

## **GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA**

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**Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecost**

**October 8, 2023**

**ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight**

In today's gospel reading, Jesus tells a vineyard parable, which serves as an image of Israel, the prophets' mission, and Christ's death. For Christians, the vineyard also speaks of God's love poured out in the blood of Christ, given to us for the forgiveness of sin. Grafted onto Christ the vine at baptism, we are nourished with wine and bread so that we may share Christ's sufferings and know the power of his resurrection.

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 hən̓q̓əmiñəḥ̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓w̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in thanksgiving to our God, the Lord of hosts, who restores us, whose face shines on us, and in whom we are saved. For God has brought us hope in the face of danger and oppression and filled us a grace and mercy that moves the mountains, shakes the trees, and breaks down walls. And so we come with worship and praise, giving thanks to this God of our salvation, through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING SONG:** Be Thou My Vision (#793)

### GREETING

To plentiful grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful love of God, and the joyous fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

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

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, maker of heaven and earth, out of your great love for your people you sent to us your Son, who was betrayed and killed at the hands of those we trusted the most. Have mercy on us, O Lord; forgive us, renew us, restore us, that we may bear the good fruit of your love, grace, and peace, through Jesus our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Isaiah 5:1-7

A reading from Isaiah.

*The prophet sings a sad, parable-like love song about the relationship between God and Israel. In this song Israel is compared to a promising vineyard. Despite God's loving care, the vineyard that is Israel has brought forth "wild grapes" of injustice and distress, when fine grapes of justice and righteousness were expected.*

<sup>1</sup>Let me sing for my beloved  
my love-song concerning his vineyard:  
My beloved had a vineyard  
on a very fertile hill.

<sup>2</sup>He dug it and cleared it of stones,  
and planted it with choice vines;  
he built a watchtower in the midst of it,  
and hewed out a wine vat in it;  
he expected it to yield grapes,  
but it yielded wild grapes.

<sup>3</sup>And now, inhabitants of Jerusalem  
and people of Judah,  
judge between me  
and my vineyard.

<sup>4</sup>What more was there to do for my vineyard  
that I have not done in it?  
When I expected it to yield grapes,  
why did it yield wild grapes?

<sup>5</sup>And now I will tell you  
what I will do to my vineyard.  
I will remove its hedge,  
and it shall be devoured;  
I will break down its wall,  
and it shall be trampled down.  
<sup>6</sup>I will make it a waste;  
it shall not be pruned or hoed,  
and it shall be overgrown with briars and thorns;  
I will also command the clouds  
that they rain no rain upon it.  
<sup>7</sup>For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts  
is the house of Israel,  
and the people of Judah  
are his pleasant planting;  
he expected justice,  
but saw bloodshed;  
righteousness,  
but heard a cry!

The word of the Lord.  
**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 80:7-15**

<sup>7</sup>Restore us, O God of hosts;  
let your face shine upon us, and we shall be saved.  
<sup>8</sup>**You have brought a vine out of Egypt;  
you cast out the nations and planted it.**  
<sup>9</sup>You cleared the ground for it;  
it took root and filled the land.  
<sup>10</sup>**The mountains were covered by its shadow  
and the towering cedar trees by its boughs.**  
<sup>11</sup>You stretched out its tendrils to the sea  
and its branches to the river.  
<sup>12</sup>**Why have you broken down its wall,  
so that all who pass by pluck off its grapes?**  
<sup>13</sup>The wild boar of the forest has ravaged it,  
and the beasts of the field have grazed upon it.  
<sup>14</sup>**Turn now, O God of hosts,  
look down from heaven;**  
<sup>15</sup>behold and tend this vine;  
preserve what your right hand has planted.

**SECOND READING: Philippians 3:4b-14**

A reading from Philippians.

*Paul reviews some of his supposed credentials, which no longer have any bearing in comparison to the right relationship he has been given through the death of Christ. The power of Christ's resurrection motivates him to press on toward the ultimate goal, eternal life with Christ.*

[Paul writes:] <sup>4b</sup>If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: <sup>5</sup>circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; <sup>6</sup>as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

<sup>7</sup>Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. <sup>8</sup>More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup>and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith. <sup>10</sup>I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, <sup>11</sup>if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

<sup>12</sup>Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. <sup>13</sup>Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, <sup>14</sup>I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (p. 188)

**GOSPEL: Matthew 21:33-46**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus tells a parable to the religious leaders who are plotting his death, revealing that their plans will, ironically, bring about the fulfillment of scripture.*

[Jesus said to the people:] <sup>33</sup>“Listen to another parable. There was a landowner who planted a vineyard, put a fence around it, dug a wine press in it, and built a watchtower. Then he leased it to tenants and went to another country. <sup>34</sup>When the harvest time had come, he sent his slaves to the tenants to collect his produce. <sup>35</sup>But the tenants seized his slaves and beat one, killed another, and stoned another. <sup>36</sup>Again he sent other slaves, more than the first; and they treated them in the same way. <sup>37</sup>Finally he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ <sup>38</sup>But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, ‘This is the heir; come, let us kill him and get his inheritance.’ <sup>39</sup>So they seized him, threw him out of the vineyard, and killed him. <sup>40</sup>Now when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?” <sup>41</sup>They said to him, “He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and lease the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the produce at the harvest time.”

<sup>42</sup>Jesus said to them, “Have you never read in the scriptures:

‘The stone that the builders rejected  
has become the cornerstone;  
this was the Lord’s doing,  
and it is amazing in our eyes’?

<sup>43</sup>Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom. <sup>44</sup>The one who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; and it will crush anyone on whom it falls.”

<sup>45</sup>When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they realized that he was

speaking about them. <sup>46</sup>They wanted to arrest him, but they feared the crowds, because they regarded him as a prophet.

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

### **SERMON**

God of all wisdom, give us your Word and send us your Spirit that we might see, recognise, and know Christ in our midst. **Amen.**

AITA... "aita". Have you ever heard of it? It's sort of a trend on the internet where the Original Poster, the OP, the person who is first to set their fingers on the keyboard, presents a situation that they were in where they reacted in a certain way, perhaps of iffy morality. And so they ask AITA, as an acronym that stands for "Am I The Ass...inine person in this situation?" So they're wondering with all honesty if they, in that particular situation, were in the right or in the wrong and they go out to ask for opinions on it on the internet (which we all know is a wealth of decency and integrity).

I come across so many different AITA stories in my travels around the World Wide Web. I sometimes read them, but I often don't. But the few that I have read are usually very relatable situations. Things like being rude to someone who was rude to them first, or being a bit vocal about a spouse or partner not living up to expectation or predetermined agreements, or openly laughing at people who were making real complaints about real dumb things like a kid making chalk drawings on a public sidewalk. In all these stories that I've read, the OP is asking in hindsight if they should have done what they've done and in hindsight, are they, because of what they've already done, the ass...et to unbecoming behaviour.

It's all innocent and in good fun I guess, right? I mean, we can't change what's already happened, but we can learn from the past so we can try not to make the same mistakes. So we turn to the masses and see what they think. Nothing wrong with that, right?

But actually, at least with the few that I've read, it doesn't feel like the OP is wanting to learn from the situation. From the few times that I've actually read the comments in which the OP engages in the conversation, more often than not I see them defending themselves or attacking others who don't agree with them. So to me, it sounds like they weren't looking for advice at all, but they were looking for affirmation. Affirmation on how they were actually the protagonist in their story the whole time, and how they didn't deserve the treatment that they actually received.

Because really, no one wants to be the ass...istant to hard feelings, and so I don't think we'd naturally go out for confirmation to that regard. But if we think we're in the right? Well we just might go out there and ask the world, or at least that small corner of the internet, how they feel about the OP being wronged and how we should all feel sorry for them and jump up in their defense.

Basically, the OP is playing the victim. And the victim deserves sympathy.

And we get a lot of that these days, don't we? People playing the victim? Don't get me wrong, there are some real atrocious things that happen in the world and there are true victims of

crime, violence, and evil. But for someone complaining to you about your kid misbehaving? Your spouse feeling a bit annoyed with your constant nagging? Someone not treating you with the utmost respect all the time? That's not really being a victim, that's more like a first world problem.

That doesn't stop us from playing the victim though, because like I said, as the victim, we can get sympathy. And when we have sympathy, we can get people standing up for us, we can get power from pulling on the heart strings of others to get them to do things for us or say things about us that just makes us feel better about ourselves. That's what I mean about these AITA OPs that just want affirmation for their own being right in doing what they did. What a bunch of ass...ociates of guilt.

And really, upon first reading the parable that Jesus gives today, it sounds like the landowner is making his own AITA post. The landowner, innocently owning a vineyard which is like the most prestigious of yards with all its vines growing on it, keeps getting his servants killed by the people he hired to tend to what is rightfully his. And even after sending his own son to deal with the situation, thinking his son would be safe from harm, it ends up that the landowner is wrong and his son gets killed too. So now this rich landowner is wondering what the appropriate "non-A" course of action would be. The Pharisees that Jesus is talking to, these educated religious leaders and pillars of morality, these gurus of the God-given laws, answer that the landowner must react with anger, retribution, and violence. No, that's not an "A" move at all.

But we understand this language, don't we? I mean, those tenants of the vineyard had it coming. They dug their own hole. They were straight up evil for killing those slaves, for murdering the son, for wanting what quite honestly probably would have been given to them anyway.

Wait, what? Why would they get the vineyard? Why would they inherit what isn't theirs? Why would they ever deserve these riches? I mean, they're the problem of the whole situation. They were unprovoked and caused unnecessary harm. They were, no doubt, the "A's" of this story. There's no real saving grace for them here. Or is there?

While we'd want them to get theirs, God says different. While we'd want those who do evil to be punished, God does something else. While we'd want to follow the ways of the world and that those who wronged us will get what they deserve, God reaches out with grace and mercy. God calls out to invite and welcome. God continues to love.

I mean, look at the response that Jesus gives to the Pharisees when they say that the landowner should kill the perpetrators. He quotes Psalm 118, a Psalm of thanksgiving to God for God's salvation to all, even the most wretched, even the most horrific, even the most ass...ailant to decency. That means even these awful tenants in the story, that means even these Pharisees who think they know but don't really know, that means even us.

Ouch. That's not fair, is it? Clumping us in with the sinners, the dissenters, the AITA OPs that play the victim? Ok, maybe we're not all that bad, but that doesn't mean that we aren't in need of forgiveness. This is what the Psalm that Jesus quotes is about, it isn't in our accomplishments that we are blessed by God, it isn't by our achievements or rewards that we see God's love for us, it isn't even by how much validation we get from our peers that tells us

what we deserve. But it's in the healing from suffering that God is most apparent, it's in the forgiving of sins that God is most felt, it's in the blessing in spite of being undeserving that God's love for us is the most strong, lifting us up from under the burdens that weigh us down, and revealing to us a joy in community and life.

So while we might think that we'll get what we get by earning or taking, God will give because God loves. While we might think that we need to follow the ways of the world and give an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, God will forgive because God is gracious. And while we might think that we need validation from others to tell us that we are indeed assuredly good, God will lift us up from our own pits of despair, save us from under the weight of our own guilt and shame, and declare us as God's own children, welcomed in God's kingdom, and joint-heirs with Jesus Christ our Lord.

I know, life will continue to seem unfair. We will keep facing things that don't go our way and don't happen the way we want them to happen. We will fall, make mistakes, and be called worse things than what I've been saying this whole sermon. But through it all, God continues to show us the value and worth we have just for being us, God continues to reveal to us our role in the larger picture of life and community, God continues to love us in spite of our undeservedness, and brings us all into blessing and peace.

On this Thanksgiving Sunday, let us with gratitude give thanks to God for all that God has done, for whether we deserve it or not, we are welcomed, we are saved, we are loved. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus (#802)

### **CREED**

Together with all of God's forgiven 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 the grace and peace of God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “God, by your restoring mercy,” and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. God, by your restoring mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your face shines upon us and we are saved by your love and grace. May the love you show us be reflected onto all that we encounter and may it drive our ministry and service. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those that use our building for worship, work, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, pastors, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. We pray in particular for Dunbar Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their pastor Thomas Keeley; and for all our BC Synod staff: Rachael, Susanna, and Elina. God, by your restoring mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you have brought a vine out of Egypt, and you have adorned it with life and called it hope. May we trust in the good order of your creation, that our stewardship and care for all that you have made be pleasing to you, as this planet remains to house us and our communities for generations. God, by your restoring mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you break down the walls that separate us and you bring us together to live as one in your kingdom and community. But we work hard to raise these walls back up and create reasons to be suspicious and untrusting. Instill in us a sense of peace in knowing that you love us all the same, regardless of our ethnicity, nationality, or cultural background. We especially lift up in prayer the areas of the world that face war, violence, or political turmoil, that your gracious love and compassion might rule in the hearts of all who have the power or influence to make real change. Also we pray for the continued support of those that we’ve sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Berhane and Solyana Amanuel; as well as those who have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. God, by your restoring mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you look at us from the heavens and you reach out your hand of healing for our sake. Lift us up by your love, especially those of us who mourn, who feel lonely, or who are sick, that we might all be able to see the joy in the life lived in you. We pray in particular for Bryan and Chona; Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bev and family; Sukhwant; Cari; John; 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...  
God, by your restoring mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you behold us and tend to our needs, and you preserve our lives by including us in your eternal story with all the saints. May we always be inspired by the lives of faith in the past, and may we always remember our connection with them as we continue to navigate our lives in your kingdom and community. God, by your restoring mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the everlasting grace that you give 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 leads us into all grace and mercy,  
showing us a life of community and compassion,  
and joins us with the choirs of angels,  
the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth,  
to praise your name with this unending hymn:

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

### THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God are you indeed mighty and merciful, and in you we have nothing to fear. For you bestow upon us a grace that is never ending, you shine on us a mercy that is everlasting, and you give to us your Son Jesus, who shows us a steadfast love that lasts forever.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, and 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, he took the cup that they all shared, 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."

So it is in this bread and cup that we can see all love, we can feel all grace, and we can taste all mercy, as we together proclaim the basis of our faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

It is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, as we give thanks for all that you have done in loving us, saving us, and joining us together as the one body of Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered together by God's grace and mercy, 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 compassionate welcome for us all.  
**Thanks be to God.**

#### **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 191)  
When I Survey the Wondrous Cross (#803)

#### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, you have given us yet again your truth to feed on and your Word to strengthen us, and you empower us with your love. May we be energized to show your love to all the world, that your compassion and grace for all people might be seen through our deeds and service, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**

#### **SENDING**

#### **BLESSING**

May the face of God shine upon you and save you from shame, the grace of God live within you and bring you blessing and joy, and the salvation of God lift you up in grace and bring you peace.  
**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (#815)

#### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, be thankful for God's treats us all with compassion and grace.  
**Thanks be to God.**