



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

7283 Nelson Avenue, Burnaby, BC V5J 4C2

604-433-1515

office@graceburnaby.com

pastor@graceburnaby.com

graceburnaby.com

facebook.com/GraceLutBurnaby



Fourth Sunday after Pentecost

June 16, 2024

WOV Holy Communion, Setting Five: Bread of Life

The mustard seed becomes a great shrub that shelters the birds, recalling ancient images of the tree of life. We'd expect a cedar or a sequoia, but Jesus finds the power of God better imaged in a tiny, no-account seed. It's not the way we expect divine activity to look. Yet the tree of life is here, in the cross around which we gather, the tree into which we are grafted through baptism, the true vine that nourishes us with its fruit in the cup we share. It may not appear all that impressive, but while nobody's looking it grows with a power beyond our understanding.

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

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

We are gathered in thanksgiving to our Lord and to sing for joy to the name of the Most High, for God's lovingkindness and faithfulness are worthy of our praise and worship. We are made glad by the works of God's hands and we grow and flourish in God's grace. So together we sing to our Lord, our rock and redeemer and Saviour, Jesus Christ. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Lord, Whose Love in Humble Service (#712)

GREETING

The mind-boggling grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the indescribable love of God, and the reassuring fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

HYMN OF PRAISE: Glory to God (WOV p. 29)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

O Lord our God, you are the sower of the seeds and the grower of our faith. Continue your work in us, that by your grace we might bear fruit and spread your gospel message of love and peace to all the world through our words, deeds, and by who we are, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Ezekiel 17:22-24

A reading from Ezekiel.

Tree imagery is used in a messianic prophecy to tell how the LORD will choose someone from Judah's royal family (the cedar tree) to reign over all creation. This tree will be planted on Mount Zion, the location of the holy temple.

²²Thus says the Lord GOD:

I myself will take a sprig
from the lofty top of a cedar;
I will set it out.
I will break off a tender one
from the topmost of its young twigs;
I myself will plant it
on a high and lofty mountain.

²³On the mountain height of Israel
I will plant it,
in order that it may produce boughs and bear fruit,
and become a noble cedar.
Under it every kind of bird will live;
in the shade of its branches will nest
winged creatures of every kind.

²⁴All the trees of the field shall know
that I am the LORD.
I bring low the high tree,
I make high the low tree;
I dry up the green tree

and make the dry tree flourish.
I the LORD have spoken;
I will accomplish it.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 92:1-4, 11-14

¹It is a good thing to give thanks to the LORD,
and to sing praises to your name, O Most High;
²**to tell of your lovingkindness early in the morning
and of your faithfulness in the night season;**
³on the psaltery, and on the lyre,
and to the melody of the harp.
⁴**For you have made me glad by your acts, O LORD;
and I shout for joy because of the works of your hands.**
¹¹The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree,
and shall spread abroad like a cedar of Lebanon.
¹²**Those who are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God;**
¹³they shall still bear fruit in old age;
they shall be green and succulent;
¹⁴**that they may show how upright the LORD is,
my rock, in whom there is no fault.**

SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:6-10, 14-17

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

Paul encourages believers to live by faith and not by sight. We do not consider Jesus from a human perspective but through the eyes of faith, believing he died for all and was raised. All who are in Christ are now in God's new creation.

⁶So we are always confident; even though we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord—⁷for we walk by faith, not by sight. ⁸Yes, we do have confidence, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. ⁹So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. ¹⁰For all of us must appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each may receive recompense for what has been done in the body, whether good or evil.

¹⁴For the love of Christ urges us on, because we are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died. ¹⁵And he died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves, but for him who died and was raised for them.

¹⁶From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we know him no longer in that way. ¹⁷So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new!

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (WOV p. 31)

GOSPEL: Mark 4:26-34

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus frequently uses parables to teach ordinary people as they are able to hear and understand. Images of sowing and growing show the vitality of God's kingdom.

²⁶[Jesus] said, "The kingdom of God is as if someone would scatter seed on the ground,²⁷ and would sleep and rise night and day, and the seed would sprout and grow, he does not know how. ²⁸The earth produces of itself, first the stalk, then the head, then the full grain in the head. ²⁹But when the grain is ripe, at once he goes in with his sickle, because the harvest has come."

³⁰He also said, "With what can we compare the kingdom of God, or what parable will we use for it? ³¹It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; ³²yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."

³³With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; ³⁴he did not speak to them except in parables, but he explained everything in private to his disciples.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, give us the faith to hear your voice, that we might be able to find our way as we are guided by your love and grace, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

So every 5 or 6 years the stars align for me on this day. Not only is today, the 3rd Sunday of June, always Father's Day here in Canada, but today is also happens to be June 16th, which is our wedding anniversary. So there are two things going on for me today. Oh and it's also the late iconic hip hop artist 2pac Shakur's birthday, so I guess there's actually three things.

Either case, it would seem like today would be doubly special for me, or triply if you include 2pac's birthday. Because whenever the 16th lands on the 3rd Sunday of June like it does today, I get to celebrate both being a father and a husband. And while I've learned to keep my expectations around these days to a minimum, I have to admit that I'm often disappointed with this day.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not being some spoiled kid who thinks they should get everything on their special day. Nor am I sore about these two occasions landing on the same day, as though one diminishes the other, sort of like when people have their birthday on Christmas and they get the dreaded "combo gift". No, those aren't the reasons why I feel disappointed on this day.

The real reason is... well... I'm actually disappointed in myself.

Again, don't get me wrong, I really appreciate my family and all that they do and are, but it's just that I look at where I am, what I've done, and who I am as a father and husband... and it's just that... well I'm not exactly where I thought I would be at this point in life. Like if I'm honest, I'm not as lovable to my loved ones as I thought I would be. I'm not that "fun dad" for my kids that I dreamed of when I was a kid myself. I'm not as present and supportive for my wife in spite of my best efforts.

And today, that happens every 5 or 6 years, depending on where leap year lands, while it is doubly special, it is also doubly disappointing when I'm reminded of my failures, my shortcomings, my inadequacies in what I try to do.

Well, that's some self-loathing if I've ever seen self-loathing before.

I should say that I'm not telling you these things to garner any kind of pity or sympathy or anything like that, I'm just telling you what I'm feeling, how I see myself, and the disappointment I often have in the different aspects of my life.

Maybe you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you've been disappointed in yourself as well, where you are in life, what you've accomplished, or just how you've treated people in the past or even currently. Maybe you wish you could start over, or change the past somehow, or at least undo some of the things that have been done. Maybe you know this feeling of disappointment, of not living up to the dream you had for yourself, of just being not.... enough.

These are some real feelings that many, if not all of us have probably felt at some point in our lives. This sort of self-reflection can be helpful in getting us to improve and be better, but also can be debilitating when it all hits just a bit too hard. This kind of self-loathing, while perhaps not to the degree that I may have shared with you, really isn't good for anyone. But in those emotions we can know that we aren't alone in feeling this way, we aren't the first and we most certainly won't be the last, we aren't the only ones in history that have felt like we aren't enough.

You know who else might have felt this way like 2000 some odd years ago? Who might have been disappointed in their performance, their value to their community, their place in the world? Who might have felt these same feelings of inadequacy and not being enough?

You might think the Israelites, because we know what kind of wild ride they've been on from being slaves to not being slaves, to having land to not having land, to knowing what their saviour looks like to not knowing what their saviour looks like. Or you might think the disciples, with how they couldn't understand Jesus' teachings no matter how much he taught them in spite of all the time they spent together. You might even think Jesus because you ran out of guesses and if Sunday School taught us anything, it's that 99% of the answers will be Jesus.

But I'm not thinking about any of those. Who I'm thinking about, who I'm guessing might share in these feelings, who might have thought that they're just not enough, is that poor mustard seed. The small, insignificant mustard seed that pops up in a couple of parables and analogies of Jesus. I mean, talk about big dreams, am I right? Imagine being that tiny little mustard seed and someone... well, not just any someone, but Jesus himself, sees you, calls you the greatest of shrubs, and compares you to the kingdom of heaven. That would be enough to inflate anyone's ego really, I mean sentient being or inanimate object or not.

But then along come the commentators and scholars trying to decipher Jesus' words here. Along come the pastors and preachers who rip these words apart to try to figure out what's really what. Along come all the people who hear Jesus' words of praise and affirmation over this mustard seed turning into the greatest of shrubs and be like, "what, that thing? That thing isn't great at all, it's just an annoying weed that no one wants."

And plop. Back in it's place the mustard seed goes. Again reminded of what it is. Insignificant. Unworthy. Simply not enough.

I'll admit, I've been guilty of putting this mustard seed down as well. I've explained away Jesus' claims of its greatness as a figure of speech, exaggeration, and even misunderstanding. Because there ain't no birds that want to nest in this plant. Ain't no people small enough to catch shade from its branches. Ain't no use or value to be had in this unwanted, invasive, mistake of a thing.

But while this mustard seed might seem insignificant, it didn't go unnoticed. While it might be seen as unworthy, Jesus revered it enough to include it in his teachings more than once as an example. While

we might think that this little seed wouldn't be enough, according to the gospel and grace of Christ, this seed was exactly what God created and how God created it.

Do you see what I'm saying here?

In spite of all the labels that could be put on this seed, it is still significant in the grand scheme of creation. Even with how annoying and disliked the plant this seed becomes can be, it is called great by the Greatest there is. Even if this tiny seed thinks of itself as never being enough, God says actually, you are so very much enough.

So it is with us. In our feelings of self loathing, of insignificance, in not being enough, we know that God says otherwise. Even in my own regret and shame of not being all that I can be as a husband, father, and even a pastor and a person, I can know that I'm still loved by my wife, my kids, and hopefully even some of you. And in all of our own collective thoughts and feelings about ourselves, our communities, and even our church and country, we can trust and believe and have faith that God doesn't assign our value and worth in the same way that we do through actions and numbers, but instead with grace, mercy, and love.

This isn't to say that we should just aim for mediocrity and just be "good enough" in all that we do, but I'm saying that in those times of self loathing, whenever others unnecessarily put us down, if we ever feel like we're not enough, we can remember this parable of the mustard seed and how Jesus sees and attributes greatness even to the insignificant, worthiness even to the mundane, and appreciation for all that we are created to be, flaws and all.

See even in our mistakes, God brings healing. Even in our fallenness God lifts us up. Even in our sin, God forgives us, saves us, and brings us to life. And like the farmer in the first part of today's parables, we don't know how all of this works. We don't know why this works. We might not even know who it's working for. But we can know that God has promised us that we have been, are, and always will be dearly beloved people of God, welcomed into the community of God's kingdom, and called and anointed to be the body of Christ in the world, totally, utterly, and completely made to be *enough*.

Enough to be known. Enough to be saved. Enough to be loved beyond all comprehension.

Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (#707)

CREED (WOV p. 18)

Together with all contemplating but accepting of God's love, 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, his only Son, our Lord.

**He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.**

**He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.**

He descended into hell.*

On the third day he rose again.

**He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.**

He will come again 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 love and serve our God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “Lord, in your life-giving mercy,” and you may respond with hear our prayer. Lord, in your life-giving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our song, we give you thanks and sing praises to your name, for you give our lives meaning and purpose through your love and faithfulness and we sing your melody throughout our lives. You bring us joy as we serve you through our ministry and in our community with others. Strengthen us in all that we do, that our whole lives be a testament to your grace. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use this building for worship, work, and play; our full communion partners: the Anglican Church of Canada, and the Moravian Church in Canada; and all of our bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Comox and the pastors and leaders that serve there; and for our seminaries in Saskatoon and in Waterloo, and all their faculty, staff, and students. Lord, in your life-giving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our joy, you have made us glad by the works of your hands in creating all things and entrusting them to us. Help and strengthen us as we care for this planet, that its beauty and resourcefulness will continue be a blessing for the future generations. Lord, in your life-giving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our righteousness, your justice flows and flourishes throughout our lives and you guide us on the path of peace and community. Be with all world leaders and politicians and instill in them your wisdom, and reveal to us the call you have for our lives to live with each other in right relationship. We pray for the continued support of those that we’ve sponsored to live in this country: Abraham Barhane; and Solyana Amanuel; and for those that have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. Lord, in your life-giving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our stronghold, you plant us in your household and welcome us into your courts, nourishing us with your love and healing. Be especially apparent among those who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that all might find wholeness in you. We pray especially for Beulah; Kathy and Raj; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bryan and Chona; Bev and family; Ellwood; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Will’ Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Hwee Yang; Ephraim; Georgina; and all whom we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... Lord, in your life-giving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God our rock, in you there is no injustice but you are upright and hold us in your love forever. Remind us of our connection with you and all the saints of all times and places, that we might never forget your call for us and our lives as your people in Christ’s name. Lord, in your life-giving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your eternal love and forgiveness, shown to us by Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PEACE (WOV p. 20)

The peace of the Lord be with you always.

And also with you.

DIALOGUE (WOV p. 36)

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, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who shows us the ways of your righteousness and peace, that we might faithfully join with all 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 (WOV p. 36)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord the Most High, in thanksgiving, we praise your name for your love and faithfulness never end. They make us glad and we shout for joy at the works of your hands. You allow us to flourish by your grace, and we bear witness to your goodness throughout the world. In you, there is no injustice but you are steadfast in your righteousness and truth. And in the fullness of time you sent to us your son Jesus to show us the redemption found in your love and forgiveness.

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

And then after they ate it, 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 that we see you providing for us and calling us as your own, even as we declare the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God, we glorify your name for joining us together with you and the saints, reminding us of your unending love and grace, and calling us to be your kingdom people in the world through

Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (WOV p. 25)

Led into community and peace, 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 the love that surpasses understanding.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (WOV p. 39)

For the Fruit of All Creation (#679)

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Holy God, again we have been nourished by your Word and blessed by your truth. Renew our sense of call to be your people in your kingdom, that we might confidently continue to serve you and neighbour through the gracious love of Christ, by the power of the Spirit. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May God the Creator bless you with new life,
God the Christ bestow upon you grace and mercy,
God our Companion guide your steps as you walk by faith, now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: To Be Your Presence (#546)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be united in the love of Christ.

Thanks be to God.