



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Second Sunday of Easter

April 16, 2023

Now the Feast and Celebration

Hymnal Supplement (1991)

In today's gospel the risen Christ appears to the disciples and offers them the gift of peace. Even amid doubts and questions, we experience the resurrection in our Sunday gathering around word and meal, and in our everyday lives. Throughout the coming Sundays of Easter the first two readings will be from the Acts of the Apostles and the first letter of Peter. Even as the early Christians proclaimed the resurrection, we rejoice in the new birth and living hope we receive in baptism.

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 gather this day in the name of our God, our protector and refuge, the good above all other, to delight in worship and community. For the Lord is our portion and cup, upholding our lot and welcomes us into the pleasant land bestowing upon us a rich inheritance of grace and mercy. May the Lord be blessed by our gladdened hearts and rejoicing spirits, that our faith be renewed and our hope strengthened as we walk on the path of life in the fullness of joy through Jesus Christ, present with us and at the right hand of God. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Thine Is the Glory (#376)

GREETING

The living grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the tangible love of God, and the proven fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

NOW THE FEAST (HS p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of all wonders, you have revealed to us the gift of Jesus as our Saviour, risen from the death, and tangibly among us all. Strengthen our faith that we might experience the fullness of life in Christ's name. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 2:14a, 22-32

A reading from Acts.

After the Holy Spirit comes to the apostles on Pentecost, Peter preaches the gospel to the gathered crowd. He tells them that Jesus, who obediently went to his death according to God's plan, was raised from the dead by God. Finally, he appeals to scripture, quoting Psalm 16:8-11, to show that Jesus is the Messiah: though crucified, the risen Jesus is now enthroned.

^{14a}Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed [the crowd], ²²"You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—²³this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. ²⁴But God raised him up, having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. ²⁵For David says concerning him,

'I saw the Lord always before me,
for he is at my right hand so that I will not be shaken;
²⁶therefore my heart was glad, and my tongue rejoiced;
moreover my flesh will live in hope.

²⁷For you will not abandon my soul to Hades,
or let your Holy One experience corruption.

²⁸You have made known to me the ways of life;
you will make me full of gladness with your presence.'

²⁹"Fellow Israelites, I may say to you confidently of our ancestor David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. ³⁰Since he was a prophet, he knew that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would put one of his descendants on his throne.

³¹Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying,
'He was not abandoned to Hades,

nor did his flesh experience corruption.’

³²This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 16

¹Protect me, O God, for I take refuge in you;

I have said to the LORD, “You are my Lord, my good above all other.”

²**All my delight is in the godly that are in the land,
upon those who are noble among the people.**

³But those who run after other gods
shall have their troubles multiplied.

⁴**I will not pour out drink offerings to such gods,
never take their names upon my lips.**

⁵O LORD, you are my portion and my cup;
it is you who uphold my lot.

⁶**My boundaries enclose a pleasant land;
indeed, I have a rich inheritance.**

⁷I will bless the LORD who gives me counsel;
my heart teaches me night after night.

⁸**I have set the LORD always before me;
because God is at my right hand, I shall not be shaken.**

⁹My heart, therefore, is glad, and my spirit rejoices;
my body also shall rest in hope.

¹⁰**For you will not abandon me to the grave,
nor let your holy one see the pit.**

¹¹You will show me the path of life;

in your presence there is fullness of joy, and in your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 1:3-9

A reading from 1 Peter.

This epistle was written to encourage Christians experiencing hardships and suffering because of their faith in Christ. The letter opens by blessing God for the living hope we have through Christ’s resurrection even amid difficult circumstances and surroundings.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, ⁴and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, ⁵who are being protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. ⁶In this you rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer various trials, ⁷so that the genuineness of your faith—being more precious than gold that, though perishable, is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. ⁸Although you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and rejoice with an indescribable and glorious joy, ⁹for you are receiving the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (HS p. 8)

GOSPEL: John 20:19-31

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The risen Jesus appears to his disciples, offering them a benediction, a commission, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. But one of their number is missing, and his unbelief prompts another visit from the Lord.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe."

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe." ²⁸Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" ²⁹Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe."

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Guiding God, send to us your Spirit that we can be led along the path of life into the fullness of joy in your everlasting presence, through Jesus Christ, our risen and tangible Saviour and Lord. Amen.

So you must have heard it said that seeing is believing. And at first that totally makes sense. I mean if you see something there in front of you, how can you not believe it's real? If you witness something that happens, how can you not believe that it's true? If you can observe something physical and tangible that is like literally right there, how can you not believe that it's like literally right there? So off the bat, we'd agree that seeing really is believing.

And logically speaking, if that's true, then I guess the inverse should also be true. So if seeing is believing, then that must mean that not being able to see something means we needn't believe it to be real. I mean that's why we give so much weight to eye-witness testimonies, because if no one saw whatever was said to have happened happen, then can we really believe that it's true? Maybe this is why our culture is so obsessed with taking pictures too, because then it's

actually proof because if we can't lay our eyes on it, then its credibility is just thrown out the window.

So that settles it then, it's true. Seeing is believing and not seeing gives you the right to not believe.

Well, yeah it's true... until it isn't.

There are a lot of things that we see that we just won't believe. Slight of hand, weird perspectives that make shadows look like lake monsters and trees look like giant gorilla people, and even clever movie making and AI photoshop are all examples as to why what we see isn't all that reliable. I mean I've seen in person, a man cut his lovely assistant completely in half while her top half giggled and her bottom half still flinched when he tickled her feet. But not for a second did I believe that she was actually cut in half. And I was like 7 years old at the time. So maybe seeing isn't really all that believing.

And then maybe not being able to see something doesn't necessarily mean that it isn't true either. I know personally I've never seen Saturn, but I believe it's out there. I've never seen Germany in person either, but I believe it's a real place. And I've never seen Barack Obama in the flesh, but I firmly believe that he truly is my brother-in-law's cousin's brother-in-law. But you might say that's different, because we know people who have seen and there are pictures and stuff, but I don't know anyone who has seen my brain, and I have never seen any pictures of it either. Well, you all might be "exactly, that explains it", to which I'd retort that I've never seen any of your brains either. So I think not seeing doesn't have to mean that it isn't true either.

So then what is true? What is real? What can we believe?

In this time of history when anything can be made to look real with a half decent computer and a good plastic surgeon, it really is hard to trust anything. Since the invention of lying, which I think we can trace all the way back to Adam and Eve, we have always had a little bit of suspicion in us. And even Jesus' own disciples who witnessed him perform miracles, heal the sick, walk on water, and even raise people from the dead, had a hard time believing that Jesus was risen from the dead, even when he was standing right in front of them, totally able to be seen.

Talk about seeing is not actually believing. I imagine the disciples reacted the same exact way that we would have reacted if our beloved teacher and mentor whom we watched get killed at the hands of the very people he wanted to save only to have him show up in our hiding place behind locked doors. And that would be "whu-bu-bu-bu-whaaa?" Seeing or not, this is would be a hard one to swallow. Impossible, really. So much so, in fact, that at first, they didn't believe. They couldn't. It was just too unbelievable.

I know we like to rag on Thomas for not believing, even gave him a nickname that stuck around for centuries: Doubting Thomas. But really, none of the disciples believed at first. They all doubted. They didn't believe when Jesus told them it would happen, they didn't believe when the women told them that it did happen, and now they still don't believe as they are witnessing it right now first hand while it's happening.

But can you blame them? Can you blame Thomas for not believing even after his buddies told him of their experience? Can you blame anyone for thinking that resurrection from death is a little hard to believe even when they can see it right before their eyes?

There are some things, that seeing is just not enough to lead you to believe. Sometimes you have to do more than just see it in a picture or in person but you have to actually go and examine it. Sometimes before you can believe in something, you have to use whatever senses are available to you and study it and understand it more. Sometimes you have to experience it.

That is what happened with disciples, not just with Thomas. As soon as Jesus showed up the first thing he did after telling them to chill the heck out was show them the wounds on his hands and side. And as gross as it sounds, you better believe those disciples took a closer gander. Maybe it poked it a bit. Can't be too careful, you know, gotta make sure that this is the same Jesus. But then Jesus goes and sends them out into the world, breathing in them the Spirit that unites them and us all, empowering them to be all they can be as God's people. Experience.

And then when Thomas catches wind of this, he's all like, "Aw I want to touch the wounds too." Of course, who wouldn't? And Jesus shows up again and Thomas gets the same sensory exhilaration as the other disciples. Then he believes. Then truly sees the risen Christ. Then he praises his God knowing full well that he has been included in the salvific grace and redemption of God. Thomas sees, yes, but it is the experience that renews his faith, revitalizes his soul, and reconfirms in him his belief that Jesus is Lord.

Experience.

So I can believe that there is a Saturn even when I haven't seen it because I have experienced knowledge transfer from those who have seen and studied it. I can believe there is a Germany even when I've never been there because I have experienced things that came from that country, like Lutheranism to say the least, but also Volkswagens and beer. I can believe that Barack Obama is a real person even though I've never actually met him because I've experienced my brother-in-law's family who have through pictures and story. And I can of course believe that I indeed have a brain contrary to popular thought, as I myself have experienced thought, doubt, and regular neural functions that would suggest that there is actually brain matter in this noggin of mine.

It isn't just seeing that is believing, but it is experiencing it that really seals the deal.

So what do we experience that leads us to believe in the living Christ? What in our lives can we attribute to God's grace and mercy? What do we see that truly tells us and assures us that we are beloved children of God, saved and redeemed, forgiven and lifted up, welcomed into God's kingdom and new life with all the saints of all times and places?

Maybe it is our community in which we belong, the relationships and connections that we make in them, the support that we give and receive, the love that is shared among such a diverse group of people. Maybe it's out in nature, the beauty of the land, the wonders of the animals, and the calm serenity of all its grand coexistence. Or maybe it's just within ourselves, when we felt healed from certain destruction, released from overbearing burdens, or cleansed from debilitating shame and guilt.

Whatever it is, let's us not forget these experiences, these God moments that colour our lives, these blessings that fill our cups with life, and cherish them as they move us deeper into faith, stronger in love, and more confident in our belief.

In this season of Easter, may we experience resurrection in and around our lives and our community, that we be inspired to love and serve our God and neighbour, and boldly proclaim this good news to all that we meet. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: We Walk by Faith (#635)

CREED (HS p. 11)

With all those experiencing the presence 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

Led to experience the love of God in our lives and community, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your tangible mercy, O God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your tangible mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you protect us as our refuge and our good above all other. We take delight in our communities filled with your people, and we are blessed to serve and worship alongside all the saints. May our ministry be pleasing to you, that people of all walks might see and know of your love. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishops Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for First Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their interim pastor Dave Lefsrud; and for all Lutheran Campus ministries across Canada. By your tangible mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you have created these pleasant lands for us to live in as part of our rich inheritance, and we are blessed by your providence. Increase our stewardship of all that you have made, that our relationship with this planet and each other only improve. We pray for those living in areas that are prone to harsh weather and natural disasters, that they remain safe and protected. By your tangible mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, in you we shall not be shaken, even when the world seems to have fallen into darkness. Continue to lead our cities and nations that we all learn to work together toward peace and harmony. We pray especially for the areas living in violence, war, and political turmoil, that we might be able to put aside difference and see the value of human life and unique culture. Also we pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; and Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. By your tangible mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your love makes our hearts glad and your healing makes our spirits rejoice and our bodies rest in hope. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely that your presence will always be seen and felt. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko, Bev and family, Raj and the Prasad family; Sukhwant; John; Winn; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy; Chris; William; Larry; Walter; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

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

O Lord, even in death you do not abandon us but you lift us up and lead us on the path of life, where we can reside in your presence with you and all the saints in the fullness of joy forevermore. May we continue to draw inspiration from the lives of faith of the past, that our lives in the present might serve to welcome and inspire all that we encounter. By your tangible mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your everlasting presence, seen in 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 leads us to experience your love and grace in the world, 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 (HS p. 15)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Yes Lord you are holy and mighty, and all the earth praises your name. For even in death you show us life, even in the darkness you show us light. And in the fullness of time you send to us Jesus, to be present among us as one of us, reassuring us of your saving love and grace.

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

Then after they ate it, Jesus 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."

So it is in this bread and cup that we can tangibly see and experience the presence of Jesus among us, leading us, teaching us, and moving us to declare this mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Then it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, bringing us forth as your people in the world, reflecting your light throughout the shadows of life, and proclaiming your love to all in need, through the blessing and life of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (HS p. 18)

Gathered into God's presence, 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 with us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (HS p. 18)

The Peace of the Lord (#646)

Blest Be the Tie That Binds (#656)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have fed us and nourished us with your truth and promises, and you have shown us your blessing for us in our lives. Continue to strengthen us in our faith and love, that we might share our continued experience of your grace, through Jesus Christ our risen Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who resurrects with love bless you and keep you, the God who blesses us with a goodly portion of the Spirit shine on you and be gracious onto you, the God who is ever present among us look up on you with favour and give you peace.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: Touch That Soothes and Heals (ACS 939)



1 Touch that soothes and heals the hurt - ing, hands that
2 Feed the hun - gry, clothe the na - ked, vis - it
3 Love and serve with - out dis - tinc - tion all earth's
4 Hands that beck - on lit - tle chil - dren, bind a



break a loaf of bread; steps that walk be - side the
ones in need of care, give the home - less warmth and
peo - ple, first and least. Know with - in each act of
wound, pre - pare a meal, feet that rush to share good



wea - ry, bear - ing bur - dens in their stead:
shel - ter: Christ will find a wel - come there.
kind - ness hope and whole - ness are in - creased.
tid - ings, Christ a - ris - en, still re - veal.

Refrain



"See my hands and feet," said Je - sus, love a - ris - en from the



grave. "Be my hands and feet," said Je - sus, "live as



ones I died to save."

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, trust the Christ you cannot see and experience the Christ that you can.

Thanks be to God.