



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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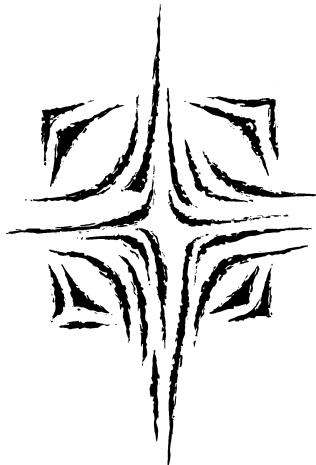
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**Christmas Day
December 25, 2022
Tree of Life**

As on the first day of creation, on this Christmas Day the Word illuminates the world, shining forth to bring all things into being. Today we celebrate the incarnate Word, God becoming flesh to live among us in the person of Jesus Christ then and now. Emboldened by the good news of Christ's birth, along with the shepherds, Mary and Joseph, and all witnesses to the light of Christ, we declare to the world that we have indeed seen and been transformed by the arrival of "the salvation of our God." O come, let us adore!

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 hən̍qəmīnəm̍ (Musqueam) and Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

DIALOGUE

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.

**The light shines in the darkness,
and the darkness has not overcome it.**

Those who dwelt in the land of deep darkness,
on them light has shined.

**We have beheld Christ's glory,
glory as of the only Son from the Father.
To us a child is born, to us a Son is given.
In the Word was life,
and the life was the light of all people.**

GATHERING SONG: It Came upon the Midnight Clear (#282)

GREETING

The grace of the Christ child born this day, the love of God that shines in the darkness, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit that joins us all together be with you all.

And also with you.

HYMN OF PRAISE: The First Noel (#300) verses 1, 2, 4

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Wondrous and faithful God, we praise you and bless you for the gift of your Son Jesus, the true light who enlightens and dispels the darkness. May all who hear his name be born anew as your own beloved children, redeemed by your grace. We pray these things in the name of your Son Jesus, our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 62:6-12

A reading from Isaiah.

The prophet invites the people to give God no rest until God reestablishes Jerusalem. In turn, they will receive names full of promise: The Holy People, The Redeemed of the LORD, A City Not Forsaken.

⁶Upon your walls, O Jerusalem,
 I have posted sentinels;
 all day and all night
 they shall never be silent.
You who remind the LORD,
 take no rest,
⁷and give him no rest
 until he establishes Jerusalem
 and makes it renowned throughout the earth.
⁸The LORD has sworn by his right hand
 and by his mighty arm:
I will not again give your grain

to be food for your enemies,
and foreigners shall not drink the wine
for which you have labored;
⁹but those who garner it shall eat it
and praise the LORD,
and those who gather it shall drink it
in my holy courts.

¹⁰Go through, go through the gates,
prepare the way for the people;
build up, build up the highway,
clear it of stones,
lift up an ensign over the peoples.

¹¹The LORD has proclaimed
to the end of the earth:
Say to daughter Zion,
“See, your salvation comes;
his reward is with him,
and his recompense before him.”

¹²They shall be called, “The Holy People,
The Redeemed of the LORD”;
and you shall be called, “Sought Out,
A City Not Forsaken.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 97

¹The LORD reigns; let the earth rejoice;
let the multitude of the isles be glad.

²**Clouds and darkness surround the LORD,**
righteousness and justice are the foundations of God’s throne.

³Fire goes before the LORD,
burning up enemies on every side.

⁴**Lightnings light up the world;**
the earth sees and trembles.

⁵The mountains melt like wax
before the Lord of all the earth.

⁶**The heavens declare your righteousness, O LORD,**
and all the peoples see your glory.

⁷Confounded be all who worship carved images and delight in false gods!
Bow down before the LORD, all you gods.

⁸**Zion hears and is glad, and the cities of Judah rejoice,**
because of your judgments, O LORD.

⁹For you are the LORD, most high over all the earth;
you are exalted far above all gods.

¹⁰**You who love the LORD, hate evil!**
God guards the lives of the saints and rescues them from the hand of the wicked.

¹¹Light dawns for the righteous,
and joy for the honest of heart.

¹²**Rejoice in the LORD, you righteous, and give thanks to God's holy name.**

SECOND READING: Titus 3:4-7

A reading from Titus.

God saves us not because of what we do. Rather, God is a God of mercy and salvation who graciously cleanses us in baptism and renews our lives through the Holy Spirit.

⁴When the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit. ⁶This Spirit he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, ⁷so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 10)

GOSPEL: Luke 2:8-20

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The world's deep night is shattered by the light of God's new day. The glory of God is revealed to poor shepherds, who share the good news with others.

⁸In that region there were shepherds living in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid; for see—I am bringing you good news of great joy for all the people: ¹¹to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Messiah, the Lord. ¹²This will be a sign for you: you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger." ¹³And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God and saying,

¹⁴"Glory to God in the highest heaven,
and on earth peace among those whom he favors!"

¹⁵When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go now to Bethlehem and see this thing that has taken place, which the Lord has made known to us." ¹⁶So they went with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the child lying in the manger. ¹⁷When they saw this, they made known what had been told them about this child; ¹⁸and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds told them. ¹⁹But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart. ²⁰The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen, as it had been told them.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

God of love and grace, teach us to treasure your Word like Mary, follow your Word like Joseph, and see your Word in the world like the shepherds, your Word Jesus Christ our Lord, borne to us this day. Amen.

"I hate Christmas!"

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that I personally hate Christmas, so you can put away those termination papers, at least until after this service, but this is a direct quote from my manager back when I worked in retail. And this guy didn't really hate Christmas either, mind you, but he was just fed up with the Christmas set up that we had to do every year. Honestly, it was quite a bit of work and there were a lot of times when it just got overwhelming and tiresome. If any of you have ever worked in retail during the Christmas season, you might know what I mean. And there were times in there, in the midst of the deadlines, the stress, and the pallets and pallets of Christmas products that we had to load up on the shelves when I probably would have shared that sentiment of hating Christmas, or at least just the work that comes with it.

And that's with a lot of things in our lives, isn't it? It might have seemed great at one point but after some time passes, after a few bumps and scrapes, after you get fed up like right up to your eyeballs a couple of times, then pfft whatever it is doesn't seem so great anymore.

Case in point: this snow. As a kid, like any kid I loved the snow. Mind you it didn't happen much as a kid when our climate was a bit more stable here in the Lower Mainland, but when it did, oh boy did we have fun. We'd be outside for as long as our parents would allow, which incidentally is way longer than how long I let our kids be outside these days. And even as I grew older, I loved the snow. I would drive around and find empty parking lots and do donuts and drift and a friend of mine even brought some pylons one time and we set up our own race track. Those were the days. Just the site of snow would bring unsurpassed giddiness and excitement for the fun we'd have that night after every other normal person would be asleep.

But these days? If I could swear during a sermon, I would. All the back breaking shovelling, dealing with the poorly plowed roads in our city, and these toques that totally mess up my hair, I think I can say that right now, I hate snow. I'm fed up with it. I'm just done. I know yesterday I mentioned how I don't mind shovelling the snow here at the church or even at home, but that's because I like playing with the new toys like the snowblower and the electric shovel I bought. I still hate snow though.

Sure, I might still pull into a parking lot or two or ours here at the church and do a couple donuts in the snow, but it's just not the same. It's not the same when paired with responsibility of being an adult. It's not as fun when all the downsides are so much at the forefront. I don't love snow anymore because most of the reasons for me to love it aren't there anymore.

And this is what I mean, this can happen in so many areas of life, where we just get fed up, we can only see the negatives, the reasons to love whatever it is just don't seem worth it anymore. It doesn't have to be Christmas or snow, but it could be certain hobbies, it could be our jobs, it could even be the relationship that we're in. And in the most extreme cases, it could be life itself.

Well, this got real bleak real fast.

But this is a huge danger for us, when things no longer bring joy but instead they suck that joy right out of us, obliterating any kind of hope that we'll ever get it back. You might know what I mean. Maybe it's happened to you before. Maybe you're going through it now. Whatever the case, it isn't a good place for us to be in as it could be overwhelming, suffocating, and just downright awful if you're there for too long.

I think back to when my wife and I first had kids, and I didn't know it at the time but I face a series of mental health issues about being a relatively new spouse and now a new parent. As those of you who have had kids of your own or cared for other people's kids or even been in a supermarket or an airplane with kids present would know that kids can sometimes be a handful. And when I was in the thick of parenting I remember feeling extremely tired, majorly annoyed at times, and just wondering what on earth was thinking when I agreed to this. Actually I think I know what I was thinking but I didn't know that nine months after it'd result in so much work and so little sleep. But of course, we got through it, and here we are years later, looking back and wondering where the time has gone.

Don't get me wrong, parenting is still hard for me, especially when there's snow on the ground, Christmas around the corner, and I have 2 sermons to write. But I'd be lying if I didn't somehow miss that infancy stage. I miss carrying our children in my arms. I miss the (clean) smells, the laughs at the cute things they do, the excitement when they hit little milestones. But there's just something about babies, isn't there? Sure, maybe when it's ours and have to care for it 24/7 it doesn't seem like it, but just seeing the innocence of a newborn, hearing the cooing and soft babbling, and just witnessing the miracle of life, well it somehow makes it all worth it.

And so I wonder if that's why the shepherds watching their flock by night just sort of jumped up to go see the news of this newborn baby. Actually maybe the promise of the child being the Messiah might have had something to do with it as well, but I'd like to think that the excitement of a baby, the joy of witnessing the love of new parents, the hope in a new life might have had something to do with it as well.

I know it would have for me. Like I said, there's something about a newborn. And just the thought of a baby, it brings me back to that time in my life, that joy, that hope. It wasn't a simpler time by any means, but it was a more joyful time. And maybe we all need that kind of reminder that in the midst of all the frustrations of life, in the thick of all the stress and overload that we face, in all the joy-sucking situations that come our way, a baby was sent to us. We are given a gift of hope when we think about what this season of Christmas is all about. In God's abundant and overflowing grace, love has been given to us in the form of tiny human. A tiny human who would grow to be love incarnate, leading us into joy and peace, and saving us all.

And so it's a good thing that we have this reminder at least once a year. It's a good thing to be brought back to not a simpler time but to a joy that motivates and fulfills us. It's a good thing that we are shown God's love for us again and again, lifting our spirits and revealing to us again of who we are.

I think this is what Luke meant by telling us that Mary treasuring these things and pondered them in her heart. That she cherished the memory and was able to pull them out when the

going got tough, bringing her back to the innocence of a baby, the joy of family, and the love that came to her in the form of God with us.

So while we might still get fed up with things here and there, while we might still face the frustrations of those we don't like and would rather not be around, while we might still feel the overwhelming stress and discomfort of life, we can always look back on this child who made the night dance with angels and the sky light up with the glory of God. We can always remember how love was sent to us in the form of baby. We can always keep our hope in the Messiah, born to us this day, who brings us back into joy and peace, showing us how life and love aren't necessarily easy, but are most definitely worth it.

In this Christmas season, may we be reminded of the joy of life, love, and the miracle of a baby born. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Love Has Come* (#292)

APOSTLES' CREED (p.12)

With all those worshipping the arrival of the Christ Child, 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 the wonder and majesty of God with us, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "by your incarnate mercy, O God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your incarnate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you reign throughout all the earth and we rejoice and are glad for your righteousness and justice. Continue leading us through this world, that our work and ministry be effective and pleasing to 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 Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Coquitlam and their pastor Eric Krushel; and for Trinity

Lutheran Church in Delta and their pastor Jennifer Wilson. By your incarnate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, fire and lightning light up the world but they do not compare to your power and might shown in your creation. May we all grow in our respect for all that you have made, that our stewardship of what you've entrusted to us be faithful. We pray for those living in areas of harsh weather and natural disasters, that we all might find safety and peace in our changing climate. By your incarnate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, the heavens declare your righteousness and glory, and we rejoice in your justice. Teach all world leaders, politicians, and people of influence the ways of your love and grace, that we might be able to work together toward peace in spite of difference. We pray for all areas of the world that face wars and violence, and we especially pray for those that we've sponsored to come to our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. By your incarnate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you are the most high above the earth, and you guard us and rescue us in our times of need. Be with all who are ill, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and bring us all the hope and joy of your peace in the world. Especially we pray for Bryan; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; William; Chris; Walter; Larry; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your incarnate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your light dawns joy in our hearts, and we rejoice in your holy name as you welcome us into your kingdom to live with you and all the saints. May all the lives of faith from the past continue to inspire us as we move into the future, that we all be testament to your gracious promises and redemption. By your incarnate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the hope of your Son Jesus, borne to us today. **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 came to us as one of us to show us the ways of your everlasting life, that we might join with all the angels and archangels,

cherubim and seraphim, the whole host of heaven and the church on earth, in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 14)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Blessed are you, O Holy God, the beginning and the end, the giver of life. Blessed are you for the birth of creation. Blessed are you in the darkness and in the light. Blessed are you for your promise to your people. Blessed are you in the prophets' hopes and dreams. Blessed are you for Mary's openness to your will. Blessed are you for your Son Jesus, the Word made flesh.

Who, on the night that he was betrayed, sat with his friends for a final meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it saying, "Take and eat; this is my body, given for you.

Do this for the remembrance of me."

And then after they ate, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and shared that 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."

It's in this bread and cup that we see Christ in our midst, with us, one of us, joining us together, even as we declare the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Remind us always, O God, of your Word dwelling among us. Reveal to us always, O Lord, of your unending grace and love. Restore in us always, O Redeemer of the world, the joy and hope that you bring through this meal, through this community, and through your Son sent down to us full of truth and life, as he continues to live and reign with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 17)

As we are gathered together in awe of the Christ child come to us, let us pray as he 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

Come to the table, taste and see God with us.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 17)

What Child Is This (#296)

That Boy-Child of Mary (#293)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

We give you thanks, O God, for again feeding and nourishing us, and for revealing to us your love through the Christ child borne to us this day. Empower us with your grace and shine your light through us that the world be illumined with your truth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

Now may God our Light shine on you with grace and peace,
God our love fill you with hope and joy,
God our life lead you into salvation and everlasting life, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Go Tell it on the Mountain (#290)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, bear witness to the light shining in your life.

Thanks be to God.

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