



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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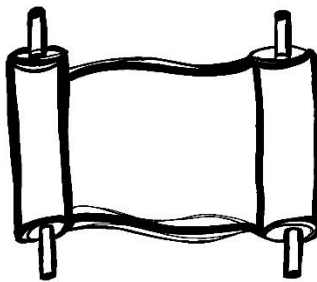
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Third Sunday in Lent

March 3, 2024

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three

The third covenant in this year's Lenten readings is the central one of Israel's history: the gift of the law to those God freed from slavery. The commandments begin with the statement that because God alone has freed us from the powers that oppressed us, we are to let nothing else claim first place in our lives. When Jesus throws the merchants out of the temple, he is defending the worship of God alone and rejecting the ways commerce and profit-making can become our gods. The Ten Commandments are essential to our baptismal call: centered first in God's liberating love, we strive to live out justice and mercy in our communities and the world.

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 hənq̓əminəm (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in worship, to declare the glory of God and proclaim the handiwork of our Creator. Throughout history, we have been shown the mercy of God, revealed through gracious acts of love and compassion, and blessing us all with community and relationship. For the teachings of the Lord is perfect and revives us all with its shining light and wisdom. And so we long for the presence of God in our lives through God's Word, which enlightens us, cleanses us, forgives us, and moves us into our worship, praise, and prayers to God, our strength and redeemer, through Jesus Christ, our brother and our friend. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING SONG: Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation (#645)

GREETING

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

KYRIE (p. 203)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, your power is made perfect in weakness and your wisdom appear as foolishness in this world. Overturn in us all the ways we are stuck and stifled, that we might embrace your true calling into discipleship and faithful living in your kingdom, where we can find true community and compassion and peace, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Exodus 20:1-17

A reading from Exodus.

After escaping from slavery, the Israelites come to Mount Sinai, where God teaches them how to live in community. The Ten Commandments proclaim that God alone is worthy of worship. Flowing from God, the life of the community flourishes when based on honesty, trust, fidelity, and respect for life, family, and property.

¹God spoke all these words:

²I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery; ³you shall have no other gods before me.

⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me, ⁶but showing steadfast love to the thousandth generation of those who love me and keep my commandments.

⁷You shall not make wrongful use of the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not acquit anyone who misuses his name.

⁸Remember the sabbath day, and keep it holy. ⁹Six days you shall labor and do all your work. ¹⁰But the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God; you shall not do any work—you, your son or your daughter, your male or female slave, your livestock, or the alien resident in your towns. ¹¹For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but

rested the seventh day; therefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day and consecrated it.

¹²Honor your father and your mother, so that your days may be long in the land that the LORD your God is giving you.

¹³You shall not murder.

¹⁴You shall not commit adultery.

¹⁵You shall not steal.

¹⁶You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

¹⁷You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or male or female slave, or ox, or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 19

¹The heavens declare the glory of God,
and the sky proclaims its maker's handiwork.

²**One day tells its tale to another,
and one night imparts knowledge to another.**

³Although they have no words or language,
and their voices are not heard,

⁴**their sound has gone out into all lands, and their message to the ends of the world,
where God has pitched a tent for the sun.**

⁵It comes forth like a bridegroom out of his chamber;
it rejoices like a champion to run its course.

⁶**It goes forth from the uttermost edge of the heavens and runs about to the end of it again;
nothing is hidden from its burning heat.**

⁷The teaching of the LORD is perfect and revives the soul;
the testimony of the LORD is sure and gives wisdom to the simple.

⁸**The statutes of the LORD are just and rejoice the heart;
the commandment of the LORD is clear and gives light to the eyes.**

⁹The fear of the LORD is clean and endures forever;
the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

¹⁰**More to be desired are they than gold, more than much fine gold,
sweeter far than honey, than honey in the comb.**

¹¹By them also is your servant enlightened,
and in keeping them there is great reward.

¹²**Who can detect one's own offenses?
Cleanse me from my secret faults.**

¹³Above all, keep your servant from presumptuous sins; let them not get dominion over me;
then shall I be whole and sound, and innocent of a great offense.

¹⁴**Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight,
O LORD, my strength and my redeemer.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

The word of the cross is pure foolishness and nonsense to the world because it claims that God is mostly revealed in weakness, humiliation, and death. But through such divine foolishness and weakness, God is working to save us. The center of Paul's preaching is Christ crucified.

¹⁸The message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ¹⁹For it is written,

“I will destroy the wisdom of the wise,
and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart.”

²⁰Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? ²¹For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, God decided, through the foolishness of our proclamation, to save those who believe. ²²For Jews demand signs and Greeks desire wisdom, ²³but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, ²⁴but to those who are the called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. ²⁵For God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)

GOSPEL: John 2:13-22

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus attacks the commercialization of religion by driving merchants out of the temple. When challenged, he responds mysteriously, with the first prediction of his own death and resurrection. In the midst of a seemingly stable religious center, Jesus suggests that the center itself has changed.

¹³The Passover of the Jews was near, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. ¹⁴In the temple he found people selling cattle, sheep, and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables.

¹⁵Making a whip of cords, he drove all of them out of the temple, both the sheep and the cattle. He also poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables. ¹⁶He told those who were selling the doves, “Take these things out of here! Stop making my Father's house a marketplace!” ¹⁷His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for your house will consume me.” ¹⁸The Jews then said to him, “What sign can you show us for doing this?” ¹⁹Jesus answered them, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.” ²⁰The Jews then said, “This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and will you raise it up in three days?” ²¹But he was speaking of the temple of his body. ²²After he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this; and they believed the scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, may the words of my mouth and the meditation of all our hearts be honouring and pleasing to you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A number of years ago I was travelling abroad and I had the opportunity to visit this particular location's "celebrity mega church". I'm not going to name of the church as that doesn't really matter for the story, nor do I want any of the thousands of people hearing these words thinking that I'm putting down another congregation. Either case, this church was known for its really good music. They were led by some very talented composers and artists that were able to write worship song after worship song that just sounded like they belonged more on a secular top 40 list than on a church's hymn board. Let's just say that "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," these songs were not, and they had the cd sales to prove it.

Anyway, visiting this church was a bit of a trip for us, as it was like going to a concert where we'll see some celebrities. I remember driving up to their parking lot and just being in awe with their modern architectural feat of a building. It was huge and so innovative looking. Sort of like the Hall of Justice from the old Justice League comics and cartoon if you remember those. I thought it was pretty cool, at least (the building, not the comics... those were awful).

I admit, I went in with some mixed emotions. While I was a bit excited to be in the presence of pseudo-royalty, I was also somewhat skeptical, because I knew that they were going to be acting like full-on royalty. And when we walked in, my excitement dropped and my skepticism was confirmed. Because the first thing I saw through the door, literally the first thing anyone would see... was their bookstore that took up basically the entire foyer. This behemoth bookstore was full of self-published books by their pastors and founders. This gigantic gift shop had shelves and shelves of paraphernalia with their names on it. This massive marketplace housed a seemingly endless supply of their albums and cd's, overpriced in my opinion, and tempting every visitor to spend their hard earned money.

I couldn't help but think, uhhh isn't there a story about a place like this in the bible? Don't all the gospel accounts that we have include a somewhat negative reaction to people profiteering in the temple courtyard? Haven't these people heard of Jesus turning over the tables of the merchants, the money changers, the marketplace mallrats that brought disgrace to God's house?

Isn't that what was happening here? Couldn't they see that? Don't they get their folly and... sin?

So yeah, I was pretty disappointed. Disappointed that they didn't know better. Disappointed that my skepticism was confirmed the moment I stepped in the door. Disappointed that I literally couldn't even find their sanctuary because their bookstore completely covered it up. It felt like for them, making money was first and worship was second.

So I think it's pretty clear why I told you this story. In today's gospel reading, we get that exact account that instantly came to my mind when I walked into this place. Jesus overturning those tables. Jesus calling out their selfishness and taking advantage of others. Jesus denouncing this marketplace. Most people that I talk to don't like this angry Jesus, but they understand him. I mean, no one likes those kinds of churches that seem to only focus on money and how to get more of it. No one likes those congregations that look like they spend more money on

themselves than on helping the poor. No one likes those pastors who are all flashy with their nice clothes and fancy cars and transformers collections.

I mean, even if Jesus didn't overturn those tables, we know that focussing on money is bad, right? Doesn't it say somewhere else in the bible that the love of money is the root of all evil? Aren't we warned against greed and selfishness, and the hurt and pain that it brings?

These were the thoughts that I couldn't help but have when I was at that church I was talking about. I mean, not only was their bookstore, their biggest money grab, the first thing anyone sees when walking into the church; not only was it actually a task and a half just to find the sanctuary that, by the way, was devoid of any Christian images whatsoever; and not only do their pastors drive some really nice cars that I could only ever dream of ever even sitting in, let alone owning one; but all around their space, everywhere you went, even in the bathrooms were these posters and sign boards and really expensive looking propaganda pieces advertising their special "Giving Sunday" that we apparently were so fortunate to be present for that very day.

To me, they were clearly worshipping money. To me, they were obviously turning God's house into a marketplace, something that triggered Jesus' zeal for his father's house making him completely lose it. To me, they were, without a doubt, *not* living or worshipping in the way that they should, the way God wants, the way *I* would do it.

Oh wait a second.

As much as I don't like this money-centric model, as much as I feel like it misses the mark, as much as I think that Jesus would back me up on this, Jesus' overturning the tables in the temple all those years ago wasn't about money as much as it was about attitude. Not his attitude as poor nomadic prophet and preacher with no fixed address, but the people's attitude of narrow-minded piety, extreme religious legalism, and spiritual and cultural supremacy like they and only they are the bee's knees in practice, custom, and tradition.

And I see that I share in that mentality with my thoughts and distain against this church that I can't seem to let go of.

Yes, it's not good to be focussed on money over God. It's not a good idea to shift the point of our work toward our pocketbooks over compassion, charity, and community. It's not good form for any church to promote their own brand over the message of the gospel. But at the same time, it's also not good to assume this is the case for churches, pastors, and people that we don't even know. It's not right for us to judge others for things that we have already decided to be true before even meeting them. It isn't loving to others to think that they need to be more like us or what we want them to be instead of seeing them as God's beloved, forgiven, and saved people, just like we are.

This isn't to say that we should start making our own music cd's, because you know, I'm pretty tone deaf. This isn't to say that anything should be permissible when it comes to worship and service. This isn't to say that we shouldn't have our own preferences and opinions around our own customs and traditions and what works for and speaks to us. But it is to say that we needn't be legalistic and judgemental in our ministry. It is to say that we aren't to be rigid in

our expressions of faith. It is to say that there is more than one way to serve our God and neighbour.

See Jesus is constantly overturning the tables of our lives, attitudes, and conventional and narrow-minded thinking. Jesus is always reminding us that God's love comes without requirement, prerequisite, or condition. Jesus continues to reveal to us all God's grace, mercy, and salvation that comes not from what we do, but through the sole decision and action of a benevolent God who welcomes us all into God's kingdom, community, and family.

So while I still don't really like the practices of that other church that I'm talking about, I can be thankful for the ministry of music that they provide that helps people see God more clearly in their lives. While I continue to have my way of worship and expression of faith, I can see and honour the diversity of others in their own ways of finding meaning and purpose. While my attitudes remain imperfect but forgiven, I can accept that is true for all others as well, those that I can relate to and those that I cannot. And above all, we can be reminded and accept that we are all collectively called not to be legalistic but to be forgiving, not to be judgemental but to be communal, not to be rigid and narrow-minded but to be open, compassionate, and loving just as we have first been loved.

As we are halfway through this season of Lent, may we continue to allow our hearts to be softened by the gracious salvation offered by God to all people, those we like, those we don't, and even to each one of us. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: The Church's One Foundation (#654)

CREED (p. 105)

With all of God's children gathered in worship, 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

Led into worship and community, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, “by your redeeming mercy, O God,” and you are invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your glory and handiwork are declared in the heavens and passed through the generations. We proclaim your name through our service to you and neighbour by your grace. Continue to strengthen our ministry as our hearts are always turned to you. We lift up 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 Our Redeemer Lutheran Church in Penticton and Trinity Anglican and Lutheran Church in Port Alberni and the pastors and leaders that serve these two congregations as they both continue in their search for a called leader. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your Word rings throughout these lands that you have made and is heard throughout all of creation. May our care of this planet be faithful that your voice can be heard in and through it for all time. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your teachings are perfect and revive our souls. May the governments and leaders of the world learn from these teachings, that they may govern and lead with your wisdom and grace. We pray for the continued support of those that we’ve sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Barhane; and Solyana Amanuel; as well as for those that have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your promises of healing are more precious than gold and sweeter than honey as you cleanse us from all that ail us and bring us into wholeness. Be especially with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your faithfulness be apparent in us all. In particular, we pray for Bryan and Chona; Bev and family; Beulah; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Sukhwant; John and Betty; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; William; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Allan; Matt; Lucas; Julie and family; Hwee Yang; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you keep us from our presumptuous sins as you are our strength, and you redeem us to live in your presence with the saints forever. May we be informed by your grace seen in the lives of faith of the past, and may we reflect that grace in every situation and to every person we encounter. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your redemptive grace, 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 Savior Jesus Christ;
who teaches us how to live and shows us how to worship,
that we might join with all 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. 144)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O God, we declare your glory throughout all the world, proclaiming your gracious love to all the nations. Through all time and boundaries, your wondrous deeds and acts of mercy are known in all the lands of creation. For your wisdom is sure and perfect, reviving our souls, giving light to our eyes, and revealing joy into our hearts. And while this wisdom might seem like foolishness to the world, you sent to us your Son Jesus to be one of us, reminding us how to love and live in community.

For on that night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, took some bread, and with thanksgiving he 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 it, he took the cup, and with a continued thankful heart he passed it around the table for them to drink from it 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."

This food given to us is part of our great reward of welcome and community, even as we declare this mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

As you keep us from presumptuous sins, O God, and forgive us our offenses, you bring us to wholeness in your name, that the words of our mouths and the meditations of our hearts be pleasing and acceptable 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 (p. 145)

Gathered together in sincere and honest worship, let us pray as Jesus taught us.

Our Father in heaven,
 hallowed be your name,
 your kingdom come,
 your will be done,
 on earth as in heaven.

Give us today our daily bread.

Forgive us our sins
 as we forgive those
 who sin against us.

Save us from the time of trial
 and deliver us from evil.

For the kingdom, the power,
 and the glory are yours,
 now and forever. Amen.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

Taste and see, God remains with us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 146)
 When the Poor Ones (#725)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Let us pray.

Compassionate God, you have fed us with the bread of heaven. Sustain us in our Lenten pilgrimage: may our fasting be hunger for justice; our alms, a making of peace; and our prayer, the song of grateful hearts, through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord.

Amen.

SENDING**BLESSING**

God our Creator shine upon you.

God the Christ fill you with true wisdom and strength,

God as holiness in Spirit guide you into all faithfulness and joy, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: Day by Day (#790)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, see God in all that you do and all that you are.

Thanks be to God.