



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

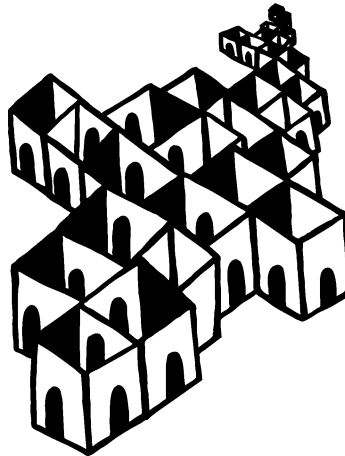
Phone / fax: 604-433-1515

Website: www.graceburnaby.com

Email: office@graceburnaby.com

pastor@graceburnaby.com

Follow us on Twitter! @GraceLutBurnaby



**Fifth Sunday of Easter
May 7, 2023
Now the Feast and Celebration
Hymnal Supplement (1991)**

As we continue to celebrate the fifty days of Easter, today's gospel includes Jesus' promise that he goes to prepare a place for his followers in his Father's house. Our baptism commissions us to share Jesus' mission in the world. As 1 Peter reminds us, we are a holy people, called to proclaim the one who called us out of darkness into light. In words and deeds we bear witness to the risen Christ—our way, our truth, our life.

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 Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in the name of our Lord, in whom we take refuge and through whom we are never put to shame, but delivered into righteousness. For God's ear is inclined to us in our times of need, and we find safety in the crag and stronghold of God's love. And so we worship and give thanks, for we are released from the snare of sin and guilt, and God rescues us from our enemies, redeems our spirit, and shines upon us with steadfast love, through Jesus Christ our risen Saviour.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING HYMN: All Are Welcome (#641)

GREETING

The faith-building grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the heart-building love of God, and the community-building fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

NOW THE FEAST (HS p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, in Christ you have shown us the way, revealed to us your truth, and offered to us a part in your plan for the church and world. Keep our eyes upon your grace, that we may see your path more clearly, know your truth more fully, and receive your life more abundantly; through Jesus Christ who dwells with you and the Holy Spirit in eternal glory. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 7:55-60

A reading from Acts.

Stephen was one of the seven men chosen by the apostles to serve tables so that the apostles could be free to serve the word (Acts 6:1-6). Stephen does more than distribute food, however. For his preaching of God's word, he becomes the first martyr of the faith.

⁵⁵Filled with the Holy Spirit, [Stephen] gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. ⁵⁶"Look," he said, "I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" ⁵⁷But they covered their ears, and with a loud shout all rushed together against him. ⁵⁸Then they dragged him out of the city and began to stone him; and the witnesses laid their coats at the feet of a young man named Saul. ⁵⁹While they were stoning Stephen, he prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." ⁶⁰Then he knelt down and cried out in a loud voice, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them." When he had said this, he died.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 31:1-5, 15-16

¹In you, O LORD, have I taken refuge; let me never be put to shame;
deliver me in your righteousness.

²**Incline your ear to me;**

make haste to deliver me.

³Be my strong rock, a castle to keep me safe, for you are my crag and my stronghold;
for the sake of your name, lead me and guide me.

⁴**Take me out of the net that they have secretly set for me,
for you are my tower of strength.**

⁵Into your hands I commend my spirit,
for you have redeemed me, O LORD, God of truth.

¹⁵**My times are in your hand;
rescue me from the hand of my enemies, and from those who persecute me.**

¹⁶Let your face shine upon your servant;
save me in your steadfast love."

SECOND READING: 1 Peter 2:2-10

A reading from 1 Peter.

Christ is the cornerstone of God's saving work and the foundation of our lives. We are God's chosen, holy people who continuously celebrate and declare the mercy of God we experience through Jesus Christ.

²Like newborn infants, long for the pure, spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow into salvation—³if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

⁴Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight, and ⁵like living stones, let yourselves be built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶For it stands in scripture:

"See, I am laying in Zion a stone,
a cornerstone chosen and precious;
and whoever believes in him will not be put to shame."

⁷To you then who believe, he is precious; but for those who do not believe,

"The stone that the builders rejected
has become the very head of the corner,"

⁸and

"A stone that makes them stumble,
and a rock that makes them fall."

They stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do.

⁹But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

¹⁰Once you were not a people,
but now you are God's people;
once you had not received mercy,
but now you have received mercy.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (HS p. 8)

GOSPEL: John 14:1-14

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

On the night that he is to be arrested, Jesus shares final words with his disciples. As the one through whom God is known, he promises to go before them and act on their behalf.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹“Do not let your hearts be troubled. Believe in God, believe also in me. ²In my Father’s house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? ³And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may be also. ⁴And you know the way to the place where I am going.” ⁵Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” ⁶Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. ⁷If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

⁸Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and we will be satisfied.” ⁹Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and you still do not know me? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? ¹⁰Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. ¹¹Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. ¹²Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father. ¹³I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. ¹⁴If in my name you ask me for anything, I will do it.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O Lord, by the power of your Spirit may our hearts be opened to your Word, calling us out of the darkness and leading us into your marvellous light, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

I had an interesting interaction with an elderly woman the other day at the salon where I get my hair cut. If you remember from a couple weeks ago, you’ll know that this place is closing down, and the lady that cuts my hair will no longer be cutting my hair, and I’m kind of distressed about it. This woman that I was interacting with is also a long time customer, and quite a colourful character. Funny thing is that she gets her hair cut on almost the same exact schedule as me as I was told, but we’ve never crossed paths before.

Anyway, I was paying for my final cut at this place, and the lady says to me, “excuse me young man, were you here for a cut?” And I responded “yes”. And she said in a longing sort of way, “well, what are you going to do now?” As in, where am I going to get my hair cut now, not what am I actually doing at that moment and if I’m free to grab a coffee or something.

We shared a half-hearted and knowing chuckle, then the conversation turned into how the powers that be never make the right decision because those decisions always inconvenience her, but that’s a story for another sermon. It was her, “what are you going to do now” question that got my sermonic juices flowing.

I mean, she looked at me and somehow knew that I was a regular at this place. Maybe she actually had seen me there before but I just don't remember. Maybe it's how my hairdresser and I were talking more like friends who knew each other for a while rather than just two strangers who have just met. Or maybe it's because I knew how to operate their very confusing credit card machine. Whatever it was, she knew that I was going through what she was going through in losing the place where we got our hair done on a regular basis, a place where we'd frequent every couple of weeks, a place where we might even, in some shape or form, call home.

So, what are we going to do now?

I'll admit, it's kind of distressing. Having to look for a replacement for what we've known for so long isn't easy. Finding comfort when suffering loss is hard. Learning to live with change, especially when feeling a bit displaced, isn't exactly a favourite thing for anyone to do. So I very much resonate with and echo her question to me, "what are we going to do now?".

And yes, we are just talking about hair cuts, but this comradery that this random woman and I shared, this common plight, this connection in our distraught feelings is something that I found interesting. Yeah, we didn't like what was happening, but there was a sort of comfort in going through it together. And while it's highly highly unlikely that I'll ever see this woman again in my life, and honestly even if I did I doubt either of us would recognise each other, this sense of kinship over our shared difficulties will not be lost. At least, it won't be lost on a preacher looking for some way to tie today's texts to real life.

See today's gospel story out of John talks a bit about distress and the comfort that can be found in community. It is the start of what is known as Jesus' farewell discourse. Essentially, Jesus is telling his disciples that he'll be leaving them soon and things will be different. He's preparing them of what is to come, albeit a bit fruitlessly. He's basically warning them of what will happen and simultaneously comforting them in it, which is a bit confusing I suppose for the disciples, as they don't really understand what Jesus is saying, where he is going, and what the whole point of it all is yet.

But they do understand that something is up.

See, right before this chapter, Jesus was telling his disciples that he'll be with them only for a little longer, and where he is going, they cannot follow. And Peter was like, "Nah Jesus, I can follow you, I'll follow you anywhere."

Now this sounds like words of a super faithful and devoted guy, ready to go anywhere with and do anything for his mentor. But Jesus drops the hammer on Peter's bubble here and is like, "You sure, Peter? Because really, before the rooster crows in the morning, you'll deny even knowing me three times." Mic drop.

This would be a blow to anyone's ego. And right before this Jesus was telling them that he would be betrayed and called Judas Iscariot out for being the traitor. At this point the disciples would have been bewildered at the thought. Maybe Judas as traitor was plausible because of the whole "sell the perfume to help the poor but really to line his own pockets" thing. But Peter? Sure, he was kind of a dunce at times, but he was the real devout one, part of Jesus'

inner circle, the one that even tried to beat science and walk on water to follow Jesus. If Peter can fail Jesus, any one of them can as well.

So they were probably feeling distressed, distraught, disillusioned. And even if they weren't, those that this gospel was originally written for way after all these things took place very likely were. Those in the early church were told that Jesus would be back and were waiting impatiently. Those who witnessed the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension that were promised that Jesus would be with them until the end of the age but he wasn't really in the way they wanted. Those that were there at the time and were looking forward to Jesus doing all the things that they thought he was supposed to do but were instead feeling a bit frustrated because nothing happened so far, not that they could tell.

But then they get this writing from John, the alleged disciple whom Jesus loved, reminding them that Jesus asked them, specifically said, and was so reassuring in his "Don't let your hearts be troubled." In their fear and distress, Jesus asked don't let your hearts be troubled. In their distraught feelings of loss and loneliness, Jesus said don't let your hearts be troubled. In their misunderstandings and misgivings of what they were taught, Jesus reassured them don't let your hearts be troubled.

See, Jesus reminded them that their hearts needn't be troubled because Jesus will be preparing a house for them. While many preachers and funeral sermons will tell you that this house is in heaven, I actually think that this house is here, now, in God's kingdom on earth, in this very church to which we belong. This house is us, this community, what we might call the body of Christ, where we can all gather even in our difficult times, and be with others who might be feeling the same way, have gone through the same things, and can lean on each other for care and support. This house where all are welcome.

You know, the beauty of this reminder from Jesus is lost in translation. The Greek word for "your" is actually in the plural. In English we only have the one word for both singular and plural so I guess in the vernacular it should be translated as "all y'all's". Beautiful, isn't it? "Don't let all y'all's hearts be troubled... y'all". Actually the beautiful part is that while "your" is in the plural, "heart" is in the singular.

So it's actually "Don't let all y'all's heart be troubled."

This one shared, common, communal heart. This one unifying, inclusive, harmonious heart. This one joining, inspiring, and divine heart. It needn't be troubled because it isn't alone, but surrounded by community in this house of God. It needn't be troubled because it isn't abandoned but held tightly by God's arms of love and grace. It needn't be troubled because at the center of it is Jesus, the Messiah, the risen Saviour, our Lord.

Friends, this heart needn't be troubled even in the most troubling of times, because God continues to be with us in the unseen, lifts us up from whatever shame and guilt hold us down, and forgives us and redeems us and saves us. This house that Jesus prepares is the house for this heart, where love resides, where we are saved, where all are welcome. This house with many rooms is the house of God, where we are invited, belong, and have our home.

So while life continues in its ups and downs, while we find ourselves facing trouble of different shapes and sizes, while we might feel alone or disconnected, we can rest assured that this

house of God continues to stand with Christ as its foundation, bringing us all in with a welcoming grace, granting us an identity as children of God that share a heart that is full of peace and love.

In this season of Easter, may we reflect on and draw strength from this heart that we all share, that we might find peace in all that life brings, now and always. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: The Church's One Foundation (#654)

CREED (HS p. 11)

Together with all the members of Christ's body, let's 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 live in community with all of God's people, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your steadfast mercy, O Lord," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your steadfast mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, in you we take refuge and you do not let us be put to shame, but you welcome us into your righteousness. May this good news of your love fuel our ministry and community, that all people might know the boundlessness of your grace and mercy. We pray especially for our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our national church the ELCIC and all its bishops: Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan, all its congregations, and pastors and deacons; and for our own BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Lutheran Church of the Cross in Victoria and their pastors Lyle McKenzie and Lyndon Sayers; and for all prison ministries throughout our church and their chaplains. By your steadfast mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your creation is our strong rock that keeps us safe. Lead and guide us in our stewardship of this planet, that its health and beauty be restored. By your steadfast mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you rescue us from the net of evil set up by the world, and you strengthen us with your tower of light. Be with all world leaders and politicians as we work together to bring out true peace. We pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filmon Abraha. By your steadfast mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you have redeemed us and our times are in your hand. You bring to us healing and wholeness in our time of need. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love be apparent to all. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Raj; Sukhwant; John; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Cindy and her family; Chris; William; Larry; Walter; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your steadfast mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

O God, your face shines upon us, your servants, and you lovingly welcome us to live with you and all the saints in your kingdom. May your love inspire us in our community, that we can be strengthened by everlasting effect on the world. By your steadfast mercy, O Lord, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the stronghold of our faith, 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 prepares for us a place in your kingdom and love, that we might join the choir of angels, hosts of heaven, and the whole 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 you welcome us into your presence and love, filling us and strengthening us with your promises of grace and mercy. And when the time was right, you sent to us Jesus to further welcome us into your kingdom of forgiveness and peace.

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."

And after they ate, he took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them to drink from saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

For it is in this bread and cup that we see our connection to each other, our place in this community, and our belonging in God's kingdom as we are reminded of this basis of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, through Jesus 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 around the cornerstone of God's kingdom, 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 that we are united in God's love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

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

Built on a Rock (#652)

Ubi caritas et amor (#642)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for feeding and nourishing us with your love and truth, and strengthening us to be your hands and feet in the world. Be with us as we navigate this journey of life, and may we see your provision and mercy for all of us, that we work together in your kingdom as your kingdom for your glory and honour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May God who raised Christ from the dead, bless you and keep you,
Christ, the way, the truth, and the life, be with you and be gracious onto you,
And the Spirit who joins us all together, empower you to serve in peace and love, now and
forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: Build Us Up, Lord (#670)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, serve the name of our risen Lord.

Thanks be to God.

From sundaysandseasons.com. Copyright © 2023 Augsburg Fortress. All rights reserved.