirit. His life and teachings ring true through us and in spite of us. His presence is among us in this community, through our relationships, and in the bread and wine. This is the promise of this season of Advent, this is the grace shown to us by a benevolent God, this is the hope that we all cling to, knowing that God with us joins us all together in salvation.

So as we embark in this season of Advent, this season of hope and looking forward, may we look at the world and our community in the here and now and see just how Christ is present among us, in our midst, encouraging us and strengthening us to graciously love with peace and joy for the sake of God's gospel for us all. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: All Earth Is Hopeful (#266)

CREED (p. 12)

With all of God's people basking in the presence of Christ, 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 vigilant hope looking for and recognising the presence of Christ in our midst, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "in your ever-present mercy, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we stand here in your house with you and all the saints in worship and praise for all that you are and all that you do. Help us to recognise you with us in our midst, and may we be humbled by the grace of your presence, and may we proclaim this truth in all that we do. 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 Peace Lutheran Church in Abbotsford and their pastor Dean Andersen; and Emmaus Lutheran Church in Burnaby and their pastor Timo Saarinen. In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you have built for us a home and have united us within it, and you reveal your love and presence with us in all that you have made. May we always see you with us in your creation, that our care and stewardship of this planet be pleasing to you. We pray also for those living in areas of harsh weather and natural disasters, that none of us would ever lose sight of your grace in the world. In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, in all the tribes of the world there are people who praise your name, unifying us in spite of difference in culture and location. We pray for peace throughout the world, that your love for all people might reign in all our hearts and fill them with compassion and hope. Especially we pray for the nations of the world that face violence, wars, and political turmoil, as well as

those that we've sponsored to come to our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we pray for prosperity in health and wholeness for all our kindred and companions in this world, that your gracious love be present with us all always. We pray in particular for those who are ill, who mourn, or who feel lonely; and especially for Bev and family; the Hahn family; Ron; Tess, and Mineko; Bryan; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; William; Chris; Walter; Larry; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you welcome us graciously to live with you and all the saints in your house forever. May the faithful lives of the saints of the past inspire us always to do good in the world, for the sake of all those in need of hope and your love. In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all those for whom we pray, trusting in your steadfast and eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE (p. 14)

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 comes to us as one of us, eternally in our midst through love and grace, joining us together with all angels, cherubim and seraphim, the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth, in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 14)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, mighty and merciful, we give you thanks for all that you are and all that you do, ever present with us in the world and continually revealing to us the hope in your love and promises, empowering us to be your people in the world acting as your hands and feet of grace and peace. And you further revealed yourself in your Son Jesus, who entered this world once and for all with an eternal message of hope and joy in your name, full of forgiveness and salvation.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal where he took some bread, and with a thankful heart he broke and shared it 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 for it, 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."

So it is by this bread and cup that we see you present with us, granting us love and peace and hope, even as we together declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

We long for your Spirit, O God, help us to see you present in our lives, blessing this meal, instilling your Word in us, and strengthening us as your people, full of your love and grace, and proclaiming your peace to the world, 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. 17)

Joined together by the eternal presence of God, 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 with us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 17)

By your Hand You Feed Your People (#469)

We Come to the Hungry Feast (#479)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you are present with us throughout our lives and feed us with your Word and nourish us with your love. May we be refreshed by the truth of your promises and the hope in your grace, humbled and empowered to be your people in the world forever, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the blessing of God of the past,
the grace of the God of the present,
and the hope of the God with us always
be with you, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: He Came Down (#253)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, ready to see Christ with us in the world.

Thanks be to God.

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