



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Second Sunday of Easter

April 7, 2024

Now the Feast and Celebration

The Easter season is a week of weeks, seven Sundays when we play in the mystery of Christ's presence, mostly through the glorious Gospel of John. Today we gather with the disciples on the first Easter, and Jesus breathes the Spirit on us. With Thomas we ask for a sign, and Jesus offers us his wounded self in the broken bread. From frightened individuals we are transformed into a community of open doors, peace, forgiveness, and material sharing such that no one among us is in need.

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

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are gathered this day in worship, as kindred living in the unity of God's Spirit. It is good and pleasant for us to be here, residing in the love of community, the grace of God, and the peace offered by Christ our Lord. And so we worship and sing praises for the joyous hope of the resurrection lifts us up and brings us into new life with Jesus Christ, our Saviour and friend.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING HYMN: The Day of Resurrection! (#361)

GREETING

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

He is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The surprising grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the calming love of God, and the peacemaking fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

NOW THE FEAST (p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord may your Spirit be breathed in this place, opening our minds, softening our hearts, enlivening our faith, and bringing us the peace that surpasses all understanding, through Jesus Christ, the Risen One, our Saviour. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Acts 4:32-35

A reading from Acts.

While the apostles testified to others about the resurrection of Jesus, the early Christian community shared what they owned or sold their possessions to help their fellow believers who were in need.

³²Now the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common. ³³With great power the apostles gave their testimony to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. ³⁴There was not a needy person among them, for as many as owned lands or houses sold them and brought the proceeds of what was sold. ³⁵They laid it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to each as any had need.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 133

¹How good and how pleasant it is,
when kindred live together in unity!

²**It is like fine oil upon the head, flowing down upon the beard,
upon the beard of Aaron, flowing down upon the collar ¹ of his robe.**

³It is like the dew of Hermon flowing down upon the hills of Zion.
For there the LORD has commanded the blessing: life forevermore.

SECOND READING: 1 John 1:1--2:2

A reading from 1 John.

The opening of this letter serves as a reality check. The reality of God is light, but our confessed reality has been sin. God cleanses us from our sinful reality through Christ's death so that we live in fellowship with Christ and walk in God's light.

¹We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—

²this life was revealed, and we have seen it and testify to it, and declare to you the eternal life that was with the Father and was revealed to us—³we declare to you what we have seen and heard so that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ. ⁴We are writing these things so that our joy may be complete.

⁵This is the message we have heard from him and proclaim to you, that God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. ⁶If we say that we have fellowship with him while we are walking in darkness, we lie and do not do what is true; ⁷but if we walk in the light as he himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin. ⁸If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. ⁹If we confess our sins, he who is faithful and just will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ¹⁰If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

^{2:1}My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; ²and he is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 8)

GOSPEL: John 20:19-31

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The story of Easter continues as the risen Jesus appears to his disciples. His words to Thomas offer a blessing to all who entrust themselves in faith to the risen Lord.

¹⁹When it was evening on that day, the first day of the week, and the doors of the house where the disciples had met were locked for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." ²⁰After he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples rejoiced when they saw the Lord. ²¹Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I send you." ²²When he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. ²³If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

²⁴But Thomas (who was called the Twin), one of the twelve, was not with them when Jesus came. ²⁵So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I

see the mark of the nails in his hands, and put my finger in the mark of the nails and my hand in his side, I will not believe.”

²⁶A week later his disciples were again in the house, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were shut, Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.” ²⁷Then he said to Thomas, “Put your finger here and see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it in my side. Do not doubt but believe.” ²⁸Thomas answered him, “My Lord and my God!” ²⁹Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have come to believe.”

³⁰Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book. ³¹But these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

God of all faith and doubt, by the power of your Spirit may our ears hear your voice, our eyes see your face, and our hearts feel you present with us, here and now, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

So the funeral for my uncle who died a couple weeks ago happened this past Wednesday. And I’ll admit, I got a bit more emotional than I thought I would, which is weird because I’m not usually emotional at the actual funeral. Before or after, maybe, but not during. So I’m glad that my cousins who organised it had the foresight to not ask me to lead the service or preach the sermon. Well, either they had the good foresight or they just don’t trust me enough to not make inappropriate jokes on such a solemn day. Either case, it was a good decision on their part.

The thing about this uncle though, is that while he didn’t speak English very well, he knew enough to be able to communicate pure comedy. It wasn’t so much what he said, but just how he’d say it that always made me laugh, at least on the inside. In my opinion, this guy just brought in a bit of sunshine in all that he did for his family, for his church, and in the community in general.

So yeah, the funeral was a bit tough. As I listened to my cousins talk about him, it brought back my own memories of growing up with the man, as my family and theirs spent quite a bit of time together when I was a kid. We’d go to church together, family outings together, and since my dad and this uncle worked at the same place, we even went to their work Christmas party together. These cousins and my siblings and me are the closest in age when compared to our other cousins, so it was just natural that we’d do more things together.

But what struck me about the day was just how many people showed up in honour of my uncle. I didn’t get the exact count, but I would say over 200 at least. Aside from my extensive extended family, I also saw a bunch of other people that I probably haven’t seen for 20 some odd years at least. He was still a very active member of the church that I grew up at, so it was like a reunion for me of sorts. Like my old Sunday School teacher was there, which was wild that she was still alive, let alone remember who I am.

But after all was said and done, after the prayers were prayed and the songs sung, after the tears were wiped away and the ground covered back up, I noticed that it wasn't in the service itself where I found the most comfort. But it was in being able to see how my uncle had affected and contributed to the lives around him, how he was so loved by so many, how his legacy of hospitality and welcome will carry on, that was truly healing for me. And that realisation didn't come from anything the celebrant did or said, but it came from the wider community. It was the community in which I found peace.

Peace that was there in the fellowship and conversation after the service. Peace that was given to this group of familiar and unfamiliar faces gathered together in remembrance of the same person. Peace that was divinely breathed upon us all.

Because as introverted that we might feel like we are or need to be, there is just something to be said about being surrounded by people when in mourning, isn't there. There is something to be said about knowing that we are not alone in our pain. There is something to be said about being able to share with others who would be able to understand to a certain extent, because they are feeling what we are feeling.

I mean, that's why the disciples were locked up in that upper room, isn't it? Sure, things were still pretty heavy for them. They might have felt a bit aimless with the loss of their teacher and mentor. Or maybe they were a scared that the people would soon figure out that Peter was lying and actually did know Jesus and they'd come after them. But beyond all of that, I think they needed to be together, they needed the support from each other, they needed the peace that comes from community. And as they were there gathered together in fear and perhaps hiding, they received that peace in a way that they probably never would have guessed or imagined.

Jesus. In the flesh. Among them. With them. Giving them peace.

Who would have think it? Nevermind that Jesus said this would happen, or that he promised that he'd be there where they are gathered in his name, or that some of their crew had already seen him earlier that day, they were shocked. I guess I don't blame them as Jesus pretty much spoke to them in riddles and parables like all the time, so how could they have known to take him literally this one time?

Either case, it was in that upper room behind locked doors that Jesus appeared to all of them. All but one. Of course, as we know, Thomas wasn't there for whatever reason. I don't know, maybe he was getting groceries or making a deposit at the bank or something. But he wasn't there, he wasn't present, he missed out.

But not for long.

After he returned and the others filled him in on what had just happened, he wanted that same experience. He heard the hope in their voices and he wanted in on that action. Maybe he was even a bit jealous as his first reaction was one of skepticism, like "What? No way. For Simon Peter's sake." And he had to wait a whole week before he had his chance.

And while many many preachers and sermons might focus on Thomas' reaction of doubt here, I think there is more to be said about the events that led to and followed the doubt. I mean

Jesus was able to appear to the other non-Thomas disciples pretty easily, he found where they were, passed through their locked doors, and entered their space. Clearly this was a supernatural miraculous event that should be able to be duplicated however, wherever, and whenever Jesus wanted. So why did he wait a whole week? Why not appear to Thomas when he was at the store? Or at the line up at the bank? Or just wherever he was when he was by himself, away from the other disciples?

Well, I think it's because how Jesus promised he'd show up. See while God is revealed in a great many ways, in meditation, through creation, and apparently in dreams, I think Jesus is found in community. It's when we aren't alone that we are reminded of the teachings and promises of Christ. It's when we are plugged in, surrounded by our people, connected through the bonds of relationship and family that Jesus appears. It is in the love that we share with others in our gathering, in our congregating, or maybe even in our worship where Jesus is revealed and we are granted peace.

So I think that is why Jesus waited a whole 7 days before being seen by Thomas, because Jesus is most clearly seen in our relating to others, in our interactions, and in our support for one another. This band of folk just went through a lot with the whole crucifixion of their leader thing, and their healing came from being together and knowing that they aren't alone.

And it's in this community and family that they are transformed to be more compassionate, more generous, and more like Jesus. This is what we are all invited to in our congregations and churches. This is what we are welcomed to through the Spirit that runs through us all. This is where we can find true healing and wholeness knowing that we have not been abandoned in our pain and sorrow, but lifted up by the grace and love of Jesus, showing us how we are not alone but are given the peace that surpasses all understanding.

This is the gift that we are given as God's people. This invitation and welcome to be part of this community that spans the generations. This belonging that we have in this church regardless of who we are, where we're from, or what our pasts look like. This identity as a member of this body and family of Christ.

Friends, we are not alone in this journey of life. We can find companionship and support through our community in which we, in turn, provide companionship and support for. We can see Jesus present with us, among us, and even in spite of us in who we are, who we are with, and who we become as a people by the grace of God, granting us passage into this eternal story of faith and giving us healing, joy, and peace.

So in this season of Easter, may we see the resurrected Christ with us and among us in our relationships, community, and support, knowing that we intimately know, eternally seen, and divinely loved by the God that created the universe, now and always. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: *Jesus Christ Is Risen Today* (#365)

CREED (p. 9)

Together with all who have and continue to see the Lord in life, 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

Transformed by God's saving grace and mercy, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Our Lord and God," and you all may respond with, **hear our prayer.** Our Lord and God, **hear our prayer.**

Life-changing God, it is good and pleasant to be in your presence as you welcome us into your kingdom. You call us to live together in unity and you bless us with relationship and community. Strengthen us in all that we do, and may your light shine in us, through us, and in spite of us. 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 Dunbar Lutheran Church in Vancouver and the pastors and leaders that serve them; and for the staff at the BC Synod office: Rachel, Elina, Pastor Matthew, and Bishop Kathy. Our Lord and God, **hear our prayer.**

Providing God, you have granted to us your creation to live in and you have anointed us as its caretakers. Give us the vision of a better future and the wisdom to discern how to get there, and empower us to be mindful of the condition of a planet that we leave behind. Our Lord and God, **hear our prayer.**

Empowering God, you appoint for us leaders and guides to help us navigate the world, in hopes that we all might find true peace. May we all continually look to you as our ultimate leader, that we can lean on your wisdom and truth. We remember in prayer those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Barhane; and Solyana Amanuel; and we also pray for those who have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. Our Lord and God, **hear our prayer.**

Loving God, like dew flowing down from the heavens, so is your healing and wholeness given to all people, covering our shame and mending our brokenness. You don't abandon us in our time of need, but you restore us and grant us peace. We pray especially for those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your presence among us all always be apparent. Especially we pray for Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Bryan and Chona; Kathy and Raj; Phil; Bev

and family; Sukhwant; John and Betty; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; William; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Jeanette; Pat and Patty; Hwee Yang; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

Our Lord and God, **hear our prayer.**

Eternal God, you bless us with life forevermore and you welcome us into community with you and all the saints. May we be transformed by this promise, that our faith be increased as we act as your hands and feet in the world. Our Lord and God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your calming presence and transforming peace, revealed to 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 merciful God, through our risen Saviour Jesus Christ,
who resides among us by your Spirit, revealing to all your love and peace,
that we might with all the choirs of angels,
the hosts of heaven,
and the church on earth,
praise your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p.11)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

O God, it is good and pleasant to be in your presence, for you bring us together to live in unity with you and all the saints. You anoint us with your love and you breathe upon us your peace. And in the fullness of time, you bless us with the greatest gift: life forevermore in your kingdom, community, and family through the life and ministry of your Son Jesus, whom you sent to us to be one of us and to show us the ways of your truth and love.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, took some bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And after they ate, he 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 in this food given to us that we see God's transformative love and peace, even as we declare the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

It is here in this place, O God, that we see your face in each other. In this sharing of food we see the relationship we can have through risen Christ. In our fellowship with one another, we see the Spirit breathed upon us, strengthening us with your grace and nourishing us with your Word, for you are the one God who lives, loves, and blesses us with unsurpassed peace, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 13)

Transformed by the power of the 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 God's love and peace granted to us.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 14)

Thine Is the Glory (#376)

Be Not Afraid (#388)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding and nourishing us with your providence and love. Remind us always of the peace you give, that we be empowered to live as your people and

moved to proclaim your gospel to all whom we encounter, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

BLESSING

God the creator bless you with love and grace,
God our keeper shine on you and grant you life,
God the risen Christ breathe upon you the Spirit of peace and healing, now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: The Peace of the Lord (#646)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be comforted by the love of Christ.
Thanks be to God.