

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC
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Twenty-fifth Sunday after Pentecost
November 19, 2023
ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

Our readings during November speak of the end times. Zephaniah proclaims that the coming day of the LORD will be filled with wrath and distress. Paul says it will come like a thief in the night and urges us to be awake and sober. Jesus tells the parable of the talents, calling us to use our gifts, while we still have time, for the greater and common good. In a world filled with violence and despair, we gather around signs of hope—word, water, bread, and wine—eager to welcome the good news of Christ's coming among us.

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 hən̓q̓əmiñəŋ̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather to worship our Lord, who has been our refuge for generations, from before the mountains were brought forth, even before the land and the earth were born. From age to age, our God is generous and kind, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love. And so we sing praises to this God our Saviour, who reveals to us a life worth living and grants to us a wisdom for all our hearts, through Jesus Christ. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING SONG: O Saviour, Precious Saviour (#820)

GREETING

The abundant grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the generous love of God, and the amazing fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 185)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God, your gift of life through your Son Jesus is the treasure that we cherish and is the foundation of our faith. May your generosity be appreciated and inspirational in our community and service to you and neighbour, through Jesus our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

A reading from Zephaniah.

Zephaniah (like the prophet Amos in last week's first reading) presents the day of the LORD as one of judgment and wrath. Descriptions of the last day in the New Testament include details taken from Old Testament accounts of the day of the LORD.

⁷Be silent before the Lord GOD!

For the day of the LORD is at hand;
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.

¹²At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
"The LORD will not do good,
nor will he do harm."

¹³Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.

Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.

¹⁴The great day of the LORD is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.

¹⁵That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,

a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
¹⁶a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.
¹⁷I will bring such distress upon people
that they shall walk like the blind;
because they have sinned against the LORD,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the LORD's wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 90:1-8, 12

¹Lord, you have been our refuge
from one generation to another.
²**Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born,
from age to age you are God.**
³You turn us back to the dust and say,
"Turn back, O children of earth."
⁴**For a thousand years in your sight are like yesterday when it is past
and like a watch in the night;**
⁵you sweep them away like a dream,
they fade away suddenly like the grass:
⁶**in the morning it is green and flourishes;
in the evening it is dried up and withered.**
⁷For we are consumed by your anger;
we are afraid because of your wrath.
⁸**Our iniquities you have set before you,
and our secret sins in the light of your countenance.**
¹²So teach us to number our days
that we may apply our hearts to wisdom.

SECOND READING: 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

A reading from 1 Thessalonians.

Though we do not know and cannot calculate the day of Christ's return, we live faithfully in the here and now as we anticipate the day when we will be given eternal salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ.

¹Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come

like a thief in the night. ³When they say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Matthew 25:14-30

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells a parable about his second coming, indicating that it is not sufficient merely to maintain things as they are. Those who await his return should make good use of the gifts that God has provided them.

[Jesus said to the disciples:] ¹⁴"For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Open our hearts and minds, O God, to the power of your illuminated and living Word that empowers us to be your people living in this world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Any of you ever want to change your name? I totally have. Growing up, I hated my name, because it wasn't exactly common or uncommon. Not really unusual but also not exactly usual. It's a name that people have heard of, it's in the bible after all, but for a lot of my friends I'd be the only Nathan they ever met.

Because of this, people often would mishear what my name is when we first meet. Many times when I first introduce myself, people would think my name is Ethan, Jason, or David even. I've had people call me Winston, Wilson, and Mason. Those ones hit a bit different because I think they're less common than my actual name.

So I always wished that my name was something different. Something easier to hear, remember, and flows off your tongue better. Because names are important, aren't they? It is how we're identified, recognised, and remembered. It's how people know us, how they understand what we're like, how they perceive our being. This is why naming our kids was so hard for my wife and me. For each one we hummed and hawed for pretty much our whole 30-day window before we came up what we did. There is just a lot riding on names.

Like, names make you think of something. They evoke emotion in you. They draw on your memories, associations, and we react to them in some way. Maybe that is why so many celebrities change their name, along with some royalty and I think like all the popes. Some names just perk our ears, while others are forgotten as soon as we hear them. And when you have a powerful name, then it commands more respect. Like how the hyenas would react in fear and awe when they hear Mufasa's name in Disney's The Lion King. Or if your name is perhaps not as powerful, then maybe people might think they could walk all over you. Like Urkel, from Family Matters.

So all this talk about names and the reactions they evoke got me thinking about what the master's name might have been in today's parable. This is another difficult one that I never really liked because how it seems so unfair. But like with all the difficult parables that we got as of late, I wonder if we don't like them because of the way we automatically look at them. But if we dig a bit deeper and find what is really going on, then maybe we can get a better idea of what the lesson being taught is.

And again, we know this story. This master is about to go away for a minute and calls in 3 of his employees. Much to their surprise, he gives them exorbitant amounts of money but doesn't really explain why. Two of the three servants go and invest that money and make more, but the last one was a bit scared and buried the money to play it safe. And when the master returns, he commends those that played around with his money, and totally condemned the one that didn't. So he praised those servants for acting irresponsible, selfish, and a bit presumptuous in thinking that they could do anything with that money that was given to them. But then the third guy was punished for being responsible, trustworthy, and considerate of the inexplicable loan that was given to him.

Doesn't seem to make sense.

But then I think about why those servants did what they did. There was no explicit instruction on what to do with that money. No precedent from what we know. So where do they get the guts to go and do what they did?

Well, much like the very first and original Star Wars movie, it feels like we were dropped into the middle of the story. We don't know anything about these characters other than what we're told in the parable. We don't know their history, their personalities, their names.

But we do know what they did, and how the master reacted. We know how proud the two were for making the extra money and how happy their boss was for them doing it. And we know how afraid the third servant was of his employer, so he acted accordingly, according to what he thought of his boss.

And that is where the boss took offense. Not at the action or inaction, not at the misunderstanding, not even at the lack of profit. But the boss got angry at the third guy when he said that he knows that he is a harsh man, reaping where he doesn't sow and gathering where he doesn't scatter seed. So in his eyes, playing it safe was the correct course of action.

Is he harsh? Well, now he seems like it but let's not forget that he initially gave all this money to his subordinates. Does he reap where he doesn't sow and gather where he doesn't scatter seed? We don't know this, but it wouldn't seem like it since he didn't tell his servants to make him more money, but just kind of gave it to them without any rhyme or reason other than that he just wanted to. So if the story ended with the master leaving, then really it would seem like he is generous, gracious, and loving. He is benevolent, trusting, and kind. And even if the story ended after the first two servants gave an account of the money, he'd seem the same. It isn't until the third one explains and gives excuses and misreads the master's intentions, does the boss actually lose it.

Because this servant just didn't get it. He didn't understand that his master is actually not harsh, greedy, or mean. This third guy wasn't punished because he didn't play with someone else's money, didn't follow orders, or didn't make a profit, but because he didn't appreciate his master's generosity, didn't try to understand his master's personality, didn't know his master's name.

The master's name that should have brought comfort, brought this servant anguish. This name that offered peace, but instead was accepted in fear. The name above all names that empowers, enriches, and justifies was taken in vain. It was tarnished, dragged through the mud, and completely discredited who the boss is and what the boss is all about.

And so I think Jesus here is telling us to know the name of our God. How do we hear it? God has many too, such as Adonai, YHWH, Jehovah. Names like El Shaddai, Emmanuel, Elohim. Names like the King of Kings, Creator, Redeemer, Lord. Do these names evoke fear or comfort? Does God reach out to punish us or forgive us? Did God send Jesus to condemn or save?

See the problem with the third servant is that he didn't get it, instead he perverted the name of the master and shoehorned it into his own emotions, his own paradigms and paranoias, his own narrow ways of thinking. And honestly, he wasn't, isn't, and won't ever be the only one that does this.

Throughout our history both ancient and modern and even in our present times we have people taking the name of God to justify their horrific actions and agendas. We have people claiming the name of God to gain more power and militaristic might against those they hate. We have people changing the name of God to fit into their own name, thinking that they know better, rule better, and just are better than the living and everlasting God that created the universe.

So it's clear that this name of God might be different for different people, depending on how we hear it, how we perceive it, and how we know it. The truth of the matter is, God continually empowers us and abundantly blesses us with forgiveness and love. It's up to us what we do with it, how we understand it, and how we accept it this gracious and lavish generosity.

See, the name of God brings not war, but peace. The person of God brings not division, but unity. The salvation of God brings not authority to kick others out, exclude, or hate, but it allows us to see who we are as God's beloved, welcomed into God's eternal kingdom. This God truly is all powerful, but only because God is all love and all grace, drawing us into community, and inviting us to enter into the joy of our master.

So as we approach the end of the church year, a year in which we learned about the name, the person, the salvation of God in our lives and the grace, mercy, and love that it brings, may we always recognise this name in our hearts, empowering us to be God's people in the world, reflecting God's forgiveness, community, and welcome to all people for all time. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Lord Jesus, You Shall Be My Song (#808)

CREED

Together with all of God's redeemed, 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 recognize and know God's grace in our lives, let us in turn pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, by your eternal mercy," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, by your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you have been our refuge from generation to generation, and you have been present in our community and service. May our ministry reflect the trust we have in you, that all people might see the love and grace in your name. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use our building for worship, work, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, rostered leaders, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Grace Lutheran Church in Dawson Creek and South Peace United and their United minister Marilyn Carroll; and for Deo Lutheran Church in Salmon Arm and their pastor Erik Bjorgan. Lord, by your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you brought forth the mountains and you begat the land and earth, showing us all from age to age that you are God. Strengthen us in our stewardship of your creation, that its beauty and resources might serve to house life for years to come. Lord, by your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your justice is about grace even when we fear it's about anger and wrath. Remind us always how your forgiveness and peace have no end, and how it can guide us in our life together among the nations. We pray for this peace in the world, especially in those areas that continue to face war, violence, and turmoil. We also pray for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Barhane and Solyana Amanuel; and for those that have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. Lord, by your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, in light of our iniquities we find healing and support in your countenance. You remain with us throughout our lives, showing us that we are not alone but connected with each other in community and faith. We pray for those among us who are sick, who are ill, or who mourn, that your love always shine in and through us all. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; the Prasad family; Bev and family; Sukhwant; Beulah; Cari; John; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Allen; Matt; Lucas; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
Lord, by your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you teach us to number our days that we might apply our hearts to your eternal wisdom that transcends the bounds of time. Remind us always of your welcome into your kingdom, where we might be joined with you and all the saints of all times and places. May the lives of those that we've loved and lost always serve as inspiration for our faith, that we might move into the future full of love and willingness to serve. Lord, by your eternal mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the power of your name, 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 in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Savior Jesus Christ;
who reminds us of your grace and mercy,
eternally bestowed upon us by your love,
welcoming us with 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. 190)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy and merciful God, we come before you in awe-inspired worship. Not out of fear but out of gratitude and appreciation for your grace, shown to us by your blessings; your mercy, shown to us through your forgiveness; and your love, shown to us in the life and teaching of Jesus Christ, whom you sent to teach us your ways of righteousness and peace.

For on the night that he was betrayed, this same Jesus Christ sat with his friends for a meal, where he took the 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 it, Jesus took the common cup that they would share, gave thanks, and passed it around the table for 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 are reminded of your providence, your inclusion, and your community, drawing us all together ready to contemplate and proclaim this basis of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

For it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, for you bless us, you welcome us, and you give us what we need for life with you, in your kingdom, and with all the saints, through

Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Brought into God's welcome and community, 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, that God graciously loves and blesses us.

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 and nourishing us with your truth and wisdom, filling us with your blessing and revealing to us the welcome we share into your kingdom. May we be strengthened by the grace that you give, that we might boldly go into the world, ready to do your will, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who is lovingly gracious, keep you fervent in faith.

God who is lavishly generous, hold you steadfast in hope.

God who is long lastingly good, bless you now and always.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: My Life Flows On in Endless Song (#763)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, live and share in God's abundant blessing.

Thanks be to God.