



**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA**

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**Christ the King Sunday**

**November 26, 2023**

**ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight**

On this final Sunday of the church year our gospel is Jesus' great story of judgment. In the end, the faithful are those who served Christ by ministering to those who are poor, hungry, naked, sick, or estranged. In the first reading God is the shepherd who seeks the lost, weak, and injured and feeds them with justice. We gather this day to celebrate the reign of Christ and his victory over death, yet we await the consummation of all things yet to come. Acknowledging Christ as our merciful ruler, we go forth that his reign may be known in our loving words and deeds.

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 Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We enter this place to sing to the Lord, to shout for joy to the rock of our salvation. We gather in God's presence with thanksgiving and to raise a loud shout to the Lord with psalms. For our God is great and is above all gods, in whose hand are the caverns of the earth, the heights of the hills, all the seas, and the expanse of the universe has been made by our Lord our maker. And in all grace and mercy, God has chosen us to be God's people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and King. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

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

### GREETING

The reigning grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the sovereign love of God, and the empowering fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

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

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, in your raising of Christ from the dead you have established him as Lord over all lords. May we serve him wisely and faithfully, that the meaning to bestow upon all of our lives be seen and felt and displayed, that your love and mercy be recognized and acknowledged and reflected throughout all the world, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

## WORD

**FIRST READING: Ezekiel 34:11-16, 20-24**

A reading from Ezekiel.

*Because Israel's kings proved to be bad shepherds, Ezekiel declares that the LORD will assume the role of shepherd in Israel. The LORD will also set over them a shepherd-messiah, "my servant David," who will feed and care for the people.*

<sup>11</sup>Thus says the Lord GOD: I myself will search for my sheep, and will seek them out. <sup>12</sup>As shepherds seek out their flocks when they are among their scattered sheep, so I will seek out my sheep. I will rescue them from all the places to which they have been scattered on a day of clouds and thick darkness. <sup>13</sup>I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries, and will bring them into their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the watercourses, and in all the inhabited parts of the land. <sup>14</sup>I will feed them with good pasture, and the mountain heights of Israel shall be their pasture; there they shall lie down in good grazing land, and they shall feed on rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. <sup>15</sup>I myself will be the shepherd of my sheep, and I will make them lie down, says the Lord GOD. <sup>16</sup>I will seek the lost, and I will bring back the strayed, and I will bind up the injured, and I will strengthen the weak, but the fat and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with justice.

<sup>20</sup>Therefore, thus says the Lord GOD to them: I myself will judge between the fat sheep and the lean sheep. <sup>21</sup>Because you pushed with flank and shoulder, and butted at all the weak animals with your horns until you scattered them far and wide, <sup>22</sup>I will save my flock, and they shall no longer be ravaged; and I will judge between sheep and sheep.

<sup>23</sup>I will set up over them one shepherd, my servant David, and he shall feed them: he shall feed them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup>And I, the LORD, will be their God, and my servant David shall be prince among them; I, the LORD, have spoken.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### **PSALM: Psalm 95:1-7a**

<sup>1</sup>Come, let us sing to the LORD;

let us shout for joy to the rock of our salvation.

<sup>2</sup>**Let us come before God's presence with thanksgiving  
and raise a loud shout to the LORD with psalms.**

<sup>3</sup>For you, LORD, are a great God,  
and a great ruler above all gods.

<sup>4</sup>**In your hand are the caverns of the earth;  
the heights of the hills are also yours.**

<sup>5</sup>The sea is yours, for you made it,  
and your hands have molded the dry land.

<sup>6</sup>**Come, let us worship and bow down,  
let us kneel before the LORD our maker.**

<sup>7a</sup>For the LORD is our God,  
and we are the people of God's pasture and the sheep of God's hand.

### **SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:15-23**

A reading from Ephesians.

*In this passage, God is praised for revealing ultimate divine power in raising Jesus from the dead. The resurrected, exalted Christ is Lord of both the church and the entire universe, now and in the age to come.*

<sup>15</sup>I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, and for this reason <sup>16</sup>I do not cease to give thanks for you as I remember you in my prayers. <sup>17</sup>I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation as you come to know him, <sup>18</sup>so that, with the eyes of your heart enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance among the saints, <sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power for us who believe, according to the working of his great power. <sup>20</sup>God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. <sup>22</sup>And he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

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

#### **GOSPEL: Matthew 25:31-46**

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus compares himself to a king who moves among his subjects to see how he is treated: what is done for the least of those who belong to his family is truly done for him.*

[Jesus said to the disciples:] <sup>31</sup>"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. <sup>32</sup>All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, <sup>33</sup>and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the king will say to those at his right hand, 'Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom

prepared for you from the foundation of the world; <sup>35</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? <sup>38</sup>And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? <sup>39</sup>And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ <sup>40</sup>And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup>Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; <sup>42</sup>for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup>And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

Lord, may the eyes of our hearts be opened by the power of your Spirit, that we may see the hope to which we have been called in Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

So usually I’m pretty good with faces. Not so much with names, but if I’ve met you before, even if just in passing, I will likely remember you if we meet again... even if I pretend that I don’t. But even with this elephant-like memory around faces, I still can get it wrong from time to time. This was apparent the other day, when my oldest sister and her partner were at the hockey game and they send in our family group chat this picture:



with the caption: who are these people?

Well, being one of the clowns in the group, I jokingly said “from left to right, that’s Shannon Doherty, Kevin Kline, Gilbert Gottfried, Meghan Markle, Jim’s dad, Meghan Markle’s husband, Aziz Ansari, Elon Musk, Carol from the Walking Dead, and Captain Marvel.” I thought that I

knocked that one out of the park as it was a pretty funny joke. Well, it was funny until I saw on Twitter or X or whatever it's called now that it actually was Meghan Markle and her husband, whose name I honestly forget what it is. Harry or William or Charming or whatever. From the picture, I actually thought it was one of the Sedin twins. Now I'm thinking that's actually Elon Musk too.

Anyway, my comments didn't get the reaction that I thought they would. No one really said anything and just ignored it, but I could tell, they were rolling their eyes behind their screens. Not sure why though, the joke got even more hilarious with this new revelation. But I guess it was just expected that I would recognise Meghan Markle and her spouse. I mean, they are (or were at least) connected in some way to the royal family, arguably the most famous family in our modern history. So I do mess up on recognizing faces from time to time. In my defence, that was a horrible picture. I bet a lot of people would have thought that was a Sedin twin.

But what's the big deal? This formerly royal couple just want to enjoy a hockey game. So they're famous. So they're really rich. So they're adored by millions. That doesn't change the fact that I honestly didn't recognise them. It doesn't change the fact that I really forgot his name. And it doesn't change the fact that I never really cared about the royal family or ever wanted to keep up with their news.

Still, the folks at Rogers Arena made this royal attendance at the game a big deal. I think they had them say a few words before the puck dropped, they gave them some priority seating, and I think Meghan Markle even has a thing of champagne there. Not sure if that's normal at a hockey game. So I'm glad the people at Rogers Arena recognised them at least, or they might have been treated like the rest of us common folk who have to pay for our seats and drink regular beer.

That's the thing about being a celebrity though, isn't it? You get special treatment when you're recognised, in the public eye, and a person of influence. You're regarded different when you're well known, respected, and looked up to. You're more easily celebrated when you're a big deal, when you're on the covers of multiple magazines and newspapers, or when you're just so greatly loved as these two apparently are. By people who would recognise them or remember their name, at least.

And so this second-degree-encounter with this royal couple made me think of today, Christ the King Sunday. It's the day that marks the end of the church calendar year, that is supposed to act as the culmination of all that we've learned over the past 12 months, that helps us recognise the kingship of Jesus and the role that plays in our lives.

This time around, we get the parable of the sheep and goats, which is the last of a pretty good run of difficult parables, and it seems like it comes with more judgement, more stark legalism, and more weeping and gnashing of teeth. Another parable that is unliked by at least me because of all that, and another one that probably has more meaning than we are giving it credit for.

It seems straight forward though, help people like Jesus and be welcomed in the sheepfold. Don't do that and have fun being a goat, and not the good kind of goat either, but the bad animal kind. The thing about this parable though, is that we probably off the bat can more easily identify as the sheep, the ones who did good, the ones who are kind, the ones who are

welcomed into God's kingdom. At the same time, we sure as heck can point out the goats in our lives, still not the good kind. We can recognise those who aren't so good or kind and have, by their own fault, excluded themselves from the kingdom. We know those people. Sometimes it might be us, sometimes. But mostly we know exactly who they are outside of us.

I mean, there's a reason we don't like them, right?

And maybe that is why we don't like this parable all that much. It's just too easy to slip up, to be out of line, to be regarded as a not good kind of goat. It's too easy to act poorly, to have a slight oversight, to not recognise Jesus, the King of kings, the divine royalty, in our midst. I mean, even the good sheep didn't recognise him, how is anyone else supposed to?

I know, we might just say that we should just treat everyone good and we'd be covered. Make sure we're always merciful and we'll be safely in the ranks of sheep. Be absolutely intentional to feed the hungry, clothe the poor, and tend to the sick, and Jesus will be in there to honour us somewhere.

But that still isn't that easy. I mean, we just talked about those that we don't like. Sure, we can be kind to the kind, we can show mercy to the merciful, we can love those that are already loveable. But to be kind, merciful, and loving to those that we aren't big fans of? That's a totally different story.

But maybe that is what Jesus is talking about. Maybe this is the point that Jesus is trying to make. Maybe Jesus saying that he is there among the weak, the lowly, and the downcast isn't to get us to change how we *act* but to change how we *see*.

Change how we see those who aren't us. Change how we see those that we don't like. Change to see how all people are actually God's beloved, with Christ in their midst, and welcomed parts of this body and kingdom and community.

So just as I didn't recognise that royal couple right away because I just don't really care about or follow that part of human history as influential and positive as it may have been, so do we all sometimes not recognise Christ in our midst and in the midst of those that we just might not want to see Christ in. But the thing is, Jesus promises to be among those who are outcasted, the marginalized, those that don't fit in with society. Jesus shows up in the pain, the hurt, and the brokenness that we all experience. Jesus can be seen and recognised among all those that we might not like so much, changing our perspective as to where God really is in the world.

And so we are invited into this as well, to see the world as Jesus sees it, to be in community as Jesus is in community, to love people as Jesus loves people. And through it all, we can see the kingship of Jesus, not in militaristic might and power, but through grace, mercy, and peace, joining us all together to live as a body and family, full of forgiveness, redemption, and joy.

You see, we can recognise the whole width and breadth of God's love and welcome, when we are better able to recognise Christ among us, when we remember the person of Jesus and how compassionate, inclusive, and gracious he is toward all people, when we know that mercy flows in and through us all, allowing us to see the world differently. See the world with humble, faithful, and loving eyes.

So as we close up this church calendar year and move into a new year with new themes and lessons, may we remember the person of Jesus in our midst, submit to his reign of grace and mercy, and together serve and pray for this world that is dearly loved by its Creator and God, that we might recognise the value and worth in all people as our siblings and partners in the gospel and good news of love and redemption. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** How Great Thou Art (#856)

### **CREED**

Together under the reign of Christ, 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 a life full of meaning and love, let us together pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your shepherding mercy, O God," you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you are the rock of our salvation and we sing and shout for joy in your name. May your message of love travel across the globe, and may our ministry and service only assist in its proclamation. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use our building for worship, work, and play; our full communion partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; our bishops, rostered leaders, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. And in particular, we pray for Peace Lutheran Church in Abbotsford and their shared pastor Dean Andersen; and for Emmaus Lutheran Church in Burnaby and their pastor Timo Saarinen. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we come before you in thanksgiving for all that you made in the caverns of the earth, the heights of the mountains, the vastness of the seas, and creativity in the dry land. May our stewardship of the beauties and wonders of your creation be pleasing to you, that this world might continue to house us and all life for the generations to come. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you are a great God, a great ruler above all gods and we put our trust in you and your wisdom and justice. Bestow your influence on all the nations of this planet, that all people might learn to put down their weapons and trade them for tools of community and harmony. We pray especially for the areas of the world currently facing war, violence, and political turmoil, that your hand lead and guide them into peace. We also pray for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into this country: Abraham Barhane; and Solyana Amanuel; and for those that have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we worship and bow down before you, our maker, redeemer, and healer. You remain with us even in our lowest points, when we are sick, when we mourn, and when we feel lonely, and you lift us up by your love and fill us with meaning and purpose. We remember in prayer Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Bev and family; Sukhwant; 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...  
By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you are our God and we are the people of your everlasting pasture and the sheep of your welcoming hand throughout eternity with all the saints. May the lives of faith of the past inform the lives of faith of the future, that your unending community and kingdom and connection be apparent to all who call upon your name. By your shepherding mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your leading and guiding and kingship, 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 Saviour Jesus Christ;  
who leads and guides us toward righteousness and faith,  
joining us with the choirs of angels,  
the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,  
in praising your name with this unending hymn:



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

### **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Holy and merciful God, you alone are holy yet you chose to love us and lead us into a meaningful existence in your kingdom and community. And when the time was right, you send to us Jesus to remind us of who we are as your people: restored and redeemed, healed and made whole, beloved and brought into belonging in your family of believers.

This was further displayed on that night when Jesus was betrayed, when he sat with his friends for a meal and 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 after they ate it, he then took the common cup, gave thanks, and passed that 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."

It is in this heavenly food that we are reminded of our connection, our community, and companionship as your children, lifted up by your grace and forgiven by your mercy, together proclaiming this basis of our faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

Then it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong for all that you have done and continue to do in leading us and guiding us down your paths of righteousness and faith, that we might live lives pleasing to you, 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 together as God's beloved, 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, the blessing that brings us meaning and purpose.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 191)  
Beautiful Saviour (#838)

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding and nourishing us with your welcome and wisdom. May we be strengthened by your love, that we might reflect your good news and live into our identity as your people, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

May the God who seeks the lost keep you,  
the God who brings back the wandering heart uphold you,  
the God who strengthens the weary and binds up the injured heal you and empower you and grant you peace, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** Crown Him with Many Crowns (#855)

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, live with hope, journey in love, act with purpose.

**Thanks be to God.**

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