



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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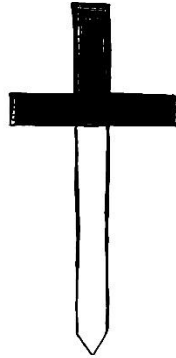
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Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

July 14, 2024

WOV Holy Communion, Setting Five: Bread of Life

When Amos reports his vision of God judging Israel for its mistreatment of the poor, he becomes a threat to the power of the priests and the king. John the Baptist also speaks truth to power, and Herod has him killed. In Herod's fear that Jesus is John returned from the dead, we may hear hope for the oppressed: all the prophets killed through the ages are alive in Jesus. We are called to witness to justice in company with them, and to proclaim God's saving love.

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 hən̓q̓əmi̓n̓əm̓ (Musqueam) and Sḵw̓x̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather this day in worship, to listen to what the Lord our God is saying, speaking peace to us as our hearts are turned to God's grace. For God's salvation is near, dwelling in glory in the land with mercy and truth. May God's righteousness bless us with joy, sustain us with peace, and strengthen us with love, through Jesus Christ, by the power of the Spirit. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Lord of Light (#688)

GREETING

The redeeming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the salvific love of God, and the forgiving communion 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

Eternal God, from the formation of the world, you have set us on a path that we might live lives of truth steeped in your righteousness. By the power your Spirit, strengthen us in building justice and making peace through the righteousness of Christ. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Amos 7:7-15

A reading from Amos.

Amos is not the kind of prophet attached to temples or royal courts. Rather, he is an ordinary farmer from Judah (the southern kingdom) called by God to speak to Israel (the northern kingdom). God's word of judgment through Amos conflicts with the king's court prophet Amaziah, whom Amos encounters at Bethel.

⁷This is what [the Lord GOD] showed me: the Lord was standing beside a wall built with a plumb line, with a plumb line in his hand. ⁸And the LORD said to me, "Amos, what do you see?" And I said, "A plumb line." Then the Lord said,

"See, I am setting a plumb line
in the midst of my people Israel;
I will never again pass them by;

⁹the high places of Isaac shall be made desolate,
and the sanctuaries of Israel shall be laid waste,
and I will rise against the house of Jeroboam with the sword."

¹⁰Then Amaziah, the priest of Bethel, sent to King Jeroboam of Israel, saying, "Amos has conspired against you in the very center of the house of Israel; the land is not able to bear all his words. ¹¹For thus Amos has said,

'Jeroboam shall die by the sword,
and Israel must go into exile
away from his land.'

¹²And Amaziah said to Amos, "O seer, go, flee away to the land of Judah, earn your bread there, and prophesy there; ¹³but never again prophesy at Bethel, for it is the king's sanctuary, and it is a temple of the kingdom."

¹⁴Then Amos answered Amaziah, "I am no prophet, nor a prophet's son; but I am a herdsman, and a dresser of sycamore trees, ¹⁵and the LORD took me from following the flock, and the LORD said to me, 'Go, prophesy to my people Israel.' "

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 85:8-13

⁸I will listen to what the LORD God is saying,
for he is speaking peace to his faithful people and to those who turn their hearts to him.

⁹**Truly, his salvation is very near to those who fear him,
that his glory may dwell in our land.**

¹⁰Mercy and truth have met together;
righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

¹¹**Truth shall spring up from the earth,
and righteousness shall look down from heaven.**

¹²The LORD will indeed grant prosperity,
and our land will yield its increase.

¹³**Righteousness shall go before him,
and peace shall be a pathway for his feet.**

SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:3-14

A reading from Ephesians.

In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.

³Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, ⁴just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love. ⁵He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. ⁷In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ⁸that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight ⁹he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ, ¹⁰as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth. ¹¹In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will, ¹²so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory. ¹³In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit; ¹⁴this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (WOV p. 31)

GOSPEL: Mark 6:14-29

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

As Jesus and his disciples begin to attract attention, Mark recalls the story of John the Baptist's martyrdom. Like John, Jesus and his disciples will also suffer at the hands of those opposed to the gospel of salvation.

¹⁴King Herod heard of [the disciples' preaching,] for Jesus' name had become known. Some were saying, "John the baptizer has been raised from the dead; and for this reason these powers are at work in him." ¹⁵But others said, "It is Elijah." And others said, "It is a prophet, like one of the prophets of old." ¹⁶But when Herod heard of it, he said, "John, whom I beheaded, has been raised."

¹⁷For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife, because Herod had married her. ¹⁸For John had been telling Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." ¹⁹And Herodias had a grudge against him, and wanted to kill him. But she could not, ²⁰for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; and yet he liked to listen to him. ²¹But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers and officers and for the leaders of Galilee. ²²When his daughter Herodias came in and danced, she pleased Herod and his guests; and the king said to the girl, "Ask me for whatever you wish, and I will give it." ²³And he solemnly swore to her, "Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom." ²⁴She went out and said to her mother, "What should I ask for?" She replied, "The head of John the baptizer." ²⁵Immediately she rushed back to the king and requested, "I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter." ²⁶The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths and for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. ²⁷Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John's head. He went and beheaded him in the prison, ²⁸brought his head on a platter, and gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. ²⁹When his disciples heard about it, they came and took his body, and laid it in a tomb.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Eternal God, by the power of your Spirit, open our ears to hear your Word, soften our hearts to accept your grace, and strengthen our hands for building justice and making peace, through the righteousness of Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

Remember back when the gospel meant good news? You know, we'd read a story from the gospel lesson for that day, get some good feelings from something Jesus said or did, then we'd say "praise to you, O Christ", and then listen to an exhilarating sermon about it and call it a day. I love it when that happens, I mean it's the stuff that dreams are made of. Pastor dreams, at least. Or at least Lutheran pastors, who love to preach about good news, God's grace and love, and... you know... *gospel*. That's just what we do, what we believe, what message from the bible that we want to share with the world.

You know what I mean, don't you? Most of the time we get good stories with actual good news in the gospel reading for the day. The other readings could be up in the air, but the gospel almost never fails in the good news department. Sure, sometimes you'd have to massage it a bit to find it, but it wouldn't be exactly that difficult to do so, most of the time. This year alone even, we got a lot of obvious good ones.

Like Jesus healing the sick or in some cases the dead/sleeping. Or Jesus telling us about the glories and wonders of God's kingdom. Or even Jesus protecting the disciples by standing up to a storm that was bullying them and putting it in its place with but a word.

Those are some feel-good stories, where we see the power and care and love of Jesus. Those are some prime sermon-preaching topics. Those were very clearly *gospel*.

But this? Today's story of treachery, deception, and murder? Not so much. It's hard to preach a sermon on such an unjust killing. We can't get any good feels from this kind of manipulation, betrayal, and evil. There doesn't seem to be any good news in this so-called gospel lesson.

So, as I was preparing for this sermon, I went through my regular routine of research, pulling out books and commentaries, but most of the things I read weren't exactly helpful or even interesting. In fact, most of them seemed to be as perplexed as I am, they would just reiterate that this is a difficult text to preach on. Then I talked to some colleagues, and I got a lot of the same "this story sucks for finding good news" sentiment, and a few of them are intentionally not even preaching on this text. I even went so far as to look back on my own past sermons to see what I said before, and apparently July was a pretty popular month for holidays for me, especially in year B, which we're in now, meaning there were slim pickin's in my archives and those that I did find are probably best left in the past. So then I had to pull out the big guns... I prayed. A lot. But I guess thankfully none of them were answered because I'm still healthy enough to preach today and I have all my limbs in tact.

So we're still left with this... story. This tale of evil. This anger-inducing text that seems to just take away joy, drown out hope, and give us a very bleak view of the world... and its power.

I mean, just look at what we get in this story. Well, it's a story within a story, I suppose, as it starts off with Herod hearing about Jesus sending the 12 and the rumours that Jesus is John the baptizer coming back to life, then it kicks off Herod's flashback on how he killed almost on a whim John the baptizer, who was his friend and whom he respected and actually appreciated. With friends like those, am I right? And without getting into the gory details, as you just heard them, let's just say that it wasn't too difficult to manipulate him, especially by the charms of his own flesh and blood. Herod even remembers feeling guilty about it all because of his affections and respect for John, but he went through with it anyway because he didn't want to lose face in front of his friends.

Imagine that. You're this powerful king who could give away half of your unlimited wealth at the drop of a beat but you're scared of what your drunken friends might think of you. Just say you're too drunk to haphazardly sacrifice someone's life. Just say you need time to sober up and think about it and you'll get back to her in the morning. Or easiest yet, just say no. But Herod doesn't do any of these things. The text tells us that he *immediately* calls for John to be beheaded. Immediately? When do things ever happen immediately in an organisation, a government, or even a church?

The truth is that Herod caved to the seduction of a young woman. He gave in to the lust of power and prestige. He fell for the manipulation of a vindictive woman who is perhaps just as power hungry as he is, and can't take being called out for it.

What a tragedy. What an awful story. What an anger-inducing episode that almost makes us want to throw our bibles away and give up.

But then, that'd be a shame, wouldn't it? I mean if we threw away our bibles, then we wouldn't get the stories of the healings and the miracles, the grace and blessings, the community and humble service to others. If we just gave up, then we wouldn't get the opportunity to see God in our relationships, feel the joy in God's unifying love, and be encouraged by God's grace in our lives. If we didn't actively

participate in this learning, we wouldn't be able to see God in the world because we wouldn't know how to look.

And maybe that is the gospel in this not-really-gospel story. It's a gospel of contrast. In that this story is sandwiched between Jesus empowering and sending his disciples out in mission, and the feeding of the 5000. There is Jesus calling his disciples to go, do, and preach, and right away they catch a glimpse of what could happen when God is proclaimed in the world like John the baptizer did. They saw what happens when evil and privilege is called out. They saw what horrendous things people could be capable of when they are offended, insulted, or righteously shamed by the gospel. And yet, the disciples go and do and preach anyway.

I mean, of course there would be times where the world can be a bad place. Of course there will be times when its evils might leave us so disillusioned that it would just seem easier to throw in the towel. Of course there will be times when it would be hard to see God present in the messiness of life, when it'd be difficult to know God's blessing for us, when it'd be downright impossible to feel God's love for this whole world.

And maybe... we shouldn't be focussing on those times. Maybe we shouldn't allow the bad to determine our whole view and paradigm of the world. Maybe we shouldn't be defined by the things that bring us down.

Instead, we can remember the times when we felt called and empowered, and be strengthened by them. We can recall the times when it was so clear that God was present with us in community and within this congregation. We can look back on all the times when we've found the joy in God's blessing and love and welcome.

This doesn't mean that the bad will go away or we shouldn't acknowledge it. No, we'll continue to face evil, we'll continue to betray and be betrayed, we'll continue lose faith in people. But it does mean that by focussing on the good, remembering the blessings throughout our lives, defining ourselves as God's forgiven and saved people in the world, we will get better at seeing the joy, holding onto the grace, and recognising God working in us, through us, and all around us for the sake of this elusive gospel.

See even when we see all this hard to read passages and we don't like them because of how they make us feel, it doesn't make it any less scripture or pointing us to God. Just because life can get tough and do things to us that we don't feel like we deserve, that doesn't mean that we are any less loved or favoured by God. Just because there is bad and evil in the world, let's not forget the ocean of good and righteousness, overflowing our cups with abundant blessing and grace, lifting us up and empowering us to live and act as God's people, now and always.

So as we continue on through this season after Pentecost, let us allow the good and blessing in our lives strengthen us to navigate this world and bear the bad, for the sake of God's Word, God's promises, and God's gospel, through Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: O God, Why Are You Silent (#703)

CREED (WOV p. 18)

With all of the redeemed and forgiven, 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 act and love in justice, 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 all may respond with hear our prayer. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we hear your truth for our lives and your words of peace spark our faith to turn our hearts to you. May this peace be reflected in our lives that others might see and feel your love through us. 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 our bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Hilly of Peace Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Jane Gingrich; our Global Mission Companion: the Evangelical Lutheran Church – Peru and their president Ofelia Davila; and their other partner synods: Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod and their bishop Mike Reinhardt, as well as LaCrosse Area Synod in Wisconsin and their bishop Felix Malpica. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your glory dwells throughout all of creation. Help us in our stewardship of this earth, that we take seriously the warnings the climate tells us, that we might enjoy the communion with this planet and all its creatures as you had intended. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your steadfast love and faithfulness are seen in the diverse peoples of the world. May all world leaders and politicians learn to celebrate that diversity and lead us to live together in peace and harmony. We especially pray for the continued support of those we've sponsored to come to this country: Abraham Barhane; and Solyana Amanuel; as well as those who 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, you look down upon us with your righteousness and you grant to us a prosperity that extends beyond this world. Bring your healing and wholeness to those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that we all might know the joy in your name. We pray especially for Beulah; 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; Tom; and all whom we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

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

O Lord, you call us into relationship with you and all your saints, and you pave that path with your righteousness. May we always be reminded of your eternal promises and truths, that we be strengthened by your love and grace seen in the connections and community we share with all people. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your justice and peace, taught 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 your ways of justice and righteousness, paving the way for us to join with 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)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

O Lord our God, we listen to the sound of your voice, speaking to us peace as our hearts turn to you. Your salvation has come near and your glory dwells throughout the land. Your steadfast love and faithfulness springs up from the earth as your righteousness and peace come down from heaven. You indeed bless us abundantly with grace and mercy and your love yields increase in our lives, shown to us through Jesus, you Son, who came in righteousness to prepare a pathway into our hearts.

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

And after they ate, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and gave it to 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 by this food that we are reminded of your truth and grace, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

O God may you bless this food. May you enrich our lives. And may you bring about a joy and peace that surpasses understanding, granting to us all your justice and community through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (WOV p. 25)

Brought together into God's justice and peace by 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 righteousness and love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

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

When Pain of the World Surrounds Us (#704)

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Holy God, again you have fed us with your holy food, your Word of life and love. Continue to empower and strengthen us for your work in the world, that all people might see your justice shining in and through us, now and forever. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May Creator God bless you with faith and joy,
Christ God save you with love and mercy,
and Companion God lead you into all justice and bring you peace, now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: God of Grace and God of Glory (#705)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, led by the Spirit of justice.

Thanks be to God.

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