



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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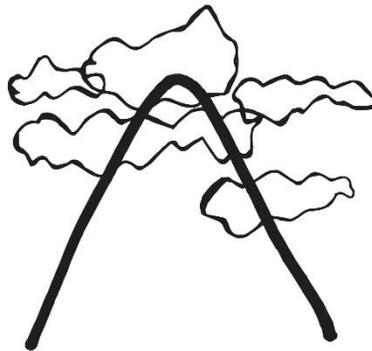
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**Fourth Sunday after Epiphany  
January 29, 2023  
ACS Holy Communion, Setting 12**

Who are the blessed ones of God? For Micah, they are those who do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God. For Paul, they are the ones who find wisdom in the weakness of the cross. For Jesus, they are the poor, the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, the peacemakers, those who mourn, and those who hunger for righteousness. In baptism we find our blessed identity and calling in this countercultural way of living and serving.

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) speaking peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in this tabernacle to worship, here on God's holy hill we sing praises of adoration. For God has recreated us to be blameless and has led us to do what is right and true, and joins us together as a loving community with each other and all the saints. In this house there is no place for our guilt or transgressions and so we are redeemed by God's love to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with God in God's kingdom.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING SONG:** Rise Up, O Saints of God! (#669)

### GREETING

The blessed grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal love of God, and the wholistic fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

### KYRIE

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.

Chris - te e - lei - son. Christ, have mer - cy.

Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.

The image shows three staves of musical notation in a single system. Each staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of two flats (B-flat and E-flat). The first staff contains the melody for the first line of lyrics: 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.' The second staff contains the melody for the second line of lyrics: 'Chris - te e - lei - son. Christ, have mer - cy.' The third staff contains the melody for the third line of lyrics: 'Ky - ri - e e - lei - son. Lord, have mer - cy.' The lyrics are written below the notes, with hyphens indicating syllables that span across multiple notes. The music is written in a simple, clear style suitable for a church service.

## SONG OF PRAISE



1 Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;  
2 Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;  
3 Glo - ry to you, God, for yours is the earth;



yours is the prom - ise, the bless - ing, the birth.  
yours the ho - san - nas, the dy - ing, re - birth.  
yours the a - noint - ing, the ra - di - ant worth.



Ours the re - joic - ing for Word giv - en frame;  
Ours the re - joic - ing for na - ture re - claimed;  
Ours the re - joic - ing for spir - its a - flame;



ours the thanks - giv - ing to your ho - ly name.



Ours be the tell - ing of deeds great - ly done;



yours be the glo - ry, O God, yours a - lone.

## PRAYER OF THE DAY

Redeeming God, you come to us in Christ to rescue us from our slavery to sin and lead us out of captivity into the freedom of your love. Guide us by the wisdom of the cross, and show us how to live a life full of justice, hope, and blessedness, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Micah 6:1-8

A reading from Micah.

*With the mountains and the foundations of the earth as the jury, God brings a lawsuit against Israel. God has "wearied" Israel with a long history of saving acts. God does not want or expect lavish sacrifices to attempt to earn divine favor. Rather God empowers the people to do justice, to love loyalty to God, and to walk shrewdly in God's service.*

<sup>1</sup>Hear what the LORD says:

Rise, plead your case before the mountains,  
and let the hills hear your voice.

<sup>2</sup>Hear, you mountains, the controversy of the LORD,  
and you enduring foundations of the earth;  
for the LORD has a controversy with his people,  
and he will contend with Israel.

<sup>3</sup>“O my people, what have I done to you?  
In what have I wearied you? Answer me!

<sup>4</sup>For I brought you up from the land of Egypt,  
and redeemed you from the house of slavery;  
and I sent before you Moses,  
Aaron, and Miriam.

<sup>5</sup>O my people, remember now what King Balak of Moab devised,  
what Balaam son of Beor answered him,  
and what happened from Shittim to Gilgal,  
that you may know the saving acts of the LORD.”

<sup>6</sup>“With what shall I come before the LORD,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
Shall I come before him with burnt offerings,  
with calves a year old?

<sup>7</sup>Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams,  
with ten thousands of rivers of oil?  
Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression,  
the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?”

<sup>8</sup>He has told you, O mortal, what is good;  
and what does the LORD require of you  
but to do justice, and to love kindness,  
and to walk humbly with your God?

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM: Psalm 15**

<sup>1</sup>LORD, who may dwell in your tabernacle?  
Who may abide upon your holy hill?

<sup>2</sup>**Those who lead a blameless life and do what is right,  
who speak the truth from their heart;**

<sup>3</sup>they do not slander with the tongue, they do no evil to their friends;  
they do not cast discredit upon a neighbor.

<sup>4</sup>**In their sight the wicked are rejected, but they honor those who fear the LORD.  
They have sworn upon their health and do not take back their word.**

<sup>5</sup>They do not give their money in hope of gain, nor do they take bribes against the innocent.  
Those who do these things shall never be overthrown.

## SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

*According to the world's standards of power and might, the message of the cross seems stupid and offensive. Yet this word reveals the paradoxical way God has chosen to work power and salvation through weakness, rejection, and suffering. Hence the message of the cross becomes true wisdom and power for believers.*

<sup>18</sup>The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup>For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,  
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

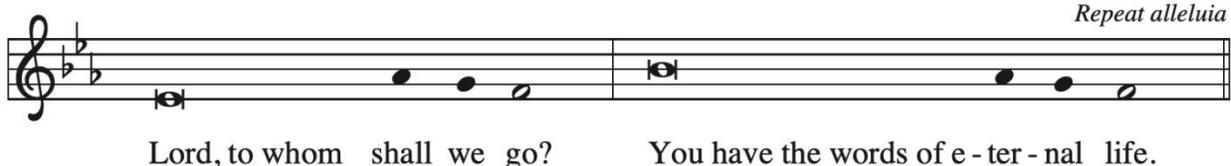
<sup>20</sup>Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup>For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup>For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, <sup>23</sup>but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup>but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup>For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

<sup>26</sup>Consider your own call, brothers and sisters: not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup>But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup>God chose what is low and despised in the world, things that are not, to reduce to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup>so that no one might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup>He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup>in order that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



## **GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount by naming those who are blessed in the reign of God.*

<sup>1</sup>When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. <sup>2</sup>Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

<sup>3</sup>“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>4</sup>“Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup>“Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

<sup>6</sup>“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

<sup>7</sup>“Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

<sup>8</sup>“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup>“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

<sup>10</sup>“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

<sup>11</sup>“Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. <sup>12</sup>Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON**

Holy God, your blessings are abundant and your wisdom exceeds our grasp. Fill us with your Spirit and open our eyes, ears, and hearts, that we might see, hear, and feel your love and welcome for us all, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Remember enneagrams? If by chance you never heard of it before, it’s basically like this extensive personality test that, in my opinion, pigeon holes you into one of the 9 personality types that they’ve defined all people to have. And if I sound a bit skeptical about it, it’s because I am, as I’ve had some bad experiences with these personality test type things.

Anyway, enneagrams were super popular 5 or 6 years ago, but I never bothered to take the test as I think it costs money to do. However, that didn’t stop my brother (who loves the stuff) from pegging me as a “challenger”, which essentially can be defined as “competitive”. Now, I have to admit that I was a bit offended. I mean, just because I win at basically everything I do and am better than most in so many areas of life, that doesn’t make me competitive. And I’d fight anyone who would say otherwise.

But seriously though, it got me to thinking that of course my brother would say I’m competitive as aren’t we all basically competitive in pretty much everything that we do? Don’t we sort of have to be in this world that we’re living in? This perpetual rat race that we just call life has us up against each other in pretty much every aspect and facet we could ever imagine. The amount of money we make, what colour our skin is, how well we understand the material in school or other learning centers, even who our spouse or partner is, it’s like life is a giant competition. And then we’re bombarded by different forms of media that basically tells us to keep comparing ourselves to others like the Forbes 30 under 30 list, that Time magazine’s 50

sexiest people in the world, shows like America's Got Talent, and don't even get me started on all the different social media platforms and all their filters and doctored photos. It's just that the climate that we're in cultivates a competitive spirit within us all, both on a global and personal level.

And maybe there's nothing wrong with that, nothing wrong with a little healthy competition. Keeps us on our toes and pushing forward in our growth and accomplishments. But the problem comes when the competition starts to affect our self esteem. When we label ourselves as losers because we can't catch a break. When we are conditioned to believe that we're failures so we just stop trying. When we look at how the stacks are against us and we contemplate giving up on life.

We just saw an example of this last week, when the Alex Fraser was closed for like 8 hours because someone was standing on the dangerous side of the guardrail, threatening to jump off. I know that I'm not aware of the circumstances that surrounded this particular situation or what the person was going through, but I did read about some of the people stuck in the traffic reacting poorly, which led to thousands of dollars of damage to public and private property, as well as the police issuing fines and suspensions to some of the motorists.

I know, right? All I can do is shake my head. I mean, there is someone who is at the end of their rope, and in response we have people making jokes and taking pictures, driving dangerously, and even telling the person in question to jump so to not further inconvenience anyone anymore. It's sad really.

It's sad because this person is obviously hurting but people don't seem to care. It's sad because they were clearly just done with life and this world and those feelings would have been just exasperated by the behaviour displayed among the bystanders. It's sad because this person is dearly loved and blessed, and they almost left this world believing the exact opposite to be true instead.

I get it, life is tough. We find ourselves in seemingly impossible situations and we can feel so overwhelmed. We look at the brokenness of the world and it weighs us down mentally and emotionally. We feel like we've failed so many times that it just doesn't seem worth it anymore.

And to all that, Jesus says that you are blessed.

I know, it's weird. It doesn't feel like we're blessed when we are down and out. It doesn't feel like we're loved by anyone let alone the God that created the universe when nothing seems to ever go our way. It doesn't feel like life is worth it when it seems like we lose so much so often.

But... blessed are you, Jesus says, in the face of our hardship and woe. Blessed are you, Jesus reminds us, even when life is difficult or impossible. Blessed are you, Jesus declares, even when that is literally the last thing we are thinking and feeling because of how much life sucks.

Still, it's hard to believe, I get that. But notice how Jesus isn't giving a command or explaining what has to be done or giving any kind of conditions. He isn't saying that we'd be blessed if we're poor in spirit or mourn. He's not saying that we can find blessing if we hunger and thirst or are persecuted. He isn't saying that in order to be blessed, we need to suffer first. I mean, if

he did, then those who sign off on their emails and greeting cards with “blessings” would take on a whole new meaning.

Rather, Jesus’ tone is indicative. He’s just telling it as it is. He isn’t giving conditions or listing out requirements, but he is making promises and speaking truth into our hardship, our pain, our lives.

I get that it still might not seem to make much sense. It just doesn’t sound right. It most certainly doesn’t feel like it could be true as the world tells us a very different tale. The world tells us that we are blessed only when we have good things, that we are lucky only when things go our way, that we are winning only when we have the most, the best, and the shiniest. The world judges us by the things we’ve acquired, our achievements that we’ve accomplished, and the strength and power that we’ve clawed our way to get. The world requires us to gain, to profit, and to fill our bellies if we want to end up on top. The world frowns upon weakness, pain, and loss.

This is what Paul meant by the cross being foolishness to the world. It is. I mean, who would have thought that being killed by the hands of his enemies and potential followers could ever be considered a success? That seems ridiculous. But it matters not to God, for it is in the weakness that God’s strength is most apparent. It is in the brokenness and hurt that God’s healing and providence is most seen. It is in the failures according to the world that God’s blessing is most found.

Not because God causes us pain, mind you, but because the pain doesn’t push God away. Not because God judges us by our failures or hurts, but because the failures or hurts don’t change our position in God’s love or kingdom. Not because God is worried with how we are rated or ranked by the standards of the world, but because God instead sees us all as beloved children, recreated to be worthy parts of the body of Christ, joined together in redemption and forgiveness by the good news of the promise of salvation.

See, the cross does seem foolish because the world taught us to be competitive and aim to win at all costs and to conquer our enemies. To proclaim the cross as the basis of our faith doesn’t make sense to the world because it is typically reserved only for the worst of criminals, the most immoral, the complete failures of society. Looking to the cross for hope and fulfilment sounds ridiculous because it is the ultimate symbol of death. But the actual truth is that the cross is the power of God, the power that makes the foolish wise, lifts the lowly high, and blesses all people to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with this God that will love us and save us regardless of who we are, where we’re from, or what situations we find ourselves in.

For it isn’t by our accomplishments or achievements that earn us God’s love and blessing, but it is by God’s gracious act that determines us to be worthy of love and blessing, now and always.

In this season after the Epiphany, may we see the blessedness and worthiness of all people, that regardless of our place in the hierarchy of society, we may all be recognised as God’s beloved children in the world, full of God’s grace and mercy, lifted above the ways of the world, and brought into peace and community with each other and all the saints of all time. Thanks be to God. Amen.

## **HYMN OF THE DAY: Let Streams of Living Justice (#710)**

### **CREED (p. 104)**

Together with all those blessed by God's love, 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**

Blessed into community and service, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your blessed mercy, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we pray for the poor in spirit and those who mourn, for comfort is found in your kingdom. Bless us all in our congregations and communities, that our ministry to each other and the wider neighbourhood be effective and fruitful. We pray especially for the other faith communities in close proximity to us both physically and spiritually; for our partner Anglican Church in Canada and all their leaders, clergy, and members; for our bishops Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan, along with all the assistants to the bishops across our church; and for our companion congregations of the BC Synod and ELCIC. In particular we pray for Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Langley and their pastor Kristen Steele, and for all of the hospital chaplains we have serving in our Synod and country. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we pray for this earth, your creation, that it might be cared for in a way that it can sustainably house the future generations that will inherit it. Keep us diligent in our stewardship, that it might be faithful and pleasing to you. We also pray for those currently living in areas of harsh weather and natural disasters, that they are able to find safety in the midst of uncertainty. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we pray for those who hunger and thirst for righteousness in their regions, countries, and the whole world, that they might receive mercy and justice. Instill in all world leaders and politicians a wisdom in their leadership, and may we all work together toward peace. We also

remember in prayer those areas of the world threatened by war, violence, and political turmoil, as well as those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we pray for all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that in their heart of hearts they never lose sight of you. Be apparent to all of us in your providence and healing, and bring us together into wholeness. Especially we pray for Bryan; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Winn; Sukhwant; John; 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 blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we pray for those persecuted in your name, that their hope in your promises never falter but continue to strengthen them in their journey as the hope of the past has strengthened the saints and prophets of old. Remind us of these stories of faith, that we be inspired by them and the connection we share in our own lives and community. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your love and blessing shown to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

#### **PEACE**

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, 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 way of your truth and blessing, including us in your plan of salvation and redemption and joining us with the choirs of angels, hosts of heaven, and the church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

## HOLY, HOLY, HOLY

Ho - ly, ho - ly, ho - ly Lord, God of pow'r and  
God of might, heav - en and earth are full of your  
glo - ry. Ho - san - na in the high - est.  
Bless - ed is the one who comes in the name of the  
Lord. Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.  
Ho - san - na, ho - san - na in the high - est.

## THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy are you, O God, for all the good that you have done and continue to do. For you bring us up out of our hurts and struggles and you show us the true nature of your gracious love, forgiving and redeeming us into your salvation with all of the saints. And in the fullness of time you had sent to us your Son Jesus, to further reveal and solidify our nature in your family, community, and kingdom.

For on the night that he was betrayed, it was your Son Jesus who sat with his friends for a meal where he took the bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it and said, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate it, he took the common cup, gave thanks 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."

Because it is in this bread and cup that we are reminded of how we are connected, provided for, and blessed by God's redeeming grace, even as we ponder the mystery of our faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

So it is to you, O God, that all honour belongs, for you have given us all that we need for life and all that we are in your name. As you bless our time together, may you also bless this food, feed

our hearts, and nourish our souls with the teachings of your Word made flesh, 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)

Gathered together as the body of Christ, let us pray and 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**

Taste and see God's blessing through love and community.

**Thanks be to God.**

**COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (ACS booklet)

O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate (#722)

When the Poor Ones (#725)

**LAMB OF GOD**



Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have mer-cy on



us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the world; have



mer-cy on us. Lamb of God, you take a-way the sin of the



world; grant us peace, grant us peace.

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for the blessing of your love that gives us all that we need for life and love. Strengthen us with your truth as we go from here, that we might together be a people and community that does justice, loves kindness, and walks humbly with you for all our days, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May the righteousness of God shine brightly on your path as you walk in the way of justice and grace,

the love of God show you love and kindness in community and fellowship,

and the blessing of God be upon you always and give you peace and hope, now and forever.

**Thanks be to God.**

**SENDING SONG:** Light Dawns on a Weary World (#726)

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, walk humbly with God.

**Thanks be to God.**

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