

## **GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

### **EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA**

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### **Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost September 10, 2023 ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight**

Conflict is a part of relationships and life in community. Jesus' words in today's gospel are often used in situations having to do with church discipline. The prophet Ezekiel tells of warning the wicked to turn from their ways, and Paul reminds us that love is the fulfilling of the law. We gather in the name of Christ, assured that he is present among us with gifts of peace and reconciliation.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping 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 hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together in the name of the Lord, who teaches us the statutes and understanding that keep us in community. Our hearts are inclined to God's decrees and our eyes are turned away from beholding falsehood. For we have been promised the life that truly is life, where we are saved from reproach and injustice, but clothed with joy and righteousness, enlivening us as God's people, now and always. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING SONG:** All Are Welcome (#641)

### GREETING

The welcoming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the compassionate love of God, and the empathetic communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**CANTICLE OF PRAISE** (p. 185)

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving God, you do not abandon us even in our wicked ways, but you turn to us, call out to us, and welcome us back into your arms of unending grace and love, where we are reconciled to you, neighbour, and all the saints, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Ezekiel 33:7-11

A reading from Ezekiel.

*God appointed Ezekiel as a sentinel for the house of Israel. Ezekiel must faithfully convey God's warnings to the people. Remarkably, God—who is about to attack Jerusalem—gives a warning with the hope that repentance will make the attack unnecessary.*

<sup>7</sup>So you, mortal, I have made a sentinel for the house of Israel; whenever you hear a word from my mouth, you shall give them warning from me. <sup>8</sup>If I say to the wicked, "O wicked ones, you shall surely die," and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but their blood I will require at your hand. <sup>9</sup>But if you warn the wicked to turn from their ways, and they do not turn from their ways, the wicked shall die in their iniquity, but you will have saved your life.

<sup>10</sup>Now you, mortal, say to the house of Israel, Thus you have said: "Our transgressions and our sins weigh upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?" <sup>11</sup>Say to them, As I live, says the Lord GOD, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from their ways and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM: Psalm 119:33-40

<sup>33</sup>Teach me, O LORD, the way of your statutes,  
and I shall keep it to the end.

<sup>34</sup>**Give me understanding, and I shall keep your teaching;  
I shall keep it with all my heart.**

<sup>35</sup>Lead me in the path of your commandments,  
for that is my desire.

<sup>36</sup>**Incline my heart to your decrees  
and not to unjust gain.**

<sup>37</sup>Turn my eyes from beholding falsehood;  
give me life in your way.

<sup>38</sup>**Fulfill your promise to your servant,  
which is for those who fear you.**

<sup>39</sup>Turn away the reproach that I dread,  
because your judgments are good.

<sup>40</sup>**Behold, I long for your commandments;  
by your righteousness enliven me.**

## **SECOND READING: Romans 13:8-14**

A reading from Romans.

*The obligation of Christians is to love one another and so fulfill the heart and goal of the law. Clothes make the person as we “put on the Lord Jesus Christ” and live today in light of the future God has in store for us.*

<sup>8</sup>Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. <sup>9</sup>The commandments, “You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet”; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, “Love your neighbor as yourself.” <sup>10</sup>Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

<sup>11</sup>Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; <sup>12</sup>the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; <sup>13</sup>let us live honorably as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in debauchery and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. <sup>14</sup>Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)**

### **GOSPEL: Matthew 18:15-20**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus offers practical advice to his disciples on how individuals—and the church as a whole—should go about restoring relationships when one member has sinned against another.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>15</sup>“If another member of the church sins against you, go and point out the fault when the two of you are alone. If the member listens to you, you have regained that one. <sup>16</sup>But if you are not listened to, take one or two others along with you, so that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. <sup>17</sup>If the member refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if the offender refuses to listen even to the church, let such a one be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. <sup>18</sup>Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

<sup>19</sup>Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. <sup>20</sup>For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.”

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

O God, may our hearts and minds be awakened by your Word, that we might have the understanding of the Spirit on how to live in your ways of love and grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

So as you've noticed, I am back. We had a great time away, and honestly for the first time in a long time I do feel somewhat refreshed. I don't know if it's because the Canadian Lutheran and Anglican Youth Gathering was very fun and fulfilling although it was a lot of work, or the trip I took with my family right after came with a lot of new and good experiences although it was really expensive, or the fact that the worry and stress around the pandemic is pretty much behind us, although my family and I caught it anyway. Whatever it was, I feel pretty good and am ready to be back here with you all (not like I have a choice).

I did have a lot of fun on our trip though. With the exception of my wife, this was our first time there. So everything was new: the language on the most part, the food in a big part, and the culture in very surprising part. The funny thing is that before we went, a few of my friends warned me about how snooty the people can be in Quebec, so I was kind of expecting the worst.

So we were surprised with how very gracious and hospitable the people were. Like, they were really friendly. Locals saying hi to us on the street, restaurants and shops being so accommodating due to our very limited to non-existent French, and just how generally welcoming they were was really a breath of fresh air when compared to... well... here. So it was nice.

Until it wasn't.

There was a thing that happened. It was our second day in Montreal, and we were visiting the famous Mount Royal, from which the city got its name. I don't know if you have been there before, but if you take the hike up, it's quite a hike. Not as gruelling as the Grouse Grind but it was enough for us who did it to feel the burn. So we were tired, thirsty, and maybe a bit grumpy as we were making our way down a different easier and much wider trail. We were walking down on the right side of the path, which is what we just instinctively do, but one of our sons was so tired he ran up ahead to sit on a bench on the left side of the path. Our daughter, in spite of our tired and perhaps exasperated warnings to not, slowly and lazily wandered to the left of the path to join him. We saw an older fellow riding his bike up the path on the left, and we told her several times to get out of his way.

She was tired too, and as you know when kids get tired, they just don't give a crap. But she saw the man as well and came back to the right a bit until he passed at his very leisurely pace. We told her to stay close but she started wandering back to the left just as I heard another bike,

considerably faster than the first, barreling down the path. I remember yelling at her to come back but by the time she decided to heed to my voice, it was too late.

I heard the screeching of brakes as the second biker skidded sideways down the gravelly path, dropping him to the ground. His bike kept going a couple feet, enough to knock our daughter's feet out from under her and she fell as well. I got there a split second too late and immediately picked her up and checked her over. No major blood spots or disfigured limbs, so I handed her to my wife and turned to the biker and asked him if he's ok. And this next part just went so fast.

This guy let us have it. He didn't call us names or anything but he did very clearly question our intelligence and knowledge on how these paths work. I apologized profusely and looked him over visually and noticed that he was bleeding a little. But he kept yelling at us to the point that I made sure I stood between him and my family. I asked him again if he's ok, and he responded with a "I don't know, I fell pretty hard" as he looked his bike over and sort of pretended that it was completely trashed as though he wanted me to compensate him for damages. I didn't. His bike was fine.

I wasn't though. I was shook. I didn't even know what to think as finally the second biker left. The first biker we encountered earlier kindly came back and he assured us that it wasn't our fault. He said that the other guy was going way too fast and is an idiot (those were his words), and he extended his hand to our daughter and said "you're ok, you didn't do anything wrong" in a very gentle and grandfatherly way.

I appreciated his gesture, but as I thought about it, I was angry. I was angry at how the second biker held himself, how he instantly blamed us for what happened, and how he didn't even apologize or care that he knocked over a little kid. I was angry at how everything played out. And maybe above all, I was angry at myself for not doing more to stand up for our daughter, for not protecting her, or at very least, for not using these principles from today's gospel lesson to show this guy just how wrong he is and how bad his transgressions are.

I mean, that's what this is for, right? According to this, when someone wrongs you, like hits your kid with their bike, it is our God-give right to call them out on it. I should have done that. And if they don't listen, then we could bring in a third party to back us up on how bad they are. I had that with my family who saw the whole thing. And if that doesn't work, which probably wouldn't have with this guy, then I can take it to a higher power, in this case maybe that other local who admitted that this biker was an idiot. It should have been in the bag for me as really, he was in the wrong and I had the biblical precedent to prove it. Ugh, if only I had read this passage earlier so it'd be in my back pocket ready to use against this guy.

Because how dare he? He hurt my daughter, he bruised my ego, and he tarnished the image I had of the people of Montreal up to this point. I needed him to know his wrongdoing. I should have done more.

After we calmed down a bit, I went up to our daughter and picked her up, which wasn't easy as I had to navigate around her bumps and scrapes. I held her and said, "I'm sorry that I didn't protect you more, and I'm sorry that I didn't stand up for you against him. Are you sad that I didn't yell at that guy?" And what she said in response was probably the biggest shock I had

the whole trip. She looked at me deadpan in the eyes and said, “No, because if you yelled at him, you’d be just as bad as he is.”

Who the heck raised this kid? But dang, she was right. I just wanted him to hurt like how he hurt us. At that point it wasn’t about healing, or community, or any kind of reconciliation. It was about retaliation and revenge. And our daughter saw that it was wrong.

And so then these guidelines that we get out of the Matthew text hit me in a new light. I can see how these texts aren’t about accusations, pointing fingers, or shaming. Now I can see how they’re about relationship, grace, and forgiveness.

It’s about smoothing over conflict, yes, but it also leaves room for us to see what our role is in the situation, how we might have participated in the wrong, and maybe even learn to take a bit of the responsibility. I can see that Jesus isn’t teaching us how to see who is at fault, but showing us how to reconcile, heal, and re-engage in community with each other. I can see how the goal isn’t to fight and cast blame, but it’s about opening our hearts to love the other, just as we have first been loved.

This isn’t easy, as some people are really hard to get along with, but we have a God that acts as our support, our strength, and our example and inspiration. For Jesus promises us that when two or more are gathered in his name, he is surely there with us. And thanks be to God, he totally is. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Love Divine, All Loves Excelling (#631)

### **CREED**

Together with all of God’s loved, forgiven, and redeemed people, 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 into truth and reconciliation with God and neighbour, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, “by your redeeming mercy, O God,” and you are invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you teach us the way of your statutes and we endeavour to keep them to the end. But in our shortcomings, you offer us a grace and forgiveness that allows us to return to you and your community always. May our lives and ministry reflect this grace upon all people, that all might one day know of your love and righteousness. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, pastors, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for out of our own BC Synod Faith Lutheran Church in Powell River and their Anglican pastor Paula Sampson; and for Our Saviour’s Lutheran Church in Prince George and their pastor Fleming Blishen, and all the pastors that assist them while Pastor Fleming is on leave. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, lead us in the paths of your commandments, which reveal to us how to care for and live with all people, all creatures, and all that you have made. Continue to strengthen our stewardship of this planet, that its beauty and wonder be restored as it continues to house life for the generations to come. We pray for the areas of the world that has been affected by harsh weather and natural disasters and especially the wild fires that we experienced this past summer, that all might find safety and security as they restore and rebuild. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, our hearts are inclined to your decrees and we resist the injustices and greed of the world. Be with us, the whole human race, as we continue to grow and learn to live with one another in peace. Help us to put away pride and selfishness and embrace the righteous grace and forgiveness, that your love might be reflected onto all the world. We pray for the healing of all the nations and countries that face war, violence, 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 redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we know that you are faithful and we trust in your promises of wholeness and goodness. Bring your healing to all those among us who call out to your name and lead us to the green pastures and still waters of your kingdom. Especially we lift up in prayer Beulah; Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Ernie; Sukwant; John; Cari; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; William; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Allen; Matt; Lucas; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

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

O Lord, we long for the righteousness of your commands as we are enlivened by your promise of welcome into your eternal kingdom with you and all the saints. May we always be inspired by the faith of the saints in the past, that we could together move into the future with hope in all that we do. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your grace and welcome, shown 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 shows us how to live in peace and reconciliation with each other, as we are joined with the choirs of angels, hosts of heaven, and church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

### **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 190)**

### **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Holy and almighty God, we give you thanks for being with us throughout our lives, throughout our ups and downs, and throughout our joys and hurts. And you continue to be with us regardless of where we may be in life. And in your being with us, you reveal to us your ways of truth, righteousness, and reconciliation. You reclaim us as your people, showing us how to live in community and right relationship, full of welcome and compassion for all. And in the fullness of time, you send to us your Son Jesus, who set the example of grace and love, reminding us of how we are redeemed through your sole providence.

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

And then 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."

It is in this bread and cup that we see our welcome as your people, our redemption as your children, our forgiveness as your beloved saints, even as we together contemplate 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, bringing us up out of the depths and joining us with each other and all the saints, through the work of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**



## **LORD'S PRAYER**

As we are welcomed together as reconciled people of God, 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, know God's reconciliation with us all.  
**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 191)  
Healer of our Every Ill (#612)  
Just As I Am, without One Plea (#592)

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding and nourishing us with your truth and love, and showing us your ways of reconciliation and redemption. Strengthen us in our daily lives, that we might be to all signs of your welcome and grace, through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

May the love of God pursue you,  
the grace of Christ overtake you,  
and the Holy Spirit flow through you,  
filling you with love, peace, and mercy, now and forever.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** Sent Forth by God's Blessing (#547)

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, love God and neighbour in all that you do.  
**Thanks be to God.**