



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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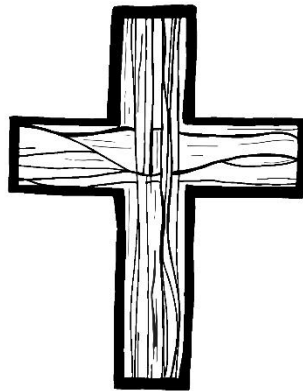
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Second Sunday in Lent

February 25, 2024

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three

The second covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the one made with Abraham and Sarah: God's promise to make them the ancestors of many, with whom God will remain in everlasting covenant. Paul says this promise comes to all who share Abraham's faith in the God who brings life into being where there was no life. We receive this baptismal promise of resurrection life in faith. Sarah and Abraham receive new names as a sign of the covenant, and we too get new identities in baptism, as we put on Christ.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and 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 hən̓q̓əmin̓əm̓ (Musqueam) and Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together this day to praise and give glory to the Lord, in whom we stand in awe. For God does not despise us or hide from us, but hears us in our cries, and provides for our every need. Dominion belongs to our Lord and we, from our varied walks of life and backgrounds, bow down in worship and service to God, proclaiming God's deliverance and grace for all people of all times and place, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and brother. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING SONG: Blessed Assurance (#638)

GREETING

The healing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the holistic love of God, and the humble fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

KYRIE (p. 203)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, your son Jesus bore the cross that represented suffering and death, and transformed it to be the symbol of redemption and salvation. Give us the strength to take up our crosses to follow him, that through his grace we may see the healing that comes from you and be moved to live in community and service in his name. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Genesis 17:1-7, 15-16

A reading from Genesis.

As with Noah, God makes an everlasting covenant with Abraham and Sarah. God promises this old couple that they will be the ancestors of nations, though they have no child together. God will miraculously bring forth new life from Sarah's womb. The name changes emphasize the firmness of God's promise.

¹When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. ²And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will make you exceedingly numerous." ³Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, ⁴"As for me, this is my covenant with you: You shall be the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁵No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the ancestor of a multitude of nations. ⁶I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. ⁷I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you."

¹⁵God said to Abraham, "As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. ¹⁶I will bless her, and moreover I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall give rise to nations; kings of peoples shall come from her."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 22:23-31

²³You who fear the LORD, give praise! All you of Jacob's line, give glory.

Stand in awe of the LORD, all you offspring of Israel.

²⁴**For the LORD does not despise nor abhor the poor in their poverty; neither is the LORD's face hidden from them;**

but when they cry out, the LORD hears them.

²⁵From you comes my praise in the great assembly;

I will perform my vows in the sight of those who fear the LORD.

²⁶**The poor shall eat and be satisfied,**

Let those who seek the LORD give praise! May your hearts live forever!

²⁷All the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD;

all the families of nations shall bow before God.

²⁸**For dominion belongs to the LORD,**

who rules over the nations.

²⁹Indeed, all who sleep in the earth shall bow down in worship;

all who go down to the dust, though they be dead, shall kneel before the LORD.

³⁰**Their descendants shall serve the LORD,**

whom they shall proclaim to generations to come.

³¹They shall proclaim God's deliverance to a people yet unborn,

saying to them, "The LORD has acted!"

SECOND READING: Romans 4:13-25

A reading from Romans.

Paul presents Abraham as the example for how a person comes into a right relationship with God not through works of the law but through faith. Though Abraham and Sarah were far too old for bearing children, Abraham trusted that God would accomplish what God had promised to accomplish.

¹³The promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. ¹⁴If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. ¹⁵For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

¹⁶For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, ¹⁷as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations")—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist. ¹⁸Hoping against hope, he believed that he would become "the father of many nations," according to what was said, "So numerous shall your descendants be." ¹⁹He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was already as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. ²⁰No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, ²¹being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised. ²²Therefore his faith "was reckoned to him as righteousness." ²³Now the words, "it was reckoned to him," were written not for his sake alone, ²⁴but for ours also. It will be reckoned to us who believe in him who raised Jesus our Lord from the dead, ²⁵who was handed over to death for our trespasses and was raised for our justification.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

GOSPEL: Mark 8:31-38

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

After Peter confesses his belief that Jesus is the Messiah, Jesus tells his disciples for the first time what is to come. Peter's response indicates that he does not yet understand the way of the cross that Jesus will travel.

³¹[Jesus] began to teach them that the Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, the chief priests, and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. ³²He said all this quite openly. And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. ³³But turning and looking at his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things."

³⁴He called the crowd with his disciples, and said to them, "If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. ³⁵For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it. ³⁶For what will it profit them to gain the whole world and forfeit their life? ³⁷Indeed, what can they give in return for their life? ³⁸Those who are ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of them the Son of Man will also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, open our hearts to receive the good news that you have for us this day and enable us to trust in your promises of grace and salvation, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Some of you might remember this about me, but I am a dragon. Not a literal fire-breathing mythical creature of course, but what I mean is that my lunar calendar astrological sign is the dragon, meaning that this lunar year that just started is indeed my year. To be honest, this has always been a point of pride for me, as being born in the year of the dragon is pretty cool. Just to give you an idea as to how cool, some other notable people born in this particular year are Keanu Reeves, Ryan Reynolds, and perhaps most importantly, Bruce Lee. Oh, and there's also our second son, which I admit was very intentional. Like I said, it's pretty cool so I wanted that for at least one of our kids as well.

But as cool as it is, it's even cooler that my parents actually decided to name me dragon. Not that my name Nathan, of Hebrew origin, means dragon, but my Chinese name (of Chinese origin) does. "Loong" is how you'd say it. And just having that word as my name just adds to the cool factor of something that is already cool. I mean, not even Bruce Lee has dragon in his name. In his nickname, yes, but not his actual birth certificate like me.

I remember when one of my wife's cousins learned that my name was dragon, he was super impressed. He was like, "waaa" (which means "wow" in Chinese), and then he said a bunch of other Chinese words that I didn't understand. He figured this from the blank look on my face, and he just put up his fist and said "powerful."

And that little brief interaction so many years ago I guess actually did make me feel powerful. Like I was super tough because I was born in a certain year that was beyond my control. Like I was super strong to have a name that I didn't choose. Like I should be feared by all because I shared an Asian zodiac sign with Bruce Lee.

This whole sense of power and strength is pretty big not just in the Chinese culture that I've come from, but it's seen around the world and throughout history as the mighty always seem to be the ones who are most typically celebrated, revered, and lifted up. It is the powerful that are feared, respected, and have the most influence. Even in evolution, nature has shown us that it is survival of the fittest. So in our instinct to just stay alive, we strive to be fit. In our mindset of surviving, we aim to be strong and able to overpower our adversaries. In our hopes to be around and make a lasting difference in this world, we do what we can to be strong.

I think that's why I like being a dragon so much. That is why we hold such a regard for whatever is considered "the best". That is why Jesus' prediction of his suffering and death didn't go over so well with his disciples.

But of course it would garner a bit of pushback. I mean, it'd be normal to assume that his disciples would have shared the same mentality as all of us: survival of the fittest, only the strong survive, the world belongs to the powerful. Saying that you're going to suffer greatly at the hands of your enemies, that you'll be rejected by your friends, and that you'll lose your life because you're just not going to win this fight... well, that doesn't exactly exude power and strength. Instead, it sounds more like weakness, defeat, and less than the best. And we can't have that.

So good ol' Peter does what any of us would do. Tries to reassure Jesus that nothing bad will happen to him, because none of us are all that comfortable in hardship. He tells Jesus that he'll be fine, when it's actually Peter that seems to need that reassurance more. Peter can't believe what he's hearing because he has forgotten the utter fact that we all, much like everyone who is, has been, or ever will be alive, will face hardship, brokenness, and death.

Like Peter, we react to weakness. We shun vulnerability. It's like we're scared of difficulties and adversity so we brush them off by putting on a strong face and telling people that "we're fine, we can handle it."

You know what I mean, don't you? Sure, we've all had our moments of being empowered, enabled, and looking strong, and so it's hard to admit when we're burdened with problems, hurt by calamity, smacked in the face by life... lest we look fragile, damaged, and powerless.

At least, I know this true for me. It'd hard for me to admit that I face turmoil in my own life, because it looks like everyone around me, at least on social media, has it all together. It's hard for me to admit that I get intimidated by others who exude a lot more knowledge and skill that I have, because I'm a dragon for crying out loud. It's hard for me to admit that I struggle with

temptations and negative emotions, because as a pastor my trust in God is expected to supersede any of this hardship and endow me with divine strength to get through it.

And that is where the problem is. That is the Adversary adversitizing. That is the lie that we often believe which Jesus rebukes in Peter today.

“Get behind me Satan, for you are setting your mind not on divine things, but on human things.”

See, Jesus calling Peter out in this way wasn't because Peter was caring for his teacher and mentor, that he was showing concern over Jesus' wellbeing, or even that he was following his natural instinct of survival. Rather, Jesus' rebuke for Peter's words were because Peter heard what he heard and reacted how he reacted but missed one crucial point in Jesus' prediction... that he will rise again. Peter focussed on the weakness and vulnerability but didn't see the strength in it. Peter only saw the despair and brokenness, but completely glossed over the healing and hope.

Hope in God's promises of grace. Hope in our unchanging position in God's community and kingdom. Hope in God's unwavering love for each and every one of us, with us, supporting us, and lifting us up out of our sin and forgiving us into healing, wholeness, and holiness with God and all the saints forever.

So it isn't true that we are alone in our suffering. It is a deception that God only loves the strong and mighty. It is a blatant lie that our value and worth is dependant on anything other than our identity as God's beloved children.

I mean, don't we often think that God can't be present in the suffering, thinking that God has left whatever place that is broken or in despair? Don't we openly wonder how a “good God can let bad things happen to good people” as though we as good should never face any kind of hardship at all? Don't we sometimes think that God's promise for us was to never suffer, be in pain, or be burdened in any way? The thing is, God's promises to us is because of all that.

That in our suffering, we can be reminded that we will be healed. In our pain, we will be made whole again and welcomed back into community. In our mortality and inevitability of death, we will live forever in God's story of relationship and grace, blessing all of history with compassion, forgiveness, and love.

This is what Jesus means in telling us to pick up our crosses. Pick up our weaknesses and pain. Pick up our hardship and suffering. Pick up our brokenness in heart, mind, and spirit... and see that God is with us in it. God holds us through it. God loves us in spite of it. And we are empowered, strengthened, and blessed to follow Jesus in his ways of humble service and community.

This doesn't mean that we look for trouble and distress so that God can be more present in our lives. This doesn't mean that we should purposely find hurt and burdens so there can be more healing for us. This doesn't mean that we intentionally live in sin so we can be forgiven all the more. But it is to say that in our distress that we can't avoid, under our already present burdens, while we are living in sin and face our mortality and death, that God continues to

show us how nothing in all of creation could snatch us from God's gracious and merciful hand of love, welcome, and peace.

In this season of Lent, as we continue in our contemplation of our shortcomings and sin, may we be able to pick up our crosses to follow Christ, knowing that he walks alongside us, sharing in our pain, suffering, and hardship and reminding us of unending hope, peace, and love. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Take Up Your Cross, the Savior Said (#667)

CREED (p. 105)

Together with all of God's broken and healed 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

Strengthened to pick up our crosses to follow Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "in your healing mercy, O God" and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. In your healing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we give you praise and glory, and we assemble together in awe and are empowered to serve you and neighbour. May our proclamation of your good news be heard by all who want to hear, and that our ministry be fruitful and pleasing to you. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use this building for worship, work, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Christ the King Lutheran Church in Surrey and their pastor Nicolas Alexandre; and for our ELCIC pastors, priests, and deacons serving our full communion congregations. In your healing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you feed us from the ends of the earth and you satisfy us with your providence. Strengthen us in our care for this planet and all that is in it, that it may continue to feed and house us for generations. In your healing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you rule over the nations and we bow before your majesty. May your grace be known in all countries, cities, and communities, that all people might know of and reflect your love and grace on others, allowing us all to live in peace and harmony. We pray for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come to our country: Abraham Barhane; and Solyana Amanuel; and as well as for those who have not yet arrived: Maেকে Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. In your healing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you do not hide your face from us, but you hear us when we cry out to you. We pray for those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love might bring us all into healing and wholeness. We pray especially for Bev and family; Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bryan and Chona; Sukhwant; John and Betty; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Allan; Matt; Lucas; Julie and family; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time....

In your healing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, even the saints of the past continue to kneel and bow down in worship, for your love and grace are eternal. Remind us of our connection to those we have loved and lost, that their lives of faith might inform us in our actions and decision making, allowing us to set a good example for the generations to come. In your healing mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, leaning on your strength and mercy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE (p. 143)

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE (p. 144)

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 overcame death and the grave
and leads us into life in community,
empowering us to join
with all the choirs of angels,

with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 144)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord, to you we give praise and glory, for we stand in awe of you and your unending grace and love. You do not hide your face from us when we call, but you hear our cries and answer our prayers. So we praise you in our community and congregation, and gladly serve you in proclaiming your name to all the world, as you feed us with your Word and nourish us with your truth. You continue to bless us by sending to us your Son, Jesus, to reveal to us just how deep and wide your love and grace are.

Because on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus 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."

After they ate, Jesus took the cup, 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 through this food that we can see how strength is manifested in love in spite of weakness, allowing us to proclaim this basis of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Again we kneel to you, O Lord, we bow down in worship and we proclaim to you all glory and honour through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 145)

Together strengthen 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

Take and eat, be fed and strengthened by healing and love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 146)

O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate (#722)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we again praise you for feeding and nourishing us with your Word, graciously given to us through your covenant with us and our ancestors, empowering us to pick up our crosses and follow you in your wisdom and truth and love, through Jesus Christ.

Amen.

SENDING**BLESSING**

May God the Creator bless you and strengthen you,
God the Christ teach you boldness and grace,
and God the Counsellor journey with you, holding your hand and granting you peace,
both now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus (#802)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, pick up your crosses to follow Christ.

Thanks be to God.