



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Third Sunday in Lent

March 12, 2023

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three

In today's gospel the Samaritan woman asks Jesus for water, an image of our thirst for God. Jesus offers living water, a sign of God's grace flowing from the waters of baptism. The early church used this gospel and those of the next two Sundays to deepen baptismal reflection during the final days of preparation before baptism at Easter. As we journey to the resurrection feast, Christ comes among us in word, bath, and meal—offering us the life-giving water of God's mercy and forgiveness.

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

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We enter this space to sing to the Lord, the rock of our salvation, with thanksgiving and loud shouts. For our Lord is a great God, a great ruler above all gods, so we worship and bow down and kneel before the Lord our maker.

We, the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand, come to hear God's voice speaking into our hearts, renewing our minds, and opening our eyes to see God's ways of righteousness and faith, where we might find the peace that surpasses all understanding through Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Saviour. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING SONG: Blessed Assurance (#638)

GREETING

The fulfilling grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the satisfying love of God, and the all-providing support of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

KYRIE (p. 138)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord our God, you are to us living water and you satisfy our souls. As we worship this day, show us who we are as channels of your love and vessels of your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Exodus 17:1-7

A reading from Exodus.

Because the thirsty Israelites quarreled with Moses and put God to the test, Moses cried out in desperation to God. God commanded Moses to strike the rock to provide water for the people. The doubt-filled question—"Is the LORD among us or not?"—received a very positive answer.

¹From the wilderness of Sin the whole congregation of the Israelites journeyed by stages, as the LORD commanded. They camped at Rephidim, but there was no water for the people to drink.

²The people quarreled with Moses, and said, "Give us water to drink." Moses said to them, "Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the LORD?" ³But the people thirsted there for water; and the people complained against Moses and said, "Why did you bring us out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and livestock with thirst?" ⁴So Moses cried out to the LORD, "What shall I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me." ⁵The LORD said to Moses, "Go on ahead of the people, and take some of the elders of Israel with you; take in your hand the staff with which you struck the Nile, and go. ⁶I will be standing there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it, so that the people may drink." Moses did so, in the sight of the elders of Israel. ⁷He called the place Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled and tested the LORD, saying, "Is the LORD among us or not?"

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 95

¹Come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

²**Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

³For you, LORD, are a great God,
and a great ruler above all gods.

⁴**In your hand are the caverns of the earth;
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

⁵The sea is yours, for you made it,
and your hands have molded the dry land.

⁶**Come, let us worship and bow down,
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

⁷For the LORD is our God, and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.

Oh, that today you would hear God's voice!

⁸**"Harden not your hearts,
as at Meribah, as on that day at Massah in the desert.**

⁹There your ancestors tested me,
they put me to the test, though they had seen my works.

¹⁰**Forty years I loathed that generation, saying,
'The heart of this people goes astray; they do not know my ways.'**

¹¹Indeed I swore in my anger,
'They shall never come to my rest.'"

SECOND READING: Romans 5:1-11

A reading from Romans.

Though we often hear that God helps those who help themselves, here Paul tells us that through Jesus' death God helps utterly helpless sinners. Since we who had been enemies are reconciled to God in the cross, we now live in hope for our final salvation.

¹Since we are justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, ²through whom we have obtained access to this grace in which we stand; and we boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. ³And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, ⁴and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, ⁵and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.

⁶For while we were still weak, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷Indeed, rarely will anyone die for a righteous person—though perhaps for a good person someone might actually dare to die. ⁸But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.

⁹Much more surely then, now that we have been justified by his blood, will we be saved through him from the wrath of God. ¹⁰For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more surely, having been reconciled, will we be saved by his life. ¹¹But more than that, we even boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

GOSPEL: John 4:5-42

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus defies convention to engage a Samaritan woman in conversation. Her testimony, in turn, leads many others to faith.

⁵[Jesus] came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph.⁶Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

⁷A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."⁸(His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.)⁹The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.)¹⁰Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water."

¹¹The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water?"¹²Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?"¹³Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again,¹⁴ but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life."¹⁵The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

¹⁶Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back."¹⁷The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband';¹⁸ for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!"¹⁹The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet."²⁰Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem."

²¹Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."²²You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews."²³But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him."²⁴God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."²⁵The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us."²⁶Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

²⁷Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?"²⁸Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people,²⁹"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?"³⁰They left the city and were on their way to him.

³¹Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something."³²But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about."³³So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?"³⁴Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work."³⁵Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting.³⁶The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together.³⁷For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.'³⁸I sent

you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.”

³⁹Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” ⁴⁰So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. ⁴¹And many more believed because of his word. ⁴²They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Living God, through your Word and the power of your Spirit, may your good news permeate in our hearts, lead us deeper into faith, and bring us to receive the peace of Christ, the Saviour of the world. Amen.

Have you ever encountered anything that was literally unbelievable? I mean like actually, totally, just can’t grasp it whatsoever unbelievable? These days we throw the term around so much that we pretty much label darn near everything as unbelievable, from the slightly surprising to the completely plausible, from the weather being the weather to time flowing at its constant pace but catching us off guard, from how our children and those younger than us age at the same exact rate as we do to how awful they can act sometimes, all of this somehow is called unbelievable in our regular everyday language.

But if you think about it, in these our modern times it seems like nothing really is all that unbelievable. These days of technology doing things that we never thought could be possible, these days where you can find anything in the vast reaches of the internet, these days where those that are found in the extreme polar ends of whatever spectrum are so extreme that it’s been said that you can say anything about them and people would believe it.

Did you catch that? It’s been said that those at the extremes these days, as in the fanatics, the fundamentals, the folks that reside on the far poles of religion, politics, and whatever other hot topic out there are so extreme, that you can say anything about them and it would be plausible. Well, plausible if you’re not part of that camp, that is. But when something is said, especially derogatory, about the side that you’re not on, it is believable to you. So whatever side you’re on, left or right, conservative or liberal, pro this or anti that, you can and probably have fallen for anything that has been said about the opposite opinion and their representatives, because the picture in your head about them as being so irreprehensible and awful has been painted so clearly that nothing bad about them even surprises you anymore.

I found this unbelievable, to be honest.

But then it actually happened to me. I forget the exact details, but I remember reading a click bait article about someone that was part of a denomination that I don’t particularly favour doing something that I don’t particularly condone, and I believed it. And then later on I was told from a very reputable source that the whole story was fabricated, and I believed it at first anyway. Easily as well, might I add.

Yikes.

This mentality that we just somehow naturally have poses a huge problem for creating relationships, for bridging gaps, or even having open dialogue with the other side because it's been so ingrained in us to not want to believe that they could ever be anything better than the absolute worst. We cannot believe that they could ever be good or smart or moral. We will not believe that they could ever be understood, listened to, or anywhere near being right. We are unable to believe that even they could ever be loved by anyone, not us at least, and probably not even God.

Now that is hard to believe.

God would never be on their side. God would never be ok with them acting the way that they do. God would never meet them where they are, reveal to them the truths of God's grace and redemption, and give them the living water from which we will never thirst again.

Oh wait. Isn't that literally what happened in today's gospel lesson?

This story of Jesus meeting the Samaritan woman at the well has so many unbelievable aspects in it, so many unbelievable details, so many people dealing with their unbelief.

It starts with Jesus treading into the enemy Samaritan territory, unbelievable.

Then he talks to a Samaritan... a sinner... a female no less... unbelievable even by her.

The disciples catch this episode and they can't believe what just happened.

And the townsfolk heard the woman's testimony and just like that they believed her. But that right there is the real unbelievable part, there is no way they would just drop everything and trust the word of a marginalized outcast that was outcasted to the margins of their outcasted and marginalized society.

So at face value, this whole story is unbelievable. So many things about the story goes against everything the early hearers and readers of it would have known about society, the natural order of things, the way life is just lived. Almost every aspect and detail that is told would have drummed up nothing but disbelief, dismay, and doubt. Doubt, until we remember who we're talking about here.

I mean, this story and interaction with the Samaritan woman would be unbelievable if it were anyone else doing the interacting. It would be unbelievable if we didn't know anything about Jesus' teaching and mission and work in the world. It would be unbelievable if Jesus wasn't all about loving others and especially "the other".

Which is what Jesus is all about.

So of course this unbelievable story suddenly becomes believable. Of course Jesus would plausibly treat this woman with dignity and grace. Of course, our understandings and paradigms of the world are challenged yet again by the truth of God's inclusive love and welcome.

Because really, deep down I'd say that we'd all much rather leave the Samaritan woman on the margins. We'd much rather discount the Pharisees and the other pompous bigwigs that aren't

on the same side as us. We'd much rather cancel those whom we dislike, distrust, and disagree with.

We'd much rather not love those that we find unlovable.

But that is where God comes in, meeting us and all people just where we are, and provides for all the living water that quenches our thirst, lifts up our hearts, and joins us all together in a way that we wouldn't have thought possible, through inclusivity, equality, and a humble peace that welcomes us all into God's grace.

See as unbelievable as some people can be to us, God continues to meet them just as God meets us. As unacceptable we can find those of other opinions and political parties, God continues to forgive them just as God forgives us. As unlovable we can sometimes deem the world, God continues to love the world enough to send Jesus not to condemn it as we would have hoped, but much to our surprise, to save it instead.

This isn't to say that we should just be totally naïve to the evils of the world and that some people can commit, that we should just overlook the unbecoming behaviours that some partake in, that we should just pretend that the world is just fine the way it is in all its brokenness and sin, but it is to say that even in the evils, even in the disagreements and strife, even in the hate that we might feel toward the other, God enters into our lives, shows us an endless love full of grace and truth, and brings us together as a diverse but united body of Christ. Not united in terms of opinion, paradigm, and even belief, but in the loving mercy revealed to us all through the cross and the living water that refreshes our souls.

And so just as the Israelites grumbled and complained and wondered if God was with them or not because of the plight they found themselves in, so do we sometimes find it unbelievable that God could be with us, with those whom we dislike and disagree with, with this world that is just so broken. But just as God provided for the Israelites in the unbelievable way of abundant water and blessing gushing from a rock, so does God surprise us with abundant blessing, inspiring hope, and unending love coming forth from sometimes the most unlikely of places.

So as we continue through this season of Lent, may the gracious character of God full of truth and mercy move us to see that even the unforgiveable can be forgiven, the unlovable be loved, and the unbelievable be believable in God's welcome and provision and life. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me (#623)

CREED (p. 105)

Together with the whole church, 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.

INSTALLATION OF LEADERS IN THE CONGREGATION

The following people have been selected by our congregation to positions of leadership. We give thanks for their openness to God's call and willingness to serve. As God's people, we are welcomed into the body of Christ and sent to work together in God's mission for the world, and we rejoice that these siblings in Christ that will lead us as our congregational council in our common life and community.

The names of those being installed are named.

A reading from First Corinthians: There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7)

You have been appointed to positions of leadership and trust in this congregation.

You are to see that the words and deeds of this household of faith bear witness to God, who gathers us into one together with the whole church.

You are to seek to involve all members of this congregation in worship, learning, witness, service, and support, so that the mission of Christ is carried out in this congregation, in the wider church, in this community, and in the whole world.

You are to be faithful in your specific area of serving, that the Spirit who empowers you may be glorified.

You are to be examples of faith active in love, fostering peace, harmony, and mutual understanding in this congregation.

On behalf of your sisters and brothers in Christ, I ask you:

Will you accept and faithfully carry out the duties of the offices
to which you have been appointed?

Response: I will, and I ask God to help me.

People of God, I ask you:

Will you support these, your appointed congregational council,
and will you share in the mutual ministry
that Christ has given to all who are baptized?

We will, and we ask God to help us.

I now declare you installed as officers and council members of this congregation.
Almighty God bless you, and direct your days and your deeds in peace,
that you may be faithful servants of Christ.
Amen.

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Led to participate in God's ways of life and love, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, by your everlasting mercy," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, by your everlasting mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we sing to you and shout for joy as you are the rock of our salvation. We give you thanks for our newly installed council members and ask that you bless them with your wisdom and our whole congregation with your strength, that we might faithfully serve you and minister to our community and beyond with joy and thanksgiving. We also pray for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada and all their bishops and pastors; and for our own ELCIC, our bishops Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan, all the assistants to the bishops, as well as all our pastors and congregations in our Synod and across the country. In particular for this day, we pray for Faith Lutheran Church in Powell River and their Anglican pastor Paula Sampson, and for Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Prince George and their pastor Fleming Blishen. Lord, by your everlasting mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your presence is seen throughout creation and we come before you with thanksgiving for all that you have made and entrusted to us. May our stewardship of this planet be strengthened and pleasing to you, that the natural beauty of this world be preserved and kept for the generations to come. We pray for all those living in areas that face harsh weather or are prone to natural disasters, and for the healing for all creatures. Lord, by your everlasting mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you are a great God and the great ruler above all gods. Be with the rulers of this world: the politicians, leaders, and people of influence, that your wisdom might be accessible to all. We pray especially for those living in areas that face war, violence, and political turmoil, that your peace might break through the darkness and bring the light of your love to all. Also we pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. Lord, by your everlasting mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we are the people of your pasture and the sheep of your hand, and you lead us to still waters. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love can still shine through all our lives. Especially we pray for Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Bryan and Chona; Sukhwant; 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, by your everlasting mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, by your grace and love you welcome us all into your kingdom and lead us into your rest with all the saints of all times and places. May their lives of faith always serve as inspiration to us, that we might in turn serve as inspiration for those who will come after us. Lord, by your everlasting mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your living waters, given to us by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE (p. 143)

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE (p. 144)

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 in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ;
who opens our eyes to see the provision of your love and nourishment in your Word, that we
might be joined 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 (p. 144)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Blessed are you, O God of the universe, for all that you have done and continue to do in and
around our lives and community. You meet us where we are and you lead us to partake in your
living water, refreshing our souls with your love and grace. And when the time was right, you
had sent to us your Son Jesus, to show us the ways of your eternal and everlasting forgiveness
and mercy.

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."

Then after they ate, he took the common cup that they all 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 through this bread and cup that we see God providing for our every need for life, love, and
community, even as we proclaim 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 are for the world, past,
present, and future, and all that you give us through your benevolence and love through Jesus
Christ, our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now
and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 145)

Gathered into community by the Holy Spirit, 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 providing for us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 146)

Bread of Life from Heaven (#474)

Eat This Bread (#472)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Compassionate God, you have again fed and nourished us with every good thing: this bread of life, this cup of the covenant, and your living Word for our souls. May we be strengthened by your truth, that our lives be renewed and refreshed to do your work and will in the world, through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May God bless you and keep you,
God's love shine on you and be gracious unto you,
God's favour spring up like living water in your hearts and give you peace.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: In the Cross of Christ I Glory (#324)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, worship God in spirit and truth in all that you say and do.
Thanks be to God.