



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Third Sunday of Easter

April 14, 2024

Now the Feast and Celebration

The gospel for the third Sunday of Easter is always one in which the risen Christ shares food with the disciples, meals that are the Easter template for the meal we share each Sunday. In today's gospel, Jesus both shares the disciples' food and shows them the meaning of his suffering, death, and resurrection through the scriptures, the two main elements of our Sunday worship.

We at Grace Lutheran Church strive to reflect and proclaim the love of God shown to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by providing an inclusive and supportive environment through loving care and community service.

A warm welcome to all who are worshipping with us in person or online! We appreciate your contribution to the community today: with your voice, your presence, and just the blessing that you are. May you be nurtured by God's Word, empowered by the love of Christ, and stirred by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this service this day, for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran Church worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəŋ (Musqueam) and Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in worship of our merciful God, the one who hears and answers our prayers, defends us and our causes, and sets us free from the dishonouring distress that sets us on paths of illusionary lies and falsehoods. But our Lord restores us into faith, leads us into repentance, and welcomes us back into community and right relationship. And so we praise our God, whose face shines upon us, who puts gladness in our hearts, and bring us peace. **Amen.**
Thanks be to God.

GATHERING HYMN: Christ Has Arisen, Alleluia (#364)

GREETING

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

NOW THE FEAST (p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Almighty God, we give you thanks for the love poured into our world through Jesus Christ, who opened our minds to see your presence in the world and to understand the peace that has been breathed on us with the Spirit. May we see your love in our space, here and now, empowering us to continue as your hands and feet of justice in the world, through Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

FIRST READING: Acts 3:12-19

A reading from Acts.

After healing a man unable to walk, Peter preaches to the people, describing how God's promises to Israel have been fulfilled in Jesus. Through the proclamation of Christ's death and resurrection, God is offering them forgiveness and restoration in Jesus' name.

¹²[Peter] addressed the people, "You Israelites, why do you wonder at this, or why do you stare at us, as though by our own power or piety we had made him walk?¹³The God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, the God of our ancestors has glorified his servant Jesus, whom you handed over and rejected in the presence of Pilate, though he had decided to release him. ¹⁴But you rejected the Holy and Righteous One and asked to have a murderer given to you, ¹⁵and you killed the Author of life, whom God raised from the dead. To this we are witnesses. ¹⁶And by faith in his name, his name itself has made this man strong, whom you see and know; and the faith that is through Jesus has given him this perfect health in the presence of all of you.

¹⁷"And now, friends, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did also your rulers. ¹⁸In this way God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, that his Messiah would suffer.

¹⁹Repent therefore, and turn to God so that your sins may be wiped out."

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 4

¹Answer me when I call, O God, defender of my cause;
you set me free when I was in distress; have mercy on me and hear my prayer.

²**“You mortals, how long will you dishonor my glory;
how long will you love illusions and seek after lies?”**

³Know that the LORD does wonders for the faithful;
the LORD will hear me when I call.

⁴**Tremble, then, and do not sin;
speak to your heart in silence upon your bed.**

⁵Offer the appointed sacrifices,
and put your trust in the LORD.

⁶**Many are saying, “Who will show us any good?”
Let the light of your face shine upon us, O LORD.**

⁷You have put gladness in my heart,
more than when grain and wine abound.

⁸**In peace, I will lie down and sleep;
for you alone, O LORD, make me rest secure.**

SECOND READING: 1 John 3:1-7

A reading from 1 John.

God has loved us in order to make us children of God. Though we do not yet know the full details of our future existence, we trust that God will reveal it just as God revealed Jesus to take away our sins.

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.

⁴Everyone who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness. ⁵You know that he was revealed to take away sins, and in him there is no sin. ⁶No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him. ⁷Little children, let no one deceive you. Everyone who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 8)

GOSPEL: Luke 24:36b-48

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

In this account of an appearance after his resurrection, Jesus opens the minds of the disciples to understand him as Messiah. Jesus convinces them that he has been raised and sends them on a mission to proclaim the message of repentance and forgiveness.

^{36b}Jesus himself stood among [the disciples] and said to them, “Peace be with you.” ³⁷They were startled and terrified, and thought that they were seeing a ghost. ³⁸He said to them, “Why are you frightened, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? ³⁹Look at my hands and my feet; see that it is I myself. Touch me and see; for a ghost does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have.” ⁴⁰And when he had said this, he showed them his hands and his feet. ⁴¹While in their joy

they were disbelieving and still wondering, he said to them, “Have you anything here to eat?”

⁴²They gave him a piece of broiled fish, ⁴³and he took it and ate in their presence.

⁴⁴Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the law of Moses, the prophets, and the psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵Then he opened their minds to understand the scriptures, ⁴⁶and he said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸You are witnesses of these things.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, by your Spirit may your radical and surprising love be revealed, in your Word, in your presence, and in our lives, through Jesus Christ the risen Saviour of the world. **Amen.**

So anyone catch the eclipse on Monday? In case you don't know what I'm talking about, this past Monday marked some special eclipse that is supposed to happen just once every few hundred years or something. I don't really follow these things because lately it seems like we have these elusive “once in a lifetime” eclipses like every few years. Either that or time is going by much faster than I thought.

Whatever the case, we couldn't see this special eclipse anyway here in the Lower Mainland even if we wanted to, because unlike the day before and the day after and most of the week for that matter, the sky was covered with rain clouds that were actively dropping rain. Any attempt to look up would only be met by water in your eye.

Either case, I know none of us here were able to see the eclipse, but were any of us here raptured? This was something else that was going around with the eclipse, a prediction that it was a sign of the end times. And I guess that is no surprise as people have been making end time predictions since time was even conceived to eventually end. And by chance you don't know what the rapture is, it's a theory that before the world ends for good, Jesus will come down to take all the faithful back with him to heaven, leaving behind all the unfaithful to fend for themselves. So it's kind of similar to Thanos snapping half of life away, except with no infinity gauntlet.

Well, it looks like most of us are here, so I guess the rapture didn't happen after all. Or maybe it did but we are all the unfaithful? I don't know. But it doesn't seem like it happened anyway. I mean, no planes crashed, no buildings fell, no inexplicable disappearances from what I've heard. Don't get me wrong, I'm sure people died on that day around the world, but it wasn't anywhere near a rapture level event where I'd completely renounce my preexisting beliefs around such rapture type events. We didn't see it. We didn't experience it. It didn't happen. And I can't say that I'm shocked by any means, as we often scoff at these predictions because so far, they haven't exactly had the greatest track record for accuracy.

But then, how can we be so sure the eclipse happened? We didn't see that either. We didn't experience it, not in the Lower Mainland at least. Yet most of us don't really question that, do we. So then there were two events that people were talking about and perhaps looking

forward to, both of which weren't at all tangible in these here parts, yet we view their plausibility and possibility of occurrence very differently. Where and how do we draw the line?

How can we say that we believe in one thing and not the other? Trust in this person but not that one? Put our faith in one doctrine but completely refute the next?

These are questions that might plague our minds whenever, if ever, we are tested, put on the stand, or questioned about who we are and what we're about. I mean, are we *sure* we know what we know and are right about what we're right about? Can we be certain that our opinions, thoughts, and ideas are correct? Is it possible that we might actually, in any subject or matter, be incorrect, misguided, or just wrong? And if so, how can we ever know?

Well, there is thing I learned in school called the scientific method, which is basically a process that we could follow to learn something. It starts with a theory or hypothesis, a question that should be as open as possible. Then we start to test that question with experiments and such. And then from those tests we observe the results and draw our conclusion. So did the eclipse happen? Aside from getting that aforementioned eyeful of rainwater, we can check for proof on the internet easily enough. We can read up on how scientists were able to predict with razor sharp accuracy the when, where, and why of the event. Or we can just ask people that we know who did experience it what they thought. And with all those sources we can probably come up with a conclusion whether it did or not.

Did the rapture happen? We can go through the same steps, except it might be hard to interview someone who did experience the rapture first hand, because you know, I don't think there's internet in heaven.

But out of all those sources, the ones we trust most about almost anything are those that have actually experienced whatever we're asking about. Those that have seen it or felt it themselves. Those that we would consider *witnesses*.

I know, that doesn't always totally change our beliefs about things, as it is proven that eye-witness accounts can be inaccurate as well, but it sure helps. It helps more when it's a friend of ours that we already trust. It helps when what they are telling us makes sense and is plausible. It really helps when we already believe whatever they're telling us before they even tell it to us.

And so I think about the first witnesses of the Resurrection and how hard it must have been to believe them as they spoke of things so unbelievable. Life after death? Impossibru!

Even for us, sitting here in our Christian church with our Christian faith holding our Christian bibles (or at least bulletins), and already believing that the scriptures that we read are true, it's still hard for us to grasp the resurrection. Of course it is, we don't experience it in the way that it is described, we haven't seen it happen in our lives, the news, or on our social media feeds, and our loved ones who have died don't appear in front of us when we're behind locked doors saying "peace be with you". At least I hope not because that would be really scary. Like deathly frightening, pun very much intended.

So how can Jesus ever trust us to spread this message? How can he ever call us witnesses? How can we even believe something that is so unbelievable?

Well, the thing is, it's hard for us to believe because we don't experience a bodily resurrection like it is described in the text. We don't experience these miraculous miracles like instant healings, feeding a multitude with 5 loaves and 2 fish, or turning water into wine. We don't experience Jesus in a way that is so tangible like being able to touch the scars in his hands and feet that it would blow any doubt out of our minds.

But.

If we really think about it, we actually do. Maybe not exactly as we read, but we experience Jesus through the healing of our pain, hurts, and suffering that come from just living. We experience miracles in community through the welcome of a stranger, the forgiveness of wrongs, and the reconciling of relationships. We experience resurrection in our second chances, our seeing the value and worth in the unexpected, in the fact that even we can still love and be loved.

So while we don't see Jesus in the flesh like the disciples did, Jesus continues to be all around us in the Spirit. We know Jesus is with us in our relating to each other, in our interactions, in the grace that we show and are shown. We witness Jesus in our lives and in the lives of others through the gifts and talents that we've been given, the contribution that we can make to society, and the role we all play for the greater good of the world.

I know, it doesn't always seem like we can be much, but really it doesn't always take much. We all can't be influential leaders, generous philanthropists, or charismatic preachers. But we can in our own way be a listening ear, a helping hand, or an encouraging presence in the lives of others. We can be there for others because others have been there for us. We can forgive and reconcile because we have been forgiven and reconciled. We can show love because it has been promised to us that we are loved.

To these, we are indeed witnesses, for we have seen it, heard it, and experienced it throughout our lives in our community, in our relationships, and in who we are as people of God. Even though we might not always realise it, but we are surrounded by the company of saints. I mean go ahead, look around you. Everyone here in this place, all of you watching online, we together are gathered in the Spirit to learn, to worship, to *be*. Be God's people. Be in community. Be witnesses to the love and peace that is graciously given.

In this season of Easter, may we continue to experience resurrection joy, that we may serve as witnesses of all that God is in and around our lives, through our actions, our words, and our very selves as saved and redeemed people loved by God. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Touch That Soothes and Heals (ACS #939)

CREED (p. 9)

With all the living witnesses of God's faithfulness and justice, 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 be heralds of God's love and grace, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "have mercy on us, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you answer us when we call and you defend our cause and set us free. You call us to justice and strengthen us to love you and neighbour for the sake of your gospel. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use our building for worship, work, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and the bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for First Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their interim pastor Dave Lefsrud; and for all Lutheran Campus Ministry across Canada and their many pastors and leaders that serve them. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we know that you have created the wonders of the world and have surrounded us with its beauty and resources for life. Strengthen our stewardship of this planet and restore its health that it may continue to be our home for the generations to come. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we tremble before your might and authority and you lead us away from sin. Grant to all world leaders and politicians a wisdom that is full of grace and peace, that we might one day live together in unity and harmony. 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 who have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you heal us and put gladness in our hearts, filling us with the knowledge of your ever-present love. Make this particularly apparent with those of us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your goodness might be seen by all. We pray especially for Bryan and Chona; Bev and family; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Kathy and Raj; Phil; Sukhwant; John and Betty; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; the family and friends of Jeanette; Pat and Patty; Hwee Yang; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O God, when our time comes we shall lie down and sleep in peace, for we can rest secure in your promise of eternity with you and all the saints. May this promise inform us of the gravity of our actions and community living as we are strengthened to follow your will, by the teaching of Jesus our Lord and the power of your Spirit. Have mercy on us, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your peace and justice, breathed onto us by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

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 places give thanks and praise to you, holy and almighty God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who resides with and is present among us through the Spirit, uniting us together with all the saints, the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the whole church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 11)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

O God you answer and defend us when we call on your name, even when we fail to honour your glory and truth. You continue to do wondrous works in and around our lives, and you forgive us of our shortcomings and sin. The light of your face shines upon us and fills us with the joy and peace shown to all through the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, whom you have sent to teach us the ways of your grace and love.

For the on the night that he was betrayed, your son Jesus was with his friends for a meal, where he took the bread, gave thanks, and 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 common 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 in this food and drink that we see the gladness of God abounding in us, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God, you alone grant us peace and you secure for us a place with you in eternity along with all the saints, through the love and grace of your Son Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 13)

Gathered into one love 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 witness God's love and peace shining upon us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 14)

Come and Fill Our Hearts (#528)

Jesus, We Are Gathered (#529)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for feeding us physically and spiritually and renewing us with the wisdom of your Spirit. May your love for us shine in and through us, reflecting out onto all people of all ethnicities, orientations, and creeds, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

BLESSING

May God our Shepherd bless you with peace and keep you in love,
God our Saviour shine on you with understanding and insight,
God our Spirit look upon you with favour, and reveal to you all faith, grace, and truth, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING SONG: We Walk by Faith (#635)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be witnesses of God's promises of love and grace.

Thanks be to God.

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