



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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**Baptism of Our Lord
January 8, 2023
ACS Holy Communion, Setting 12**

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing.

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 hə́nqəmíṇəm (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP AND READING OF THE GOSPEL OF THE EPIPHANY

We gather in the name of our God, revealed to us through the Word, the Word made flesh, and the light shining bright that comes from the divine love given to us. And in this epiphany of love and promise, we worship with thanksgiving for the star that led the magi and in turn leads us to Jesus, for John, God's servant who faithfully baptized those who would receive it, for the other apostles that listened to God's calling and set an example for all believers, and for the life and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ that allow us to know and love God.

And so in our worship we give thanks for these and so much more as we hear the gospel of the Epiphany:

GOSPEL OF THE EPIPHANY: Matthew 2:1-12

God's promise shines bright in the night as magi follow a star to honor a new king. Strangers from a faraway land, they welcome the long-awaited messiah of Israel.

¹In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, ²asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage." ³When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him; ⁴and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born. ⁵They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:

⁶'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah,
are by no means least among the rulers of Judah;
for from you shall come a ruler
who is to shepherd my people Israel.'

⁷Then Herod secretly called for the wise men and learned from them the exact time when the star had appeared. ⁸Then he sent them to Bethlehem, saying, "Go and search diligently for the child; and when you have found him, bring me word so that I may also go and pay him homage." ⁹When they had heard the king, they set out; and there, ahead of them, went the star that they had seen at its rising, until it stopped over the place where the child was. ¹⁰When they saw that the star had stopped, they were overwhelmed with joy. ¹¹On entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother; and they knelt down and paid him homage. Then, opening their treasure chests, they offered him gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. ¹²And having been warned in a dream not to return to Herod, they left for their own country by another road.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: Bright and Glorious Is the Sky (#301) verses 1, 3, 5, 6

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ given to us through his character, the love of God shown to us through baptism, and the communion of the Holy Spirit breathed on us like a dove, 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.

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

God of all life and love, your voice thunders over the floods of life and your love is embedded in the water from which we are born. Speak to us this day as you speak through water and creation, and reveal to all the wonders of your mighty grace in all the world, through Jesus Christ, our baptized and risen Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 42:1-9

A reading from Isaiah.

God's servant is endowed with God's spirit in order to bring justice to the nations. The servant will not exercise authority boisterously or with violence, nor will weariness ever prevent the fulfilling of the servant's task. God's old promises have been fulfilled; the servant's new assignment is to bring light to the nations.

- ¹Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
he will bring forth justice to the nations.
- ²He will not cry or lift up his voice,
or make it heard in the street;
- ³a bruised reed he will not break,
and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
he will faithfully bring forth justice.
- ⁴He will not grow faint or be crushed
until he has established justice in the earth;
and the coastlands wait for his teaching.
- ⁵Thus says God, the LORD,
who created the heavens and stretched them out,
who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
who gives breath to the people upon it
and spirit to those who walk in it:
- ⁶I am the LORD, I have called you in righteousness,
I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
⁷to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
- ⁸I am the LORD, that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
- ⁹See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 29

¹Ascribe to the LORD, you gods,
ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.

²**Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name;
worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.**

³The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;
the LORD is upon the mighty waters.

⁴**The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice;
the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.**

⁵The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees;
the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;

⁶**the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf,
and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.**

⁷The voice of the LORD
bursts forth in lightning flashes.

⁸**The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;
the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.**

⁹The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.
And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, "Glory!"

¹⁰**The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;
the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore.**

¹¹O LORD, give strength to your people;
give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

SECOND READING: Acts 10:34-43

A reading from Acts.

Peter crosses the sharp religious boundary separating Jews from Gentiles and proclaims the good news of God's inclusive forgiveness in Jesus' name to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As a result of Peter's preaching, Cornelius and his family become the first Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

³⁴Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: "I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. ³⁶You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree; ⁴⁰but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses, and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



Al-le-lu - ia, al - le-lu - ia, al-le-lu - ia.



Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of e - ter - nal life.

GOSPEL: Matthew 3:13-17

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Before Jesus begins his ministry, he is baptized by John, touched by the Spirit, and identified publicly as God's child.

¹³Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴John would have prevented him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" ¹⁵But Jesus answered him, "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." Then he consented. ¹⁶And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, may your Word to us today be like the heavens opening and your Spirit descending on us like a dove, that we might see your love for us as your people in this world, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

A new series was recently released on Netflix that has the internet buzzing. It's called *Kaleidoscope*, and the story itself seems to be a regular run-of-the-mill heist adventure, where a group of thieves each with some insanely impossible special skill work together to pull off an insanely impossible job where they steal an insanely impossible amount of money. So what's the hubbub about this particular show?

Well, it's in how the show can be watched. See the episodes aren't numbered, but are given one of the colours of the rainbow, or *kaleidoscope* if you catch me, and with the exception of the finale, you can watch the episodes in whatever order you choose, with each choice giving you a different viewer experience and understanding of the characters. And because there are about 7 episodes that you can mix around in different orders, you have over 5,000 options of how to watch this show.

Intriguing, right? It's like a "choose your own adventure" book in TV form.

But at the same time, it isn't. Because your choice of episode doesn't really determine the actions and decisions of the characters, rather it just changes the experience of the show for you and how you can interpret the story. A very strange and innovative concept, indeed.

One reviewer on the show that I read said that he actually thought this innovative concept is their downfall and eventually will be seen as unappealing. He said normal TV shows bring people together because it's a shared experience of the same thing. But when a single show can have over 5,000 different experiences then that just pulls people apart instead.

I thought it was an interesting take and it got me thinking, the story should be the writer's story to tell, so why should I be the one to choose how it's told to me? I shouldn't be given that choice, I shouldn't be able to determine how the story is told, I shouldn't have all that power.

And that is where this review's take fell apart for me, because let's be honest, no one wants to give up their power, especially when it's just given to you like this. I think that is actually the appeal of this show to begin with. I mean, being able to determine how a show is presented to you gives you a power that no other show has given you before, and that draws us in. I don't think we can help it. While we might not actually go watch the show, we'd at least find the viewing concept intriguing.

Or at least I hope you will, or else this sermon would be totally boring to you up until now.

But my point is, we desire power. Perhaps even crave it. It might not always be on the forefront of our minds, but we can't deny that we want to be able to determine our outcomes, our futures, who we are and who we answer to. We want that choice to be ours.

Take John the Baptizer, for instance. He was there, baptizing away and telling people how he was right and essentially everyone else was wrong. He wanted to choose who to baptize and what brood of vipers to not. But as we learned on the 2nd Sunday of Advent which I'm sure you all remember, John does relinquish that power and baptizes all who come for it. So although he still has the tendency to assert his power, he also knows when to relinquish it like he does today. "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" John says in almost disbelief when Jesus comes to him to be baptized. I guess John recognizes his cousin as the Messiah at this point, and falls into place. Or at least, he falls to where he *thinks* his place should be.

We do this too, don't we? In the perpetual climb for more power, we also relinquish that power to whom it is due, on the most part at least. We are told to be obedient to our parents, listen to our teachers, honour our spouses. We're taught to fall in line with our superiors, answer to our employers, to not bite the hands that feed us. We've been conditioned to idolize celebrities, look up to the rich, give glory to our God.

So we don't and can't really blame John for his initial reaction here, as we'd probably do the same. If we saw God in the flesh we'd be all yes Lord yes Lord yes Lord and not try to assert any kind of power at all. "Ascribe to the Lord" so the Psalmist says. We'd know our place too.

I mean, there's a hierarchy, right? That's how our world is organized. There are the people up at the top and the rest... not so much. There are the extremely rich and extremely poor and

everything in between. There are those who are able to give and those who have no choice but to only receive. There is the them, and the us who wish we were them.

And if I were honest, I see pretty much everyone vying for a piece of that power pie. While we might know our place, gaining more power is always in the backs of our minds. We work harder, we protest more, we ally with others and hope that there would just be more power in numbers.

Now, don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that having power is bad, although we do know what they say about absolute power. I'm just saying that this is what I've observed about us and the people of this world. And I wonder if this has become the only point in life. Is this just who we are? Is this what we've become?

In response to John's respect and submission, Jesus says something that I never really understood. "It is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness." What righteousness? And how does John baptizing Jesus fulfill this? I mean, should John be able to do this? Does he get that kind of authority? Would he have that much power?

Well, thinking about it this time around, I'm starting to understand Jesus' words in a different light. I'm starting to interpret baptism a bit differently. I'm starting to see a different view of what the point of life that truly is life actually is. And guess what, it isn't to gain more power.

If it were, then Jesus would have been like, "oh yeah, totally John, be baptized by me," but he doesn't. If it were about gaining more power, then the Messiah would have come like the ancient Jews expected, with guns blazing and enemies being smote. If that was actually the point then Jesus wouldn't even have bothered to come at all, God would have just flooded the earth again.

But God didn't flood the earth. The Messiah didn't come to condemn. Jesus *was* baptized.

Baptized not to gain power, but to gain *community*. Jesus went to John not because John was a baptizer but because John was Jesus' cousin and brother and fellow human. Jesus went into the waters just as we did in our baptisms, and showed us all that he truly was sent to us not to condemn and lord over us, but to redeem and save us *as one of us*.

See the point of baptism isn't about power but of community. The point of Jesus insisting that John baptize him and not the other way around wasn't to submit or relinquish power but to reveal how God's love for us all is equal and complete. The point of Jesus even showing up wasn't to get us to step in line, but to reveal to all who we are and whose we are, not just in this race to gain more over others, but to be beloved children, part of the body of Christ, who are pleasing to God for the sole reason that we are created to be just this.

This is the point of us. This is the point of life. This is the point of this Epiphany.

See, while the Magi saw Jesus for who he is even as a toddler, so is Jesus revealed to us as the Messiah, our Saviour, our brother and friend. Just as the voice from the heavens declared to all Jesus as the beloved, so are we included in that proclamation informing us of just how much we are loved. Just as the Spirit alights upon Jesus and identifies him for who he is, so are we,

through the mystery of baptism and the love and welcome and inclusion of God, informed of who we are.

So as we continue through this season after the Epiphany, may we see Jesus for who Jesus is, our Lord, our Saviour, our brother, that we might more clearly see who we are, equally beloved children of God with whom God is well pleased, not because of how much power we have gained for ourselves over others, but because of God's eternal grace and everlasting welcome. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized (#304)

CREED (p. 104)

Together with all God's people declared as beloved, 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 beloved by the God of the universe, 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, you are mighty and strong and we ascribe to you the glory due to your name. May our worship be pleasing to you, that our lives and ministry might bear witness to the wonders of your love. 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 St. Peter's Shared Ministry in Hudson's Hope and the pastors and leaders that serve there; as well as Christ Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their newly installed pastor Barbara Groote. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your voice is upon the waters and your glory thunders in the skies and throughout creation, as your beauty is seen in the wonders of all that you have made. Strengthen us as we

care for all that you've entrusted to us, and help us to act responsibly when it comes to how this planet is treated. We pray for those living in areas of harsh weather and natural disasters, that safety and security might be found. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your voice is powerful and full of splendor, flashing like bright lightning into our lives with wisdom and justice. Instill this wisdom in all world leaders and politicians that the nations of the world might be governed with grace and be able to move toward peace. We pray especially for the areas of the world that face violence and turmoil, that the influence of your gospel might reign and the people and resources of the world be respected and valued. We also pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children, that their journey might begin soon. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you give us strength and the blessing of peace and you are with us throughout our times of trouble. Bring your healing to all those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and restore us all into your wholeness. 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 blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you sit enthroned in the heavens as king forevermore, welcoming us as your people and anointing us as saints. May the lives of all your faithful people inspire us in our own journeys and remind us always of our connection to each other and to you by your Spirit and in your name, that we might effectively be your ambassadors of grace, truth, and love in the world. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your gracious welcome and peace, granted 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 reveals to us the truth of your gracious welcome and love, 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

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.

The musical score is written on a single staff in G major (one sharp) and 4/4 time. It consists of six lines of music. The first line has four measures, the second and third lines have four measures each, and the fourth, fifth, and sixth lines have four measures each. The melody is simple and hymn-like, with lyrics placed below the notes.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Indeed, O God, you are holy, mighty, and merciful, and your love has no end. For you lift us up out of sin and, just as we are, you declare us as beloved. And in the fullness of time to send to us your Son Jesus, to show us the full inclusion and welcome in your community and kingdom, revealing to us all the connectedness we share in your name.

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

And then after they ate, he took the 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."

It is through this bread and cup that we can be reminded of who we are and whose we are, even as we together declare the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

For to you, O God, all honour and glory belong, for your love and grace surpass understanding and lift up to be joined with you and all the saints of all times and places, through Jesus Christ,

our Saviour and baptized Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

As we are collectively welcomed into God's family, let us pray as Jesus taught us:

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.**

Give us today our daily bread.

**Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.**

**Save us from the time of trial
and deliver us from evil.**

**For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and forever. Amen.**

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see God's love and welcome for us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (ACS booklet)

Arise, Your Light Has Come! (#314)

This Is the Spirit's Entry Now (#448)

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, again you have fed and nourished our souls with your Word and truth, and your love for us shines in and around our lives. Strengthen us in our walk with you and each other, that our communal bond will always reflect your unending grace, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who calls us beloved speak blessing upon you,
the God in whom we are baptized empower you as sons and daughters,
the God who alights our lives like a dove look upon all of you with favour and bring you peace and joy, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: We Know That Christ Is Raised (#449)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, love one another without partiality.

Thanks be to God.

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