

GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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All Saints Sunday

November 5, 2023

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

All Saints celebrates the baptized people of God, living and dead, who are the body of Christ. As November heralds the dying of the landscape in many northern regions, the readings and liturgy call us to remember all who have died in Christ and whose baptism is complete. At the Lord's table we gather with the faithful of every time and place, trusting that the promises of God will be fulfilled and that all tears will be wiped away in the new Jerusalem.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping on-line with us today! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather to bless our Lord, to put the praise of God in our hearts, and to give glory to the Lord with rejoicing. And so together we proclaim God's greatness and exalt God name, for the Lord answers us and delivers us, lifting us up from all fear and shame. The Lord is good, and happy are we to take refuge in God, in whom we have nothing good to lack but are blessed with the redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

REMEMBERING THE SAINTS

And in this blessing, O Lord, you welcome us into your kingdom and community, where we are invited to join in this eternal story of faith, in which we are connected to you, each other, and all the saints. May these candles that we light for those that we've loved and lost serve as a reminder of how they remain present among us, in our hearts, and together with us in worship and throughout our lives.

Jesus reminds us that we share in his yoke, where we can learn from him and lean on his strength, for he is gentle and humble in heart, making his yoke easy and burden light, and in whom we can find rest for our souls.

May we hold onto this promise from our Saviour, that these candles can be for us the very real presence of the saints here, now, with us, and among us, together worshipping your name, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord. **Amen.**

GATHERING SONG: For All the Saints (#422)

GREETING

May the eternal grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the everlasting love of God, and the unending fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 185)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Throughout the highs and lows of life, you bless us, O God. When we are overwhelmed by trouble, you save us. When we are overtaken by sorrow, you comfort us. When we are overcome by death, you raise us up to new life. You promise us everlasting joy and you grant to us the hope in your grace, your mercy, and your realm that is to come. For these and all else that you do, we give you thanks, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Revelation 7:9-17

A reading from Revelation.

The book of Revelation is written to seven churches in western Asia Minor during a time of great oppression. Today's reading is a response to the question asked in 6:17: "Who is able to stand?" The writer gives the faithful the assurance of God's protection and a vision of victory.

⁹After this I looked, and there was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, robed in white, with palm branches in their hands. ¹⁰They cried out in a loud voice, saying,

“Salvation belongs to our God who is seated on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

¹¹And all the angels stood around the throne and around the elders and the four living creatures, and they fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, ¹²singing, “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be to our God forever and ever! Amen.”

¹³Then one of the elders addressed me, saying, “Who are these, robed in white, and where have they come from?” ¹⁴I said to him, “Sir, you are the one that knows.” Then he said to me, “These are they who have come out of the great ordeal; they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

¹⁵For this reason they are before the throne of God, and worship him day and night within his temple, and the one who is seated on the throne will shelter them.

¹⁶They will hunger no more, and thirst no more; the sun will not strike them, nor any scorching heat;

¹⁷for the Lamb at the center of the throne will be their shepherd, and he will guide them to springs of the water of life, and God will wipe away every tear from their eyes.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 34:1-10, 22

¹I will bless the LORD at all times;
the praise of God shall ever be in my mouth.

²**I will glory in the LORD;
let the lowly hear and rejoice.**

³Proclaim with me the greatness of the LORD;
let us exalt God’s name together.

⁴**I sought the LORD, who answered me
and delivered me from all my terrors.**

⁵Look upon the LORD and be radiant,
and let not your faces be ashamed.

⁶**I called in my affliction, and the LORD heard me
and saved me from all my troubles.**

⁷The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear the LORD
and delivers them.

⁸**Taste and see that the LORD is good;
happy are they who take refuge in God!**

⁹Fear the LORD, you saints of the LORD,
for those who fear the LORD lack nothing.

¹⁰**The lions are in want and suffer hunger,
but those who seek the LORD lack nothing that is good.**

²²O LORD, you redeem the life of your servants,
and those who put their trust in you will not be punished.

SECOND READING: 1 John 3:1-3

A reading from 1 John.

A saint is one who has been set apart by God for God's purposes. God, out of divine love, set us apart to be the children of God. Our holy hope is that we shall see God as God really is.

¹See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are. The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. ²Beloved, we are God's children now; what we will be has not yet been revealed. What we do know is this: when he is revealed, we will be like him, for we will see him as he is. ³And all who have this hope in him purify themselves, just as he is pure.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Matthew 5:1-12

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In the Beatitudes, Jesus provides a unique description of those who are blessed with God's favor. His teaching is surprising and shocking to those who seek wealth, fame, and control over others.

¹When Jesus saw the crowds, he went up the mountain; and after he sat down, his disciples came to him. ²Then he began to speak, and taught them, saying:

³"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

⁴"Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

⁵"Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.

⁶"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.

⁷"Blessed are the merciful, for they will receive mercy.

⁸"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God.

⁹"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

¹⁰"Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹"Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. ¹²Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O God by your love may we see you present among us. By your Spirit may we hear the truth of your promises. Through Christ may we filled by your blessing, now and forever. **Amen.**

Life is pretty difficult, isn't it. It's like no matter where you are in life, what's going on, or how you're doing, there's always something that comes up and brings you down. Even if it seems like you have everything going for you, there will be something that just isn't exactly perfect and becomes this nagging thorn in your side.

We might think that this is just true for us, because it seems like everyone else, especially those we respect, look up to, or are a bit jealous of, live perfect lives. We'd give anything to be like them, to live like them, to have no problems like them. If only we could be so blessed.

But in actual fact, no one is free from problems. No one is immune to pain. No one can escape the inevitability of hardship, turmoil, and strife. We might not be able to see it in others or ourselves right away, but I assure you, there is something.

Like, maybe you're really skilled and hard working, but you can't seem to hold down a job. Maybe you have all the money in the world, but the news paints you in a bad light and you're called selfish and crazy. Maybe you're a super dynamic and charismatic preacher but your regular hair cut person quit and your new person just can't seem to get it quite right.

Or maybe you have a beautiful and talented family but they don't appreciate you or even feel like you belong. Maybe you're really popular and well liked, but you battle depression and have severe mental health issues. Maybe you live in a wonderful part of the world, full of history and culture, but you keep getting invaded and bombed because your neighbours can't seem to get along with you. Or maybe you're blessed with a long, healthy life, but all your loved ones and those around you keep getting sick and die, leaving you alone.

However you want to slice it, we all have problems. We all have troubles. We all, at some point or perhaps for most of our lives, don't feel very blessed.

Because... isn't that what it means? Doesn't blessed mean "happy" or "lucky" or "smiled on upon by God"? Isn't that how we label those who seem to have it all? Isn't that how we label ourselves those few times that we think we have it all? Isn't that how we're taught to think by all those non-dynamic and uncharismatic preachers out there?

It'd be nice though, wouldn't it? It'd be nice if God were to prove God's love for us by giving us good things. But then the flip side of that would be when we get bad things, we'd start to question where we really stand with God, how God might regard us, or as a worst case scenario, whether or not God even exists.

I mean, we've all heard it asked how a good God could let bad things happen. We've all questioned our faith and the validity of God's Word in our lives. We've all wondered how blessed we actually are, because so many times this God that we profess doesn't always help us the way we want to be helped.

This is why today's gospel lesson for this All Saints Sunday can be so confusing. We're familiar with these Beatitudes, but we don't always understand them. And for some strange reason, as often as it comes to us out of Matthew or Luke, even the most dynamic and charismatic sermons don't seem to agree with what's going on here and what Jesus is trying to tell us.

I mean, Jesus kicks off his famous Sermon on the Mount with this list of bad things that we don't want to be or do or have, but he calls them blessed anyway. It strikes us as odd, because with our aforementioned definition of blessed, it just doesn't jive. It doesn't add up to us to be blessed when we're poor or hungry or sad. It doesn't seem like a blessing to feel weak,

persecuted, or being taken advantage of. We don't feel very blessed when we know that we're hated and have fallen out of love.

And so it's confusing because that's all bad stuff, isn't it? Feeling bad is bad. Not feeling good isn't good. And Jesus called this blessed? Really, seeing all the hurt and brokenness in and around us can be just so very depressing and overwhelming to the point that we just say "no thanks" and try to forget about it all.

To be honest, this is what has been happening with me and this situation with Israel and Palestine. The more I read and learn about it, the more depressed I feel. The more opinions and statements I hear, the more I just want to shut my ears and not listen. At the same time, the more pain and hurt I see around the whole thing, the more I just want to fix it all and make it better.

But I can't. I don't have the answers. I don't have the power. I don't have what is needed to make this whole thing go away. What is happening over there is horrific. The violence and total disregard for life is atrocious. The sheer anger and hate that is fuelling this war needs to be called out and condemned, on all sides of the conflict.

And then along comes this passage, this Sermon on the Mount, these Beatitudes that don't seem to help at all. There is nothing good about this war. There isn't a best case scenario. There doesn't seem to be any blessing, any love, any hope whatsoever.

But as I often say about scripture, this living Word of God, it speaks to us where we are. And depending on headspace, we see different things in these sacred words as the Spirit does the Spirit's thing, which usually is surprising and mysterious. It reveals to us the truth that we need to hear.

And this time around in reading these oh so familiar text, what struck me was that Jesus doesn't say that these folk are blessed *because* of what happened or is currently happening, but they are blessed because something *is yet* to happen. They *will* be comforted, *will* inherit the earth, *will* be filled, *will* receive mercy, *will* see God. The only thing that is present tense is that the kingdom is theirs now.

Isn't that so cool? While we've commonly thought that being blessed is due to something that is currently happening, Jesus almost seems to be telling us that being blessed comes from what will happen, we see God's love for us in what will be given to us, there is healing in the hope we have in God's promises that will be fulfilled.

This is kind of a game changer for me. Because now when I'm down in the dumps, I needn't doubt my position in God's love, I needn't question my identity as God's child, I needn't wonder about my place in God's kingdom. Rather, I can hold onto the hope that God's blessing for us all is yet to come, bringing healing and restoration, and revealing yet again how we are all welcomed and saved by the grace of a benevolent God.

I don't know what you are all going through or where you are mentally or emotionally. I don't know who needs to hear this right now. But I do know that all of you have experienced the ups and downs of life, the joys and the sorrows, the healing and pain, the life and death. And I

know that through all of that, God remains present in all that you go through, surrounding you with support, community, and the host of saints of all times and places.

This is the blessing that we receive as God's people. This connection to the unending story of faith that spans all of history, sparked by God's steadfast and unsurpassed love that is so strong that not even death could stand in its way. This connection feeds our souls, enriches our lives, and reminds us of the value and worth of all people, blessed by the God who loves us all.

Blessed... even when they are poor in spirit, when they mourn, are meek, or hunger and thirst; blessed are those who are merciful, pure in heart, peacemakers, and even persecuted and reviled. Blessed are those who are disliked, marginalized, bullied, attacked, hated. Blessed are those who don't know their own value, the depressed, the mentally ill, the foreigner. Blessed are all those who don't have it together, those who don't seem to fit in, those that don't think they'd amount to anything. Blessed are they. Blessed are we. Not because of these things, but because of the hope that we all share in the promises of God, the promises of grace, mercy, and love.

On this All Saints Sunday, may we always be aware of the connection that we have with each other and our history, that we be reminded of the value and worth we have as God's people, blessing us with the hope in God's truth, God's healing, and God's gift of life. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Holy God, We Praise Your Name (#414)

CREED

Together with all the saints of all times and places, 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 remember and honour the saints of the past, let us pray for the future of the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, “by your blessed mercy, O God,” and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we bless you and praise your name and together we proclaim your greatness to the world. May our ministry to each other and all people be fruitful in building faith and relationship for the good of all. We lift up in pray 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 the Lutheran Church of the Cross in Victoria and their pastors Lyle McKenzie and Lyndon Sayers; and for all the prison ministries and their chaplains across the country. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you have created this wondrous planet for us to live in, that meets our needs and in which we lack nothing. Strengthen our stewardship of the creation that you’ve entrusted to us, that our care for it might assist in its restoration and retention of its beauty and resources. We pray for those areas of the world that are prone to harsh weather or natural disasters, that their inhabitants find a way to be safe in navigating the elements. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you answer our cries for help and deliver us from our troubles, but we continue to face hardship and tumultuous times. We pray for peace around the world, that the nations, territories, and areas of the world might learn to live in harmony. We also remember in prayer those that we’ve sponsored to come to our country: Abraham Barhane and Solyana Amanuel; and for those that have not yet arrived: Maেকেle Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, in our times of pain and sorrow you send your angels to encamp around us, bringing us comfort and healing. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love and blessing be apparent on us all. Especially we pray for Bev and family; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bryan and Chona; Beulah; 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 blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we know that you are good and in you we have refuge and redemption. We look to you for strength and wisdom for this life of faith that you’ve called us into. May we look to the saints and draw inspiration from their faith, that we might always be reminded of how we are connected in your kingdom and community for all time. By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your unending love and blessing, 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 gives us the blessing of hope in your promises,
joining us with all the saints of all times and places,
the hosts of heaven,
the choirs of angels,
and the whole church on earth,
in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 190)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy and almighty God, in you we have no fear and we are given all that we need for life, love, and community. You bless us with hope, as you promise us salvation from our sin and a role in your unending story of faith. And when the time was right, you sent to us Jesus, your Son, to show us first hand how that hope is to be fulfilled: in your grace, in your redemption, in your love.

For on the night that Jesus was betrayed, he sat with his friends for a meal, where he took the bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it and said, "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 that they all shared, 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."

It is in this bread and cup that we are given a glimpse of the blessedness we have as God's people, God's children, living in God's kingdom, together proclaiming this basis of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So then it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory reside, for you bless us with every good gift and even join us together in community with all the saints 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

Blessed as God's people by the Holy Spirit, 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 the Lord is good.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 191)

Shall We Gather at the River (#423)

For All Your Saints, O Lord (#427)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding us and nourishing us with your Word and your truth, that fills us with your love and wisdom that blesses us as your people forever. May the hope that we have in your promises move us into action, that our time in this world might contribute to joy and community until we meet again all your saints in light, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God of love bless you and keep you, the God of salvation shine on you and be gracious onto you, the God of hope look upon you with favour and give you peace.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: We Know That Christ Is Raised (#449)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, have hope in the Lord for the Lord is good.

Thanks be to God.