



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Transfiguration of Our Lord February 19, 2023 ACS Holy Communion, Setting 12

Today's festival is a bridge between the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany cycle that comes to a close today and the Lent-Easter cycle that begins in several days. On a high mountain Jesus is revealed as God's beloved Son, echoing the words at his baptism. This vision of glory sustains us as Jesus faces his impending death in Jerusalem. We turn this week to Ash Wednesday and our yearly baptismal journey from Lent to Easter. Some churches put aside the alleluia at the conclusion of today's liturgy. This word of joy will be omitted during the penitential season of Lent and will be sung again at Easter.

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 hən̓q̓əmiṇəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together to worship our God, whose throne is in heaven and holds all people accountable with arms of justice and mercy. For we have been anointed by God to be God's beloved children, saved by grace and declared joint heirs with Jesus of the good news of salvation and peace, bringing us all into new life and community where we are empowered by the Spirit, nourished by the Word, and changed by the truth of God's light in all the world, through Jesus the Christ. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING SONG: Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (#707)

GREETING

The life-giving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the life-changing love of God, and the life-fulfilling 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.

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 majesty and might, you have blessed us with revelations of your glory. Give us the gift of faith, that we may hear your voice calling to us and recognise Jesus Christ revealed in the world, that we might be able to boldly stand in the light of your grace, by the power of your Spirit. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Exodus 24:12-18

A reading from Exodus.

At Mount Sinai, Moses experienced the presence of God for forty days and forty nights. The "glory of the LORD" settled on the mountain, and on the seventh day God called out to Moses. On the mountain God gave Moses the stone tablets inscribed with the ten commandments.

¹²The LORD said to Moses, "Come up to me on the mountain, and wait there; and I will give you the tablets of stone, with the law and the commandment, which I have written for their instruction." ¹³So Moses set out with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up into the mountain of God. ¹⁴To the elders he had said, "Wait here for us, until we come to you again; for Aaron and Hur are with you; whoever has a dispute may go to them."

¹⁵Then Moses went up on the mountain, and the cloud covered the mountain. ¹⁶The glory of the LORD settled on Mount Sinai, and the cloud covered it for six days; on the seventh day he called to Moses out of the cloud. ¹⁷Now the appearance of the glory of the LORD was like a devouring fire on the top of the mountain in the sight of the people of Israel. ¹⁸Moses entered the cloud, and went up on the mountain. Moses was on the mountain for forty days and forty nights.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 2

¹Why are the nations in an uproar?

Why do the peoples mutter empty threats?

²**Why do the kings of the earth rise up in revolt, and the princes plot together, against the LORD and against the LORD's anointed?**

³"Let us break their yoke," they say;
"let us cast off their bonds from us."

⁴**God whose throne is in heaven is laughing;
the LORD holds them in derision.**

⁵Then in wrath God speaks to them,
and in rage fills them with terror.

⁶**"As for me, I have anointed my king
upon Zion, my holy mountain."**

⁷Let me announce the decree of the LORD,
who said to me, "You are my son; this day have I begotten you.

⁸**Ask of me, and I will give you the nations for your inheritance
and the ends of the earth for your possession.**

⁹You shall crush them with an iron rod
and shatter them like a piece of pottery."

¹⁰**And now, you kings, be wise;
be warned, you rulers of the earth.**

¹¹Submit to the LORD with fear,

and with trembling bow in worship;
¹²**lest the LORD be angry, and you perish in a sudden blaze of wrath.**
Happy are all who take refuge in God!

SECOND READING: 2 Peter 1:16-21

A reading from 2 Peter.

At the transfiguration, God's voice was heard, declaring Jesus to be the beloved Son. By the activity of the Holy Spirit, God's voice continues to be heard through the word of scripture.

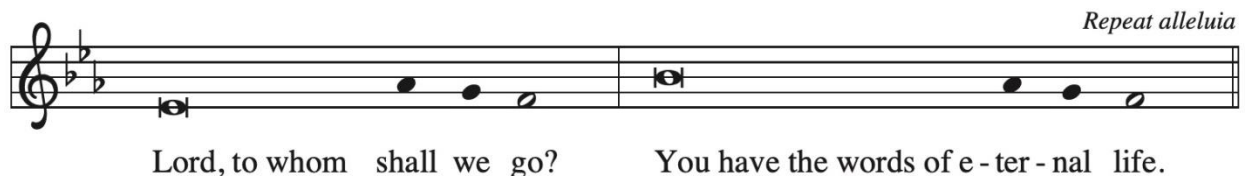
¹⁶For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we had been eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷For he received honor and glory from God the Father when that voice was conveyed to him by the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, my Beloved, with whom I am well pleased." ¹⁸We ourselves heard this voice come from heaven, while we were with him on the holy mountain.

¹⁹So we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰First of all you must understand this, that no prophecy of scripture is a matter of one's own interpretation, ²¹because no prophecy ever came by human will, but men and women moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION



GOSPEL: Matthew 17:1-9

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Shortly before he enters Jerusalem, where he will be crucified, Jesus is revealed to Peter, James, and John in a mountaintop experience of divine glory called the transfiguration.

¹Jesus took with him Peter and James and his brother John and led them up a high mountain, by themselves. ²And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became dazzling white. ³Suddenly there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him. ⁴Then Peter said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if you wish, I will make three dwellings here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." ⁵While he was still speaking, suddenly a bright cloud overshadowed them, and from the cloud a voice said, "This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him!" ⁶When the disciples heard this, they fell to the ground and were overcome by fear. ⁷But Jesus came and touched them, saying,

“Get up and do not be afraid.” ⁸And when they looked up, they saw no one except Jesus himself alone.

⁹As they were coming down the mountain, Jesus ordered them, “Tell no one about the vision until after the Son of Man has been raised from the dead.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

God our light, may we be attentive to your Spirit in this place as a lamp shining in the dark, that we might see your truth and be moved to live faithful lives with the morning star rising in our hearts, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Transfiguration Sunday. We get this day every year, so we should be pretty familiar with what it's all about. Although the actual words of the story we get would be from different gospel accounts depending on what year it is, it's still pretty much the same story: Jesus takes his buddies up a mountain, he transfigures to be all dazzling white while Moses and Elijah show up and chill for a bit, then Peter unsurprisingly says something dumb and a voice from heaven interrupts him and declares almost word-for-word what was declared about Jesus at his baptism, “This is my Son, the Beloved; with him I am well pleased; listen to him,” or something along those lines at least.

So we're pretty familiar with this story, and we've heard the different interpretations and takes on what it means, why Jesus was transfigured, why Elijah and Moses show up, and so on and so forth. We've heard ideas on why Peter wanted to build the huts, why he was so abruptly shut up by the voice from heaven, and parallels with this event and the baptism and even crucifixion of Jesus. And we've even heard of the whole Messianic secret thing and theories on what that's all about.

Or, I should say, we've been told these things, at very least by me. Whether or not they were retained or even listened to is a whole other matter altogether.

But even as familiar we might be with this story, something popped out at me this time around that I really don't think I've noticed before. Like I said, we've talked about the Messianic secret before, like how Jesus tells them not to talk about what they've seen and keep a lot of his teaching and miracles on the down low type thing, but in this text out of Matthew (and apparently out of Mark as well), Jesus gives further instruction. He doesn't just tell them not to talk about it, but he says don't talk about it until after he comes back from the dead.

So... the disciples aren't even going to talk about what Jesus just said? He just predicted his death. He establishes the fact that even his time is limited. He just told them that everything that he's been doing and everything they hope he'll do will end. He confirms that their experience, their witness of Jesus' glory in the transfiguration, their wanting to keep and mark the event with those dwellings, their awe and wonder of what just happened in front of their eyes, is temporary. It won't last forever. It will change... and die.

I'd imagine that'd be a tough one to swallow. I mean, we all will die some day, we can't deny that fact. But Jesus just makes it all so real here. And actually, he makes it real nonchalant too, like, “oh by the way, I'm going to die, k?” like it's really no big deal for him. These disciples, this

inner circle of Jesus', this "who's who" of apostles just had a supernatural experience. They witnessed something inexplicable and majestic. They were present for this glimpse of the glory of God, so much so that all they can think about is how they could capture it, hold on to it, and preserve it for as long as they can. And in almost the same breath Jesus tells them that they can't hang on to it, because it'll change, it'll end, it'll die.

And like how any one of us who have lost a loved one at any point in our lives, we know that death sucks. It is just the worst because we have no control over it. It hurts so much because it is so final and permanent, and there's no coming back from it. We avoid it with every fibre of our being because with death comes much change, change that we don't want or welcome, change that brings with it brokenness, pain, and just more death.

I remember back in the day when I worked in retail, one of the biggest complaints that I'd hear from customers wasn't the condition of the store, it wasn't our hours of operation that weren't convenient for them, it wasn't even the prices that I admit were a bit on the high side. But one of the most frequent complaints that I'd hear was from irate customers who came to buy something specific only to learn that the product had been discontinued. The amount of frustration in finally finding something that works for them only to have someone else decide that it doesn't sell well enough to stock anymore was just astronomical. And I'll admit that I understand. I get that it's super annoying. I know the pain of having something change out of our control and present to us a world that seems worse and lesser because of it.

I know, we're not talking about losing a flavour of toothpaste here, but we're talking about a death of a person. The potential death of a movement that was supposed to save the world. The impending death of an entire way of life.

At least, that's what it would have sounded like for those disciples present at the time. That's the pain that they would have felt to have their dreams crushed. That's the change that would have been dreading as everything they were hoping for in the Messiah and their salvation starts to slip out of their grasp, fall out of reach, and just die right in front of them.

But... it didn't really die, did it, not even now some 2000 years later. It changed, yes, but it didn't end. It looks much different from how they understood it, but the gospel of gracious salvation and the good news of God's love and welcome remains true today. Jesus did say that he'll die, but he also said that he'll be back.

And back he came.

Again, yes, it wasn't the same. The experience was different. Jesus was changed in that he had these new scars and spoke in even more riddles if that was even possible. Jesus wasn't with them physically in the flesh for much longer, but he was with them in spirit. His teachings remained in their hearts. His life continued to give them life.

Life even in their pain. Life in the inevitable change. Life in death.

See, this to me, is the promise of the gospel. In that while everything changes, everything ends, and everything eventually dies, the gospel remains the same. Jesus' teachings remain true. God continues to be with us. Perhaps not in ways that we're used to or in ways that we'd like

to see or give us comfort in the way that we want it, but that presence remains constant, it remains strong, remains full of abundant life, overflowing our cups with blessing and love.

And so this is what I am seeing in the Transfiguration this year. I see Jesus being present in our ever-changing lives. I see the Spirit lifting us up in the midst of our discomforts and uncertainties. I see God giving us life even in death, and showing us that death isn't actually final, it doesn't end everything, and it doesn't have the last word. Rather, the Transfiguration shows us how God's love is bigger, stronger, and brings the peace that surpasses all understanding to even the most difficult areas of life. Those areas that maybe need to be changed.

But I know, change is still scary. It's always easier to hold on to what we know, what we are familiar with, where we might be comfortable. But let's not allow those feelings of familiarity and comfort stand in the way of and hold us back from the hope in change, the joy of new life, and the peace found in the transfiguring life in which God remains present with us in love forever.

We will be observing Ash Wednesday in just a few days and thus embarking into Lent and the journey toward the cross, where we remember the ultimate death that ushered in the way of ultimate life. And so as we start this process of remembering, let's look forward to what might come, and be inspired by God always with us, be sensitive to the Spirit always joining us together, and be filled with life by the hope that is given to us through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ our Lord.

So as we again come to the end of this season after the Epiphany, may we remember all that we have learned about Jesus and be filled with the confidence of the Spirit, that the light of God might freely shine in and through our lives, bringing us all the joy of the gospel, the hope in the change, and the life even in death. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Christ, Be Our Light (#715)

CREED (p. 104)

With all basking in the light 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 to be beloved children of God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “Lord, in your shining mercy,” and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, in your shining mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you love this world and everything in it, but most do not realise or recognize you in their lives. May we always reflect the light of your love onto all people through our actions and ministry, that our witness to your truth and grace be effective and pleasing to you. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada, their bishops, pastors and members; our own bishops Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan, and all the assistant to the bishops in our Synods and National Church; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod and across the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Ascension Lutheran Church in Nelson and their interim pastor Brenda Nestegaard-Paul; and for Mount Zion Lutheran Church in New Westminster and their interim pastor, Bishop Greg Mohr. Lord, in your shining mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your creation groans under the systems of oppression and inequality that run rampant through the nations. Strengthen us to continually search for new ways of properly caring for all that you have made, that this planet be able to serve as our home well into the future. We pray for those living in areas of harsh weather and natural disasters, that they be safe and free from harm. Lord, in your shining mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, the rulers of the earth often seem corrupt and unjust, and we the people often question their judgement and understanding. Help us all work together with trust and respect, that we might one day know true peace. We pray especially for the nations that face violence, war, and turmoil, that your love and grace might be most apparent there. And we 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. Lord, in your shining mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you promise us as your beloved children your grace and love, and you bring us into your arms of healing and wholeness. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and allow us all to see your shining light in the world to inspire and strengthen us to be your faithful people. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Suhkwant; Winn; John; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; William; Chris; Walter; Larry; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... Lord, in your shining mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you provide for us eternal refuge and we are happy to live in your kingdom with you and all the saints. May we look to their example of life and faith to inspire us in our own walks, that our service and ministry be strengthened and be for your glory, until the day we join them in your eternity. Lord, in your shining mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the shining light of your inspiring love, 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, to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who appears to us in our ordinary spaces, shining the light of your love in our lives, joining us together 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.

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Yes Lord you are holy, powerful, and mighty, and in you we find our strength to be your people in the world. For you grant to us your grace and love, showing us how life can be lived in community and relationship and how joy can be found in our connections and work. And in the fullness of time you send to us Jesus, your messenger of peace, to reveal to all the ways of your everlasting justice and righteousness through 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, gave thanks, broke and shared it with them and said, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you, do this for the remembrance of me."

Then after they ate, he took the cup that they shared, 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 in this bread and cup that we see your righteousness and faithfulness, shining into our lives through your love and promises, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, for all that you have done, all that you are doing, and all that you will do for the sake of this world shrouded in darkness but anointed by your Spirit. May you bless this food that we are prepared to share, bless this congregation for the work we are prepared to do, and bless each individual here and beyond for the truth that we all receive of your eternal and everlasting love, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Gathered into the light of Christ's love, 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

Taste and see the light of God's love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (ACS booklet)
Borning Cry (#732)
Change My Heart, O God (#801)

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 and gracious God, again you have fed and nourished us as your people to be out in the world, reflecting your light shining in the darkness. Be with us in our journey, that as we move toward the cross we may have our eyes firmly fixed on you, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God of love radiate blessing on you,
the God of grace shine favour upon you,
the God of all mercy and salvation be a lamp on your way, leading you into peace, now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: Now Thank We All Our God (#840)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, reflect the light of Christ in the world.
Thanks be to God.