



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Third Sunday after Pentecost

June 11, 2023

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

Moses tells the Israelites that they are called to be a priestly kingdom and a holy people. Jesus sends out the disciples as laborers into the harvest. In baptism we too are anointed for ministry, sharing God's compassion with our needy world. From the Lord's table we go forth to proclaim the good news, to heal the sick, and to share our bread with the hungry.

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

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in the presence of our Lord, to whom we make a joyful noise in our song and gladness. For we know that our Lord is the Creator God to whom we belong, who calls us God's people and the sheep of God's pasture. So we enter the courts of the Lord with praise and thanksgiving, ready to bless God's holy name and to confess God's everlasting love and enduring faithfulness, now and to the age to come. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Rise Up, O Saints of God! (#669)

GREETING

The reassuring grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the faithful love of God, and the enduring fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 204)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of all power and peace, as Jesus sent his disciples out to heal the sick, cast out demons, gather the lost, raise the dead, and proclaim the nearness of your realm, make us ready to go and share and proclaim the good news and grace that we have received; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Exodus 19:2-8a

A reading from Exodus.

At Sinai God assured Israel, "You shall be my treasured possession," and commissioned them to serve as mediating priests for the nations. The people commit themselves completely to God's will.

²[The Israelites] had journeyed from Rephidim, entered the wilderness of Sinai, and camped in the wilderness; Israel camped there in front of the mountain.³Then Moses went up to God; the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the Israelites:⁴You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. ⁵Now therefore, if you obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession out of all the peoples. Indeed, the whole earth is mine, ⁶but you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the Israelites."

⁷So Moses came, summoned the elders of the people, and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. ^{8a}The people all answered as one: "Everything that the LORD has spoken we will do."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 100

¹Make a joyful noise to the LORD, all you lands!

²Serve the LORD with gladness; come into God's presence with a song.

³**Know that the LORD is God, our maker to whom we belong;
we are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture.**

⁴Enter the gates of the LORD with thanksgiving and the courts with praise;
give thanks and bless God's holy name.

⁵**Good indeed is the LORD, whose steadfast love is everlasting,
whose faithfulness endures from age to age.**

SECOND READING: Romans 5:1-8

A reading from Romans.

We are no longer God's enemies but have peace with God because we were brought into a right relationship with God through Christ's death.

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.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Matthew 9:35-10:8 [9-23]

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The mission of Jesus' followers is to continue the mission of Jesus himself. Here, he instructs his first disciples as to how they might proclaim the gospel through their words and deeds.

³⁵Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom, and curing every disease and every sickness. ³⁶When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. ³⁷Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; ³⁸therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."

^{10:1}Then Jesus summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. ²These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; ³Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; ⁴Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

⁵These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the

Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, ⁶but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. ⁷As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' ⁸Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. [⁹Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, ¹⁰no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. ¹¹Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. ¹²As you enter the house, greet it. ¹³If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. ¹⁴If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah on the day of judgment than for that town.

¹⁶"See, I am sending you out like sheep into the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷Beware of them, for they will hand you over to councils and flog you in their synagogues; ¹⁸and you will be dragged before governors and kings because of me, as a testimony to them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you at that time; ²⁰for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death; ²²and you will be hated by all because of my name. But the one who endures to the end will be saved. ²³When they persecute you in one town, flee to the next; for truly I tell you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes."]

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

God, by your Spirit may we learn to recognise your presence and be strengthened to heed your voice, that we may bear witness to your good news and love as your holy people, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Those of you who have excellent memories or read the blog post on our church's website from last week will know that we just passed the 6th anniversary of my dad's stroke, the one that ultimately took his life. I remember that day 6 years ago, and dreading that following Father's Day as I knew it was going to be a tough one. And here we are, 6 years later and while I've healed up quite a bit, it's still kind of hard. And to top it all off this year, my uncle, my dad's older brother, the father of probably my closest cousins, went into the hospital last week from a fall and needed to get MRI's and testing and even a biopsy to figure out what's going on. I haven't heard of the results of all the testing yet, but my goodness did this bring back a lot of emotions.

I mean, this was like almost 6 years to the day when my dad went into the hospital and never came out. This uncle of mine is probably the closest connection I still have with my dad too, as they were closest in age and been through the most together. They even worked at the same place all the way up until retirement. So I'm kind of scared of what will happen to him. I feel for my cousins and their families as I know the fear, I understand the stress, I have gone through the suffering as well.

Life just isn't easy.

Not just around health matters, but in general life can be super hard. We look around this planet that we live on and see all this horrible news. We look in our country, cities, and communities and see how awful people can be to each other and the world around us. We might even look at ourselves and our own lives and think like, “dang, this is what it is now? This isn’t what I signed up for”.

And so we might grasp for things that promise a better life. We might reach for objects, substances, or even people that may or may not be good for us, perhaps thinking that this isn’t just the last resort, but like the only resort that we have. Or we might even think that none of this is worth it and would rather us not be here at all.

Well, this kind of got real bleak real fast.

But I don’t think that we have to feel bad for perhaps thinking this. We don’t have to feel bad for being hurt and wanting the hurt to stop. We shouldn’t feel bad for the suffering, because somehow Paul tells us in today’s second reading that we should even boast in this suffering, because suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope doesn’t disappoint.

Although we know this is what our bibles say, it doesn’t really make things better because honestly it doesn’t even make much sense. Sure, hope might not disappoint, but suffering sure does. And there is no way that I’ll willingly go into suffering just for the chance that might perhaps maybe produce something that could resemble non-disappointing hope. So how can we even get to that point?

The thing is it’s not easy. Of course it isn’t. If it were we’d all be happy clappy hunky dory all the time. But Paul’s words here aren’t about the formula for us to receive hope. Rather, I see Paul explaining to us that suffering will eventually be alleviated and ultimately replaced by hope. Because as we established, that suffering will happen whether we want it to or not. So Paul is encouraging us that when it does, we can take heart because hope is on the way. Essentially, we have hope in the coming hope.

Still, that might not provide much comfort in the midst of the suffering. That probably doesn’t take away the hurt of death, the worry of illness in our family and community, or the pain of living in a broken world. That doesn’t automatically make life better. But then, that is where that hope comes in.

See Paul doesn’t say that the suffering leads directly to hope, but there is a process. There is endurance, when we bear the suffering and draw strength from God and our community. There is character, which develops in us that while life is hard, we can trust that God is bigger than the curveballs and pitfalls and we needn’t lash out and point fingers in blame. And then from that character and integrity comes hope, knowing that while things aren’t good and might not look like they will improve for a while, that we continue to be loved and cherished and supported by the body of Christ to which we all belong.

But I get it, that still isn’t helpful for the people who are living in the midst of war. This doesn’t really comfort those who are facing threats that are out of their control. This doesn’t take away the fear we might have of what we are currently going through or the inevitable suffering that we will see.

What it does do though, is remind us that our lowest point isn't our defining point. Whatever pain or hurt we are going through isn't indicative of who we are as God's people. Our suffering isn't who we are forever.

Instead, we are called to live in community, to support and be supported by the body of Christ, and together with the whole church on earth proclaim that the kingdom has come near.

The kingdom isn't near to just those who live easy, carefree lives. It doesn't come just for those who are highly disciplined and spiritual. It doesn't come to only those who ask for it or believe in it. But it has come near to all: the sick, the healthy, the rich, the poor, the insiders, and the outsiders. The kingdom has come near.

And in this truth we are able to endure, we are able to produce character, we are able to hold on to hope. We can be moved to go out into the world, confident in our identity defined not by suffering but by grace, strengthened by not the bad in life but the good that emerges from it, and empowered to see each other as fellow sinners that are made to be saints, saved by the unending and steadfast love of God through Jesus Christ.

See, six years ago my life changed in ways I didn't want when my dad died. Now 6 years later I worry for my cousins that they will have a similar experience. But at the same time, I see that through it all, through these difficult times in life, through the hurt and pain, through the stress and suffering, we continue to be welcome parts of God's community, we continue to be loved and cherished by a benevolent God, we continue to be defined as God's own people, full of meaning, purpose, and love.

Friends, I don't know where any of us are in life. I don't know what might be holding you down and out of if there even is anything going on. I don't know who needs to hear these words of grace and hope. But I do know that we will get to a point where our suffering will feel like it's too much. I know there will be questions arising of our lives and our identity. I know that we will need to be reminded of who we are and whose we are, if not now, then somewhere down the line. It happens to us all and it is inevitable.

But in it all, in all that messiness and inevitable suffering, in all the unexpected and unbelievable hardship, in all the difficulties of life, I know that we'll get to the point of hope, where death and crying will be more, where we will see how through it all we have never been alone, never been abandoned, and never been unloved. For while we were still weak, while we were in our suffering, while we were still sinners, God's love for us was proved by the grace and mercy of a crucified Christ, resurrected and eternal, living with us and in us and as one of us, and leading us into relationship and community, granting us all the hope of a love and peace that surpasses all understanding.

It might not be today, my friends. It might not be tomorrow. But God's love for us will be more and more apparent through the blessings of each day, the joys that we can share with those around us, and the peace that can come through our faith, our knowledge, and our hope.

So as we continue in this season after Pentecost, may we find endurance in pain, character in our faith, and hope even in our suffering. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Will You Let Me Be Your Servant (#659)

CREED (p. 104)

Together with all those welcomed in God's pasture, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**
**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**
**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called to serve God and neighbour, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your enduring mercy, O God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your enduring mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Lord, we make a joyful song of praise to you in your presence, and we serve you with gladness. May our ministry to all people reflect the love and grace that you show us. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our own ELCIC and especially our companion congregations of the BC Synod. In particular, we pray for Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Comox and the pastors and leaders that serve there; and for our seminaries in Saskatoon and Waterloo and for all the faculty, staff, and students. By your enduring mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Lord, we know that you are our maker and all of creation belongs to you. Strengthen us in our stewardship of this planet, that it might continue to serve as our home for the ages to come. We also pray for those living in areas that are prone to harsh weather and natural disasters, that all might find safety from harm. By your enduring mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Lord, we are your people and the sheep of your pasture, and you lead us with a staff of righteousness and peace. Continue to lead our countries, nations, and peoples toward your ways of community and right relationship, and may we learn to see the value in all cultures in spite of differences. We pray especially for the areas of the world that face war and political turmoil, and for those that we have sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel;

Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha (ah-BRA-ha). By your enduring mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, we enter your gates with thanksgiving and praise for you among us giving us strength in our hardships. Be with all who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love might shine in and through all our lives always. Especially we pray for Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Bryan and Chona; Sukhwant; Cari; John; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; William; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Maureen; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... By your enduring mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, you are indeed good and your steadfast love is everlasting, welcoming us into your eternal kingdom to live with you and all the saints forever. May we cherish all the lives of faith from the past, that they may inform our lives of faith in the present and help us move together into the future, to the glory of your name. By your enduring mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O Lord, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the strength bestowed upon us by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE (p. 106)

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 calls us and leads us into full communion with you and all the saints, joining the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the whole church on earth to praise your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 207)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy and humble, mighty and merciful, powerful and full of peace, God in your fullness you bring us together as your people in the world. You lead us to see each other as you see us, full of potential and love, brimming with the value and worth that you give us. And then you send to us Jesus, your Son, to teach and heal and physically display the good news of your mercy and grace.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a final meal together, 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 then after they ate it, Jesus 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."

It is in this bread and cup that we can see how we are joined together even in our difference and can live together in community even in our distance, further solidifying 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, for creating us, calling us, and commissioning us to be your people in the world, proclaiming your gospel and serving one another as siblings, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Called to be 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's blessing of love for all people.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)

Come, Let Us Eat (#491)

Holy, Holy, Holy (#473)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you have again fed us and nourished us with the truth and good news of your love, and you instill in us a hope that empowers us to serve. Continue to strengthen us in our faith, that as we go out into the world we may always bear witness to your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the love of the Creator bless you and keep you,
the grace of the Christ shine on you and hold you,
and the peace granted by the Counsellor look upon you with favour, and grant you community with God and all the saints, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Gracious Spirit, Heed Our Pleading (#401) verses 1-3, 5

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, proclaim good news to all whom you meet.

Thanks be to God.

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