



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

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Day of Pentecost

May 28, 2023

Now the Feast and Celebration

Hymnal Supplement (1991)

Pentecost derives its name from the Jewish festival celebrating the harvest and the giving of the law on Mount Sinai fifty days after Passover. Fifty days after Easter, we celebrate the Holy Spirit as God's presence within and among us. In Acts the Spirit arrives in rushing wind and flame, bringing God's presence to all people. Paul reminds us that though we each have different capacities, we are unified in the Spirit that equips us with these gifts. Jesus breathes the Holy Spirit on his disciples, empowering them to forgive sin. We celebrate that we too are given the breath of the Holy Spirit and sent out to proclaim God's redeeming love to all the world.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and on-line with us today! Here at Grace Luthera 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 Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in awe of the works of the Lord, God's wisdom, and creation. We gather, all living things small and great and look to God for strength and nourishment in due season. For God's hand is open to us, full of good things, and sends to us the Spirit through which we can see God's face. And so we worship and give glory to the Lord forever, rejoice in all of God's works, and sing to the Lord for as long as we live, praising God with all our being. May God be pleased with our words and souls. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: O Spirit All-Embracing (ACS #944)

GREETING

The border-removing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the wall-breaking love of God, and the barrier-lifting communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

NOW THE FEAST (HS p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, like a mighty rushing wind your Spirit moved upon the first disciples on the day of Pentecost, and like a purifying fire your message of salvation was seared on their hearts and minds. May we see your Spirit among us this day, that our courage be stirred, our witness be prophetic, and our proclamation of your good news be unified across cultures, traditions, and languages, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 2:1-21

A reading from Acts.

Pentecost was a Jewish harvest festival that marked the fiftieth day after Passover. Luke portrays the Holy Spirit being poured out upon the disciples before the gathered and astonished people assembled in Jerusalem for the festival. Filled with the Spirit, the disciples were able to witness to the power of Christ's resurrection.

¹When the day of Pentecost had come, [the apostles] were all together in one place. ²And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. ³Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. ⁴All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability.

⁵Now there were devout Jews from every nation under heaven living in Jerusalem. ⁶And at this sound the crowd gathered and was bewildered, because each one heard them speaking in the native language of each. ⁷Amazed and astonished, they asked, "Are not all these who are speaking Galileans?" ⁸And how is it that we hear, each of us, in our own native language?

⁹Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and residents of Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, ¹⁰Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya belonging to Cyrene, and visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, ¹¹Cretans and Arabs—in our own languages we hear them speaking about God's deeds of power." ¹²All were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" ¹³But others sneered and said, "They are filled with new wine."

¹⁴But Peter, standing with the eleven, raised his voice and addressed them, “Men of Judea and all who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and listen to what I say. ¹⁵Indeed, these are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only nine o’clock in the morning. ¹⁶No, this is what was spoken through the prophet Joel:

¹⁷‘In the last days it will be, God declares,
that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh,
and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams.

¹⁸Even upon my slaves, both men and women,
in those days I will pour out my Spirit;
and they shall prophesy.

¹⁹And I will show portents in the heaven above
and signs on the earth below,
blood, and fire, and smoky mist.

²⁰The sun shall be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood,
before the coming of the Lord’s great and glorious day.

²¹Then everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved.’ ”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 104:24-34, 35b

²⁴How manifold are your works, O LORD!

In wisdom you have made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.

²⁵**Yonder is the sea, great and wide, with its swarms too many to number,
living things both small and great.**

²⁶There go the ships to and fro,
and Leviathan, which you made for the sport of it.

²⁷**All of them look to you
to give them their food in due season.**

²⁸You give it to them; they gather it;
you open your hand, and they are filled with good things.

²⁹**When you hide your face, they are terrified;
when you take away their breath, they die and return to their dust.**

³⁰You send forth your Spirit, and they are created;
and so you renew the face of the earth.

³¹**May the glory of the LORD endure forever;
O LORD, rejoice in all your works.**

³²You look at the earth and it trembles;
you touch the mountains and they smoke.

³³**I will sing to the LORD as long as I live;
I will praise my God while I have my being.**

³⁴May these words of mine please God.
I will rejoice in the LORD.

^{35b}**Bless the LORD, O my soul.
Hallelujah!**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:3b-13

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

Paul is helping the Corinthians understand the relationship between our God-given unity and Spirit-created diversity. The Spirit creates the unity of faith and gives all Christians diverse gifts for the common benefit of all. We need one another's diverse spiritual gifts because the same Spirit has given them to each person for the common good.

^{3b}No one can say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; ⁵and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

¹²For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. ¹³For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (HS p. 8)

GOSPEL: John 20:19-23

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.

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.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Almighty God, by the power your Spirit, speak to us in the language of our hearts, that we might hear and see you with understanding and answer your call with confidence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Anyone here watch Guardians of the Galaxy Vol 3? It's the latest movie to come out of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, you know that series of comic book movies that I usually love to talk about. But if I'm honest, it seems like the whole MCU is kind of dying, which honestly is really hard for me to say and even harder for me to accept that it's true. But all of their recent projects have just been "meh" at best. That's right, meh. M-E-H.

But this latest and perhaps last Guardians installment was like a breath of fresh air in this struggling series of movies and TV shows. It was funny, packed with action, and it even had some tear-jerking moments in there. But above all, it was the themes of belonging and family that was so well highlighted that really did it for me. This theme really was carried throughout all their movies, starting with Guardians of the Galaxy vol 1 which was followed by volume 2, and then the Guardians were featured in Avengers: Infinity War and then again in Avengers: Endgame, oh and there was also the Guardians of the Galaxy Christmas Special that is streaming on Disney+. All these movies, although they had their own stories and subplots, revealed something throughout this ragtag group of misfits: they find belonging in their family.

In case you have no idea what I mean when I say Guardians of the Galaxy, it's a group of these intergalactic outsiders that, by themselves, people generally don't like as they don't really fit in anywhere (which says a lot seeing considering how big the galaxy is). This group, in their individual and often clashing but sometimes complimentary personalities, talents, and quirks, work together to well... guard the galaxy from threats and dangers, sometimes for pay. I guess they're kind of like an outer space A-Team. And if you don't know what A-Team is, then I don't have time to help you right now (I'm busy preaching a sermon).

Either case, like I said each member of the Guardians have a unique backstory and each of them add something special to the group. And in their diversity, they make it work. Each of them, deep down, have this need for family that they won't ever admit to, and they find that family with each other. This is apparent every time the Guardians pop up, we see in every installment how much closer they become, how much more they rely on each other, and how they're able to understand the most unique character of the bunch, a giant talking and moving tree creature named Groot.

The funny thing about Groot is that his whole vocabulary consists of three words: "I" and "am" and "Groot", and he speaks them exclusively in that order. Meaning every time he has dialogue, all we hear coming from his mouth is "I am Groot". Sure, it'd have different inflections and intonations and stuff, but basically it almost always was "I am Groot." But somehow, the Guardians understand what Groot means anyway.

I always found that interesting, that in going with the theme of family and belonging, they insert this very comic-accurate depiction of Groot and highlight how people grow to understand him and his language the longer they spend time with him. On the surface he is only audibly uttering "I am Groot" but just those three words he can explain complex concepts, technical schematics, and even express his vast emotions. Everyone else just hears "I am Groot" over and over, but the Guardians and others that have grown close to him understand his every word, his every three of those words repeated ad nauseum, and can easily communicate with him to the surprise of everyone who can understand "I am Groot" but doesn't understand "I am Groot".

And so I think you could probably ascertain why I bring this up on this Pentecost Sunday. This day that marks the end of the Easter season and the beginning of the Season after Pentecost season, is known for its lifting up and honouring of the Holy Spirit. The red that adorns the space and me symbolizes the fire of the Spirit and its cleansing and purifying properties, and reminds us of how tongues of flame danced on the heads and shoulders of the disciples in the upper room that day. This highlighting of the Spirit enters in the church calendar right after we hear about Jesus ascending into heaven, having just promised another Advocate who will be with his disciples and us forever. This day that has become somewhat synonymous with church growth attributed to the Holy Spirit is also known for one more thing: surprising understanding and connection.

Historically many interpreters thought that the disciples were empowered by the Spirit to speak in tongues, as in the language of the angels, and were also granted the gift of interpretation so they were able to understand these “moans and groans” of the Spirit. This then was used to justify the “gifts of the Spirit” that some denominations rely on heavily. While I’m not denying the whole speaking in tongues thing or the gifts of the Spirit as manifestations of supernatural powers, I do wonder if this is what actually happened here with the disciples.

Because in looking closely at the text, it sounds like they weren’t speaking in the language of the angels, but somehow able speak to the languages of the world, speak in ways that was understood by the foreigners that were visiting, effectively communicate with those they might not have been able to communicate with prior. This action of the Spirit, the bringing down of communication barriers, the granting of understanding, the revealing of the universal language of love and grace, is what I believe happened here on this day of Pentecost, and continues to happen in our ministry, community, and relationships.

You see, because the Spirit speaks to us with love and understanding, so we can speak to others using this same language. Because we can understand God’s grace and mercy upon our lives, we can operate in that understanding when dealing and relating to others. Because the false barriers that we erect ourselves in society, separating classes, genders, and ethnicities, don’t exist in God’s plan of the world, we can, without fear, regard each other in this way with love and grace, wholly and completely, and know that God’s welcome includes them and us all.

This, to me, is the work of the Spirit that we saw back in that upper room and is among us now. This, to me, is how the Spirit continues to join us together and grow this church universal in our collective community and service. This, to me, is the Spirit breaking down those barriers, increasing understanding between friends and strangers, and teaching us to love each other with a love that is stronger than death.

At the end of the first Guardians movie, there was a variance in Groot’s words. After he does something to save the team from imminent death he says, “we are Groot.” At first I was just like, ok, cool he can say other words and he’s telling them how they’re actually a team. But in this last one, Groot’s words change completely. In one of the final scenes he throws his arms around the whole team and says “I love you guys.”

To me, I was immediately brought back to the first movie and figured the movie was showing how Groot was growing and able to expand his vocabulary. But as I watched YouTubers break down the movie, I was presented with a much better explanation for the change in language. It wasn’t Groot that communicated differently so we hear him say “I love you guys”, but it was us,

the viewers, who learned more about Groot, who was drawn closer to who Groot is as a walking talking tree and person, who was able to understand him saying “I love you guys” while anyone else would have just heard “I am Groot”.

I know, this is just a movie, a very well written, thought out, and directed and filmed movie at that, but what an amazing nugget of truth this scene gives us. That by the power of the Spirit of love and community, we are drawn closer to each other and are strengthened to see with empathy and understanding, empowered to live with and serve God and neighbour with faith and compassion, building us up as God’s kingdom, the body of Christ.

Sure, maybe we won’t miraculously be able to understand different languages or know what Groot is talking about without help, but we might be able to see the connection we all share, the common life that we live, and how we are all united by the power of the Spirit, revealing to all this wide and vast church to which we all belong, connected by the all-encompassing and inclusive peace of Christ, speaking to us with a language of love and compassion.

So as we reach the end of the Easter season and move into the season after Pentecost, may we see the Holy Spirit moving in and through us, breaking down barriers, increasing our understanding, and joining us together in love and community. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Spirit of Gentleness (#396)

CREED (HS p. 11)

Together with the church of all time and place, 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 into community and compassion, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “by your manifold mercy, O Lord,” and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your manifold mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your works are wondrous and we praise your name for all that you do in joining us in community and revealing to us your ways of grace and love. Strengthen us in our ministry that those we serve might see and feel your glorious righteousness through all that we do. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our ELCIC bishops Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan; and our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular this day we pray for Peace Lutheran Church in Abbotsford and their pastor Dean Andersen; and Emmaus Lutheran Church in Burnaby and their pastor Timo Saarinen. By your manifold mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, by your wisdom you created the earth and all its creatures, both small and great. Give us a sense of appreciation for all that you've made and entrusted to us, that our stewardship be increased and our actions be for the good of all creation. We remember in prayer those who are living in areas prone to harsh weather and natural disasters, that they stay safe and out of harm's way. By your manifold mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, your glory endures forever and we look to your face for justice and peace. Instill in all world leaders, politicians, and people of influence a sense of your wisdom and grace, that all the nations and peoples might one day live in harmony. We pray for the safety of those who find themselves in the areas of the world that currently face war, threat, and political turmoil. And we especially pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. By your manifold mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, we will sing to you throughout our lives, praise you while we have our being, and rejoice in your name through the ups and downs of life. Be with those among us who face those downs, whether they be sick, downcast, or lonely, that we all be reminded of your everlasting presence and providence. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Sukhwant; John; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Chris; William; Walter; Larry; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
By your manifold mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, may our words of rejoicing be pleasing to you as you welcome us to live with you and all the saints in your kingdom forever. May we always be reminded of the inspiration of faith given to us by your saints through your Spirit, and may we be strengthened by the eternal and endless love that we all share in your name. By your manifold mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the gift of your Spirit in our midst, promised to us by 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 by the power of your Spirit continues to live and act in and around our lives, joining us together with all the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (HS p. 15)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Holy God you are mighty and holy and in you we have nothing to fear. You remain present among us, leading and guiding us into your inclusive love, showing us the ways of your righteous and community. And when the time was right, you send to us Jesus through your Spirit, to create further examples of your grace and mercy.

For on the night that he was betrayed, it was Jesus who 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, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink from saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

So it is in this bread and cup that we see the fullness of the grace and mercy of God, joining us together out of love, solidifying in us the proclamation of the basis of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

To you, O God be all honour and glory, for bringing us together, for sending to us Jesus our Saviour, and for gifting us with your Spirit of truth and peace, empowering us to be your people in the world for the sake of the world, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (HS p. 18)

Brought together as one 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 joining us together as God's people.
Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (HS p. 18)
Let Us Break Bread Together (#471)
One Bread, One Body (#496)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, in faith you have given us food for our souls, by faith you have strengthened us for your work, and through faith you continue to guide us by your Spirit. May all that we do and all that we are be pleasing to you through Jesus Christ and the power of your Spirit. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the Shepherd of grace and love bless you with peace,
the Saviour of all that is right and true sustain you in joy,
and the power of the Spirit of love fill you with courage and strength, this day and forevermore.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: God of Tempest, God of Whirlwind (#400)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be witnesses of God's love through action and community.
Thanks be to God.

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