



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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### Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 25, 2023

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

God does not promise that the path of the disciple will be easy. Jeremiah feels the pain of rejection from those who do not want to hear what he has to say. Jesus declares that his words may bring stark division. Even so, we need not be afraid for God accounts for each hair on our heads. Though we may experience rejection, frustration, division, and death, God's grace and love make us a new creation each day. Marked with the cross and filled with holy food, we are sent from worship to witness to Christ in 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 hən̓qəmin̓əŋ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather to worship our God, who has removed our shame and guilt and covered us in grace. For we find welcome among our kindred and community, and our Lord answers us with kind love and great compassion, hiding not from us but draws us near to redeem and deliver us. And so we sing to God who fills our souls with immeasurable grace and mercy. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** Let the Whole Creation Cry (#876)

### GREETING

The unifying grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the compassionate love of God, and the accepting fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**CANTICLE OF PRAISE** (p. 204)

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy and gracious God, your steadfast love abides with us throughout all of time and space, and you teach us to trust in your ways of righteousness. May we heed your call to live in peace with one another that we might live grateful lives not weighed down by fear but blessed by your grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Jeremiah 20:7-13

A reading from Jeremiah.

*Jeremiah accuses God of forcing him into a ministry that brings him only contempt and persecution. Yet Jeremiah is confident that God will be a strong protector against his enemies and commits his life into God's hands.*

<sup>7</sup>O LORD, you have enticed me,  
and I was enticed;

you have overpowered me,  
and you have prevailed.

I have become a laughingstock all day long;  
everyone mocks me.

<sup>8</sup>For whenever I speak, I must cry out,  
I must shout, "Violence and destruction!"

For the word of the LORD has become for me  
a reproach and derision all day long.

<sup>9</sup>If I say, "I will not mention him,  
or speak any more in his name,"

then within me there is something like a burning fire  
shut up in my bones;

I am weary with holding it in,  
and I cannot.

<sup>10</sup>For I hear many whispering:  
"Terror is all around!"

Denounce him! Let us denounce him!"

All my close friends  
are watching for me to stumble.

"Perhaps he can be enticed,  
and we can prevail against him,  
and take our revenge on him."

<sup>11</sup>But the LORD is with me like a dread warrior;  
therefore my persecutors will stumble,  
and they will not prevail.

They will be greatly shamed,  
for they will not succeed.

Their eternal dishonor  
will never be forgotten.

<sup>12</sup>O LORD of hosts, you test the righteous,  
you see the heart and the mind;  
let me see your retribution upon them,  
for to you I have committed my cause.

<sup>13</sup>Sing to the LORD;  
praise the LORD!

For he has delivered the life of the needy  
from the hands of evildoers.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

#### **PSALM: Psalm 69:7-10, 16-18**

<sup>7</sup>Surely, for your sake I have suffered reproach,  
and shame has covered my face.

<sup>8</sup>**I have become a stranger to my own kindred,  
an alien to my mother's children.**

<sup>9</sup>Zeal for your house has eaten me up;  
the scorn of those who scorn you has fallen upon me.

<sup>10</sup>**I humbled myself with fasting,  
but that was turned to my reproach.**

<sup>16</sup>Answer me, O LORD, for your love is kind;  
in your great compassion, turn to me.

<sup>17</sup>**Hide not your face from your servant;  
be swift and answer me, for I am in distress.**

<sup>18</sup>Draw near to me and redeem me;  
because of my enemies deliver me.

#### **SECOND READING: Romans 6:1b-11**

A reading from Romans.

*In baptism we were incorporated into the reality of Christ's death and resurrection. We have been made new in Christ through his death and resurrection to live freed from sin.*

<sup>1b</sup>Should we continue in sin in order that grace may abound? <sup>2</sup>By no means! How can we who died to sin go on living in it? <sup>3</sup>Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? <sup>4</sup>Therefore we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too

might walk in newness of life.

<sup>5</sup>For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. <sup>6</sup>We know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and we might no longer be enslaved to sin. <sup>7</sup>For whoever has died is freed from sin. <sup>8</sup>But if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. <sup>9</sup>We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. <sup>10</sup>The death he died, he died to sin, once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. <sup>11</sup>So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (p. 205)

**GOSPEL: Matthew 10:24-39**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus warns his disciples that their ministry in his name will meet with opposition. However, he assures them that they need not fear for the truth will come to light. Life is found in Christ.*

[Jesus said to the twelve:] <sup>24</sup>“A disciple is not above the teacher, nor a slave above the master; <sup>25</sup>it is enough for the disciple to be like the teacher, and the slave like the master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household!

<sup>26</sup>“So have no fear of them; for nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known. <sup>27</sup>What I say to you in the dark, tell in the light; and what you hear whispered, proclaim from the housetops. <sup>28</sup>Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell. <sup>29</sup>Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. <sup>30</sup>And even the hairs of your head are all counted. <sup>31</sup>So do not be afraid; you are of more value than many sparrows.

<sup>32</sup>“Everyone therefore who acknowledges me before others, I also will acknowledge before my Father in heaven; <sup>33</sup>but whoever denies me before others, I also will deny before my Father in heaven.

<sup>34</sup>“Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

<sup>35</sup>For I have come to set a man against his father,  
and a daughter against her mother,  
and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law;

<sup>36</sup>and one’s foes will be members of one’s own household.

<sup>37</sup>Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; <sup>38</sup>and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. <sup>39</sup>Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## SERMON

O Lord, send your Spirit into our midst and entice us and enable us with the power of your Word, that we might be strengthened to hear your call and live according to your ways of righteousness and grace, through Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Undoubtedly you all have heard about the submersible vessel that went missing last Sunday morning while taking a group of tourists down to see the sunken remains of the Titanic. And if you have heard of that, you probably also heard that they found the wreckage of said submersible about 4 days later, with the best guess being that the vessel imploded under the immense water pressure at that depth and perhaps poor safety standards. At least in my circles, this story caught the internet by storm. People talking about this and that and picking apart the whole story.

But what really happened? Some rich people died after paying \$250,000 each for a ticket to see the legendary Titanic. Don't get me wrong, it's a sad story and I feel for the loved ones that these people have left behind. But did you hear about another water-related incident where a boat carrying some 750 refugees and migrants capsized off the coast of Greece? This happened just 5 days before the Titanic submersible story, and yet it didn't get nearly as much media attention, at least, not in my circles.

In fact, the only reason I heard about it was when someone in the comments of an article about the Titanic thing actually said something like, "5 rich people go missing and everyone is talking about it, yet a boat full of poor refugees flips over and no one cares."

And while it might be likely that many of you have actually heard and were following both stories, I can't help but to think of how much truth that comment carries. We have tragedies happen in our world every day but it seems like the only ones that are interesting to the masses are the ones that involve celebrities, the rich, or maybe the people we might relate to or perhaps want to be more.

Because to be honest, even though by North American standards I don't have much, I do relate more to the rich than I do to the poor. Even as a racialized person I see myself more as privileged than marginalized. And even though I'll never be able to afford it, I can see myself going down to see the Titanic more than desperately escaping my country in search of safety.

We see what we see, we read what we read, and we subconsciously interpret things the way we interpret them. This isn't a right or wrong thing whatsoever, but it's just something that I believe is ingrained in us and what we just naturally do, unless we are very intentional in changing the lens through which we see the world.

Now you might be thinking, what on earth does this have to do with the 4th Sunday after Pentecost, which just happens to be one of my favourite Sundays after Pentecost? Well, when I read the texts for today, I felt a bit conflicted with the gospel texts. I mean, if you know, you know. But this just doesn't sound like Jesus to you, does it? It's hard for us to relate.

The Jesus we know is about love, compassion, and forgiveness. But this whole, "I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" business is so out of character that it's almost uncomfortable. I would think that it doesn't sit well with most of us and is something we find hard to understand. Yet, I personally know people that take this text literally and to heart.

They say that this is the proof that we shouldn't be so accepting, we don't need to be gracious, we can't live in community with those who see it differently. Instead, we should stand up for what we believe in, lift up a militant and works-based God, and shun those who don't agree with us.

Like, these folk that I know truly believe this.

And so I'm torn. I look at this text and I can't make heads or tails out of it. Have I been wrong about Jesus this whole time? Have I misunderstood his whole mission? Have I wasted my life believing in and following an ideal that actually isn't what I thought it was from the start?

But then I take a step back, think about what I know of Jesus, how I understand the effect that he's had on my life, what principles that he taught that influenced my faith, and I have to come to the conclusion that these words of Jesus actually aren't saying what they sound like they're saying. As with many interpretations of scripture, of modern day events, of life in general, context is very important. It wouldn't be right to just cherry pick a small portion and take it exactly at face value without considering the surrounding story and the driving themes and principles.

And so I look at the whole passage that we get for today. I consider the other texts that were chosen to accompany this text for this 4th Sunday after Pentecost Year A. I think about the whole gospel of Matthew and what his purpose of writing has always been. Then I put it in the context of all of scripture to figure out what is actually going on here.

And even then? Different people can get wildly different conclusions. This is the scary part, yes, but it's also a very liberating and telling part. What I mean is that scripture, our bibles, this living and breathing Word of God, is so very full, rich, and so useful for teaching, reproof, correction, and training in righteousness. Paul told Timothy that, and I believe it.

Scripture teaches us to be a better us, not how to reprimand others to be more like us. It's good for reproof, revealing to us where we are lacking, not acting as a measuring rod in which we can judge where others are lacking. Our bibles are useful for correction, to show us what we can focus on and how we can change, not for giving us permission to point our fingers at others and tell them how they need to shape up. This living and breathing Word of God is meant to train us in righteousness, not to make us feel good, pat ourselves on our backs as righteous, and shame those who aren't on our level.

See as it's been said time and again, scripture comforts the agitated, and agitates the comfortable.

And so how we read this passage is very telling of what is in our hearts. It reminds us of what we are like deep down in our lives. And it reveals to us what types of doctrines we put our faith in.

Earlier this week there was this meme that has been floating around social media, and it simply says this:

Two people read the same Bible.  
One sees reasons to love.  
The other reasons to hate.  
One sees unity.  
The other division.  
One finds prejudice.  
The other equality.  
One discovers compassion.  
The other, indifference.  
One goodwill.  
The other malice.  
Two people, one book. One Book, two views.  
The book is a mirror.  
The reflection is you.

N.W.

Now, if this isn't bringing a sword into our hearts and minds, I don't know what is. I see Jesus saying that he isn't bringing peace into the current world systems, to accept the inequality of our hierarchies and power structures, to think that the marginalizing and shaming of others is ok. Instead, he brings a sword to the injustices, to the oppression, to the sin of the world, to agitate all those who are comfortable with their own privilege and insiderness, and to comfort all those who are disadvantaged in their outsidership.

So while we cannot help but to see things how we see them, we can recognise what it is that we see and put it up against the rest of scripture and the themes of love, grace, and peace, and ask what do our interpretations and understandings tell us about us. We can look in our hearts and discern what kinds of hurt or anger or even hate we might be holding on to, and allow the sword of Christ to surgically remove it, that we might feel the fullness of God's love and forgiveness and embrace this wide, diverse, and communal body of Christ that welcomes us all and gives us a value and worth that graciously washes away our shame and guilt.

See, we might relate more to the powerful, we might identify more with the rich, we might even see ourselves more worthy to bear the sword to cut others out of our lives, but we are called to live in community, we are led to show compassion, and we are empowered to love just as we first were loved.

So in this season after Pentecost, may we continually look at ourselves, allowing scripture to comfort and agitate, that we might more fully live in community with each other and holding onto the peace that surpasses all understanding, graciously given to us and all people through the life and ministry of Jesus our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Will You Come and Follow Me (#798)

**CREED** (p. 104)

Together with the unified church on earth, 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 live in peace with God, each other, and ourselves, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "by your purifying mercy, O God," and you all are invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your compassionate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we are not beyond reproach yet you remove our shame from us and show us a grace that is beyond understanding. May we be strengthened always by your love, that our witness in the world be faithful and pleasing to you. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partner Anglican Church of Canada; our bishops Kathy, Larry, Sid, Jason, Michael, and Susan, and all our pastors and congregations of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for out of our own BC Synod: Good Shepherd Lutheran Church in Coquitlam and their pastor Eric Krushel; and Trinity Lutheran Church in Delta and their pastor Jennifer Wilson. By your compassionate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.



O Lord, you have created everything around us: this planet, the forests, the lands, the seas, our communities, and our families, and you welcome us to live together not as strangers but as kindred. Strengthen our stewardship over all that you have made, that we might learn to live in harmony with all of creation. By your compassionate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, together we share a zeal for your house, but there continues to be scorn between the nations and peoples. Lead us all through elected officials, governments, and politicians to places where we needed fear the threat of violence but be comforted by the community in your love. We lift up in prayer the areas of the world that face war and 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 compassionate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we are humbled by your providence and healing, and your love is kind and reaches out to us all. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that the community of your kingdom can be seen and felt and relied upon to lift us up. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Bev and family; Sukhwant; Cari; John; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; William; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

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

O Lord, you draw near to us and you redeem us into your eternal presence and community with you and all the saints, and we are blessed by your love. May the lives of those we've loved and lost remain in our hearts forever, that their faith continue to inspire us always. By your compassionate mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your welcoming love, shown to 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, majestic and merciful, compassionate and Creator of all that is, you have given us a life beyond ourselves and joined us together with you in community in your kingdom, and you lead us on paths of righteousness and mercy. And when the time was right, you sent to us Jesus, your Son, to teach and heal and show us the truth of your love.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it 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, blessed it, and passed it around so they could drink from it, 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 through this bread and cup that we see how we are joined together, brought into community, and made to be people of God, together proclaiming this, the 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 our Saviour Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)**

Gathered to serve God and one another 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**

Take and eat, God's welcoming love and grace for us all.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 208)

My Shepherd, You Supply My Need (#782)

Precious Lord, Take My Hand (#773)

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we have again been fed by your Word and your truth, and have been nourished by your love and grace. May we be strengthened by the power of your Spirit to go out into the world as your people, with your light shining on us and through us, to show your love to all whom we encounter, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

**SENDING****BLESSING**

Now may the Creator God bless you and guide you,  
the Crucified God hold you and guard you,  
and the Compassionate God lead you to live a life of trust and deep joy, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** If You But Trust in God to Guide You (#769)

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, believe that you are loved.

**Thanks be to God.**

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