

## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

### EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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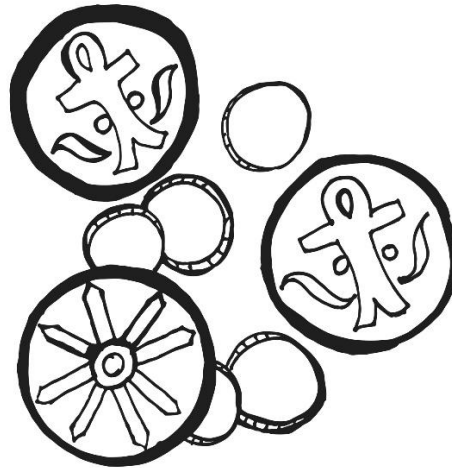
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### Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 24, 2023

### ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

Matthew narrates one of Jesus' controversial parables in which Jesus says that the reign of God is like that of a landowner who pays his workers the same wage no matter what time of day they began to work. When God changes God's mind about punishing Nineveh for their evil ways, Jonah is angry. Yet God is gracious and merciful, abounding in steadfast love. In baptism we receive the grace of God that is freely given to all. As Martin Luther wrote, in the presence of God's mercy we are all beggars.

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 hən̓q̓əmiñəm (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together this day in the name of our king, to exalt and bless God's name forever and ever. For great is the Lord and worthy to be praised, there is no end of God's greatness. The generations will praise all the powerful works of God, and speak of the glorious splendour of God's majesty. And so we worship and remember the Lord our God, so is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

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

### GREETING

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

**And also with you.**

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

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Generous God, you come to us again and again, calling us, gathering us, and empowering us to love and serve. Increase your Spirit in us, that we might see your generosity with glad hearts in joyful communion with you and all the saints, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Jonah 3:10-4:11

A reading from Jonah.

*After Jonah's short sermon in 3:4, the Ninevites all repented and God decided to spare the city. Jonah objected to this and became even more angry when God ordered a worm to destroy a plant that was providing shade. The book ends with a question that challenges any who are not ready to forgive: You, Jonah, are all worked up about a bush, but shouldn't I be concerned about a hundred and twenty thousand Ninevites?*

<sup>10</sup>When God saw what [the people of Ninevah] did, how they turned from their evil ways, God changed his mind about the calamity that he had said he would bring upon them; and he did not do it.

<sup>4:1</sup>But this was very displeasing to Jonah, and he became angry. <sup>2</sup>He prayed to the LORD and said, "O LORD! Is not this what I said while I was still in my own country? That is why I fled to Tarshish at the beginning; for I knew that you are a gracious God and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love, and ready to relent from punishing. <sup>3</sup>And now, O LORD, please take my life from me, for it is better for me to die than to live." <sup>4</sup>And the LORD said, "Is it right for you to be angry?" <sup>5</sup>Then Jonah went out of the city and sat down east of the city, and made a booth for himself there. He sat under it in the shade, waiting to see what would become of the city.

<sup>6</sup>The LORD God appointed a bush, and made it come up over Jonah, to give shade over his head, to save him from his discomfort; so Jonah was very happy about the bush. <sup>7</sup>But when dawn came up the next day, God appointed a worm that attacked the bush, so that it withered. <sup>8</sup>When the sun rose, God prepared a sultry east wind, and the sun beat down on the head of Jonah so that he was faint and asked that he might die. He said, "It is better for me to die than to live."

<sup>9</sup>But God said to Jonah, "Is it right for you to be angry about the bush?" And he said, "Yes,

angry enough to die.”<sup>10</sup>Then the LORD said, “You are concerned about the bush, for which you did not labor and which you did not grow; it came into being in a night and perished in a night.<sup>11</sup>And should I not be concerned about Nineveh, that great city, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand persons who do not know their right hand from their left, and also many animals?”

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 145:1-8**

<sup>1</sup>I will exalt you, my God and king,  
and bless your name forever and ever.

<sup>2</sup>**Every day will I bless you  
and praise your name forever and ever.**

<sup>3</sup>Great is the LORD and greatly to be praised!  
There is no end to your greatness.

<sup>4</sup>**One generation shall praise your works to another  
and shall declare your power.**

<sup>5</sup>I will speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty  
and all your marvelous works.

<sup>6</sup>**They shall tell of the might of your wondrous acts,  
and I will recount your greatness.**

<sup>7</sup>They shall publish the remembrance of your great goodness;  
they shall sing joyfully of your righteousness.

<sup>8</sup>**The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,  
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.**

**SECOND READING: Philippians 1:21-30**

A reading from Philippians.

*Paul writes to the Philippians from prison. Though he is uncertain about the outcome of his imprisonment, he is committed to the ministry of the gospel and calls on the Philippians to live lives that reflect and enhance the gospel mission.*

<sup>21</sup>For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup>If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. <sup>23</sup>I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; <sup>24</sup>but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup>Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, <sup>26</sup>so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

<sup>27</sup>Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup>and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God’s doing. <sup>29</sup>For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—<sup>30</sup>since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

### GOSPEL: Matthew 20:1-16

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus tells a parable about God's generosity, challenging the common assumption that God rewards people according to what they have earned or deserve.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>1</sup>"The kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. <sup>2</sup>After agreeing with the laborers for the usual daily wage, he sent them into his vineyard. <sup>3</sup>When he went out about nine o'clock, he saw others standing idle in the marketplace; <sup>4</sup>and he said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard, and I will pay you whatever is right.' So they went. <sup>5</sup>When he went out again about noon and about three o'clock, he did the same. <sup>6</sup>And about five o'clock he went out and found others standing around; and he said to them, 'Why are you standing here idle all day?' <sup>7</sup>They said to him, 'Because no one has hired us.' He said to them, 'You also go into the vineyard.' <sup>8</sup>When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his manager, 'Call the laborers and give them their pay, beginning with the last and then going to the first.' <sup>9</sup>When those hired about five o'clock came, each of them received the usual daily wage. <sup>10</sup>Now when the first came, they thought they would receive more; but each of them also received the usual daily wage. <sup>11</sup>And when they received it, they grumbled against the landowner, <sup>12</sup>saying, 'These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.' <sup>13</sup>But he replied to one of them, 'Friend, I am doing you no wrong; did you not agree with me for the usual daily wage? <sup>14</sup>Take what belongs to you and go; I choose to give to this last the same as I give to you. <sup>15</sup>Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or are you envious because I am generous?' <sup>16</sup>So the last will be first, and the first will be last."

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### SERMON

Gracious and generous God, may your Word challenge us this day, that your Spirit might blossom in us a yearning for your righteousness and faith, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Throughout our lives we have faced many things. While each of our stories are unique and different, I'm sure that many, if not all of us share some very similar experiences and situations. We're not so different from each other when it comes to our being human. We've had ups and down, highs and lows, joys and hardships. We've felt loved and hated, included and excluded, happy and sad. We've been pleased with life, displeased with life, and maybe perhaps at times, even angry with life.

I know I have. I've been angry at a lot of things before. Really angry, even. But in all my years, in all the things that I have gone through, with all that life has ever thrown at me, not once have I ever felt so angry that I could die. That just sounds like more anger than I'm capable of feeling. Something pretty horrific must have to happen that would grind my gears to that extent. Something pretty infuriating must have to take place to get that far under my skin. Something so awful, so unimaginable, so incredibly bad would have to occur to make my anger

so strong that it'd actually kill me. That's like Incredible Hulk level angry. So yeah, I'm pretty sure I never got to that point before. At least I've never turned into a large green gamma radiation infused monster.

However, we do read about this kind of anger in our first reading for today. Jonah, the swallowed-by-a-big-fish guy, claimed not just once, not twice, but *thrice*, that he was angry enough to die. But what happened to him? What caused his massive indignation? What changed his mind about life that made it no longer worth living? Well, a bush that gave him shade withered up and died, so he was no longer in the shade. Right?? Oh yeah, and he was also a super successful and effective preacher that through his words, a whole village was saved. Yeah, no wonder this guy was mad.

We look at this story and we can't help but shake our head. We think about the amount of selfishness and self-centeredness it must take to be this angry about these particular situations that really aren't so bad. We might even think about how it'd be impossible for us to ever feel this way, because we aren't such unreasonable people.

Or are we?

Don't get me wrong, I'm not pointing my fingers at anyone in particular, especially none of you as you don't make me so angry that I want to die, but I'm just saying it seems like our society in general can get pretty angry over things... things that I don't think really warrant that level of anger.

I mean, we have protests, rallies, and movements in the name of this anger. We hear of disputes, violence, and even wars when this anger is allowed to manifest. We see the shaming, accusations and assumptions, and a lot of hate toward the other with whom we just can't seem to agree with.

So yes, there is a lot of anger in our society. And quite honestly, with many of the issues we face, I see a lot of anger on both sides of the fence. It's like no one, no matter what they believe or stand for, is free from it. In recent protests, like as recent as this past week, I saw footage of verbal abuse, spitting in spite, and people carrying signs that were just nasty. I saw name calling, finger pointing, and all this hate mongering coming from every which way because it's like no one can take the time to see and understand where the other side is coming from.

Honestly, if everyone is just angry at everyone else, what's the point? Can the anger actually be effective and productive in bringing out compromise and agreement? Can the calling each other out actually get people to change their minds? Can the yelling, the condescending labelling, and even the violence that can come out of these disagreements ever bring out rational thought and discussion and a desire to work toward reconciliation?

Anger just begets more anger, really.

But I get it, we can't always help how we feel. We can't always control how we react. We can't exactly tame our triggers and hurts and the injustices against us that lead us down these paths. It isn't our fault that life can be so unjust, unfair, and have the audacity to treat others as equal to *us*.

Wait, what?

That's what Jesus' parable for us today is about, isn't it? The workers who were chosen first were grumbling about the actions of the landowner, and not because they were being treated unfairly. They weren't angry because they were getting paid less than what they earned. They weren't protesting because they were somehow wronged.

No, they were grumbling because others were given as much as they were given. They were angry because their judgement of what others should deserve was wrong. They were protesting because the landowner, the rich one, the one with ultimate power and authority, was generous, gracious, and abounding in steadfast love.

And that, right there, is the problem.

Just like we talked about in the past few weeks, there is a real problem in our society where we're just taught to see others as worse than us, not as deserving as us, less worthy than us. We've learned that we gain more power when those around us have less of it. We've been conditioned to believe that the better we are, the more we get and thus those who have less than us aren't as good as us, don't work as hard as we do, aren't *human enough*. And when we take away the humanity of others, we naturally think that they cannot be as welcomed as we are, as valued as we are, as *loved* as we are.

To be honest, that's what I see in these protests and even the counter protests that happen throughout our history and beyond. I see the protesters dehumanizing the other and causing more division and turmoil. I see our want to be praised and others to be cursed keeping us from seeing how we can respect others not just in spite of difference, but because of them. I see this need that we have for us to stay unequal, this insatiable hunger for power, this desire to have those we think are beneath us to be treated unfairly, holding us in captivity of anger and indignation.

See, going back to the parable, those that we hired last were probably exactly that: those that were deemed worthless, not strong enough to get the job done, those that no one wanted to hire because they just weren't good enough. But this landowner hired them anyway. Sure, it was at the end of the day so they didn't work as long as the rest, but maybe that was an act of grace as well. He gave them only what they could handle, expecting nothing more than they could do, honoured them for who they are.

And the others were angry at that?

These young, virile, able-bodied workers were grumbling because some old, frail, physically challenged workers were treated with respect? These strong, well-liked, popular people were angry because some weak, over-looked, marginalized people were given some dignity? These privileged folk, in their inability to recognise their own privilege, were protesting against the landowner because some severely underprivileged were shown that even they, in all their shortcomings and difficulties, can be shown grace and love?

I mean, shouldn't this be a reason to celebrate? Something to rejoice in? Something to be proud of and proclaimed from the rooftops? Our God is gracious and kind, generous and merciful, abundant in blessing and love and all are welcome at the table that is set. All are

welcome in the kingdom and family. All are welcome to know and see and feel the salvation of God.

See the thing is, salvation isn't about what we've earned by working hard, but it is literally for those who are unable to save themselves. It isn't about what we deserve from thinking that we are better than those we despise, but it is for the sinner who can only rely on God's grace. It isn't even about following the rules doing what we think we're supposed to do. Rather, it's about God deciding to be generous. It's about God wanting to extend God's arms in welcome to everyone regardless of class, physical make up, or gender identity. It's about God being all love for all people for all time.

My friends, this is our God, one who forgives graciously, abounds in steadfast love, and is slow to anger. So maybe we can learn to be as well.

In this season after Pentecost, may we see the equality given to us by God, a God who welcomes, saves, and loves us all just the same. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Lord of Light (#688)

### **CREED**

Together with all of God's people in equality, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

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

### **PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION**

Led into compassion and community, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "Lord, in your eternal mercy," and the congregation is invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, in your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we exalt you and your blessed name forever and ever, and we remember the works of your hands for all people. May our lives and ministry reflection your love and grace always, that your presence in the world may be known to all people. We remember in prayer our

neighbouring faith communities; those who use our building for work, worship, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, pastors, ministries, and members of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for out of our own BC Synod: Living Faith Lutheran Church in Powell River and their interim pastor Richard Hergesheimer; and Lord of Life Mission in Sandspit and their interim pastor Jim Whaley. Lord, in your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you are worthy to be praised as there is no end to your greatness as we can see in all the wonder and beauty that you have made. May our stewardship of this planet be strengthened and our care for it pleasing to you. Lord, in your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, your glorious splendour is apparent in your marvelous works, and we stand in awe of your majesty. May we all gravitate toward your ways of truth and reconciliation, that all the nations of this world might one day live in peace and harmony. We pray especially for the countries that face war, violence, and political turmoil, that they be blessed with your wisdom and righteousness. Also we pray for those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. Lord, in your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you are gracious and full of compassion, and you rain on us your steadfast love and healing. Be with all those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your hand of peace be upon us all. Especially we pray for Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bryan and Chona; Bev and family; Sukhwant; John; Cari; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; William; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Allen; Matt; Lucas; Bob; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...  
Lord, in your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, we will always remember your great goodness and sing for joy of your righteousness in welcoming us all to live with you and all the saints in eternity. May we also remember the lives of those that we've loved and lost, that they might always be an inspiration for our faith and service in the world. Lord, in your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your generous grace, mercy, and love, shown to us through 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 in all places  
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,  
through our Savior Jesus Christ;  
who treats us all with generous grace and mercy, joining us together  
with all the choirs of angels,  
the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth,  
in praising your name with this unending hymn:

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

## **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Holy and almighty God, you are indeed holy and generous with all that you give to us through your grace and salvation. You bring us all together into your kingdom as one body, moving through this world as a community of saints living for you. And when the time was right you sent to us Jesus, your Son, to further reveal to us your ways of truth and righteousness and mercy.

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 cup, gave thanks, and gave it to all 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 through this bread and cup that we see your generosity, O God, welcoming us all to be part of your eternal family in your eternal kingdom, together proclaiming 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 your steadfast love and grace that reminds us of our worth as your people for all time, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered into one equal body of Christ, let us pray as he 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 generous salvation for us all.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 191)

Give Me Jesus (#770)

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding us with your Word and nourishing us with your truth. You bless us with your generous grace and mercy and you empower us with your love.

May we go from here strengthened and renewed, ready to love and serve you and neighbour, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May the generous grace of Christ bless you and attend you, the astounding love of God find you, and the surprising movement of the Holy Spirit guide you in all that you do and anywhere that you go, now and always. **Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** Lord of All Hopefulness (#765)

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, rejoice in the generosity and grace of God.

**Thanks be to God.**