



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 22, 2024

ELW Holy Communion, Setting 10

Today we hear James warn against selfish ambition, while the disciples quarrel over which one of them is the greatest. Jesus tells them the way to be great is to serve. Then, to make it concrete, he puts in front of them a flesh-and-blood child. We are called to welcome the children God puts in front of us, to make room for them in daily interaction, and to give them a place of honor in the assembly.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and on-line with us today! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

Grace Lutheran worships, prays, and serves on the traditional and unceded lands and territories of the hən̓q̓əmiñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in the presence of God, by whose name we are saved, through whose might we are defended, and in whose heart our prayers are heard. This God offers us help, sustains us, and rescues us from trouble. So let us praise our God, for our Lord is good and righteous and faithful, in watching over us and granting us all salvation, through Jesus Christ. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Have No Fear, Little Flock (#764)

GREETING

The welcoming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the accepting love of God, and the unifying fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 204)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, you call us to be in your community, where you fully know us and yet we find favour in your eyes. Draw us near to you each day, as you teach us, lead us, and guide us on the ways of your encompassing righteousness and inclusive love, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 11:18-20

A reading from Jeremiah.

Today's reading tells of the suffering of the prophet Jeremiah, who announced God's word to Judah but was met with intense opposition and persecution. Jeremiah continues to trust in God in the midst of his suffering.

¹⁸It was the LORD who made it known to me, and I knew;
then you showed me their evil deeds.

¹⁹But I was like a gentle lamb
led to the slaughter.

And I did not know it was against me
that they devised schemes, saying,
"Let us destroy the tree with its fruit,
let us cut him off from the land of the living,
so that his name will no longer be remembered!"

²⁰But you, O LORD of hosts, who judge righteously,
who try the heart and the mind,
let me see your retribution upon them,
for to you I have committed my cause.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 54

¹Save me, O God, by your name;
in your might, defend my cause.

²**Hear my prayer, O God;
give ear to the words of my mouth.**

³For strangers have risen up against me, and the ruthless have sought my life,
those who have no regard for God.

⁴**Behold, God is my helper;
it is the Lord who sustains my life.**

⁵Render evil to those who spy on me;
in your faithfulness, destroy them.

⁶**I will offer you a freewill sacrifice
and praise your name, O LORD, for it is good.**

⁷For you have rescued me from every trouble,
and my eye looks down on my enemies.

SECOND READING: James 3:13- 4:3, 7-8a

A reading from James.

The wisdom God gives unites our hearts and minds. Instead of living to satisfy our own wants and desires, we manifest this wisdom in peace, gentleness, mercy, and impartiality toward others.

¹³Who is wise and understanding among you? Show by your good life that your works are done with gentleness born of wisdom. ¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not be boastful and false to the truth. ¹⁵Such wisdom does not come down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, devilish. ¹⁶For where there is envy and selfish ambition, there will also be disorder and wickedness of every kind. ¹⁷But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. ¹⁸And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.^{4:}

¹Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? ²You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. ³You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. ⁷Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ^{8a}Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Mark 9:30-37

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus' teaching and action in this text are directed to the church whenever it is seduced by the world's definition of greatness: prestige, power, influence, and money. The antidote to such a concern for greatness is servanthood.

³⁰[Jesus and the disciples went on] and passed through Galilee. He did not want anyone to know it;³¹for he was teaching his disciples, saying to them, "The Son of Man is to be betrayed into human hands, and they will kill him, and three days after being killed, he will rise again."

³²But they did not understand what he was saying and were afraid to ask him.

³³Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" ³⁴But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. ³⁵He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all." ³⁶Then he took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, ³⁷"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

May your wisdom, O God, land in our hearts and minds this day, that by your Spirit we be set free to hear and heed to your call into community, service, and your kingdom, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

"Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me," Jesus says. So basically he's saying that we should welcome kids? Well, I have news for you, Jesus. We don't have a problem with welcoming kids, our problem is that the kids don't come. If only we had a pastor or musician that had young kids that would actually come to church, am I right? Because if we had kids here, I'm pretty sure we'd welcome the heck out of them. We can't exactly do what Jesus did in this gospel reading, pull a random kid out of thin air...

Anyway, this has to be one of the easiest of Jesus' commands to complete, right? Most of us would easily welcome kids with open arms. How could we not? Kids can be cute, fun to play with, and they seem to love the same toys that I love. Kids can be hilarious, say the darnedest things, and without even trying they make me feel super smart. Kids remind us of a simpler time when we had less responsibilities and stress and they often have an uncanny ability of bringing us joy. Sure, maybe we prefer if kids would be quieter, a bit tidier, and a little less snotty, but it's not like we're *Vulgaria* from the movie *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* and would totally ban kids or something like that. So yeah, I think we, especially us in this church, would have an easy time welcoming kids like Jesus asks us to.

It's the kid's parents that I have issue with.

No one here, of course, but I'm talking about those random parents that have no control over their kids that I come across at the mall when I'm shopping for those toys. Or those parents that are too busy on their phones around pick up time at our child care groups here at the church to corral their really distracting and screamie kids that run up and down the ramp that connects our front door to the parking lot, while I'm just sitting in my office trying to get some

work done. And don't even get me started with the parents at the morning drop off time at school.

Actually, too late, I already got going. I've complained about this before, you know, the woes of dropping the kids off right before the bell. More like the woes of dealing with the other parent drivers who are dropping their kids off right before the bell. I mean really, if there is a spot, take it. If there is a way around the traffic, then go that way. But whatever you do, do NOT stop in the middle of the road or parking lot to let your kids out, especially when there's already a line up of cars behind you trying to do the same exact thing. No offense to anyone here who might drive that way, but seriously, I don't think anyone would really know that level of frustration until they fully experience the chaos that happens between 8:50 and 8:56 around our kids' school.

Actually, you know who doesn't feel this frustration? These parent drivers that I'm talking about. It's like they're completely oblivious to the inconvenience and hair pulling that they are causing around them. I mean, it's great for them for being a bad driver. It's just that... it isn't great for me, because I'm not one.

So I guess I'm glad that Jesus asks us to welcome kids, and not their parents. Because I don't know if I could handle the parents.

But then, if we take in consideration the culture of that time, children weren't seen as the cute and cuddly little people that we see them as today. They weren't the funny, fun, say-the-darnedest-things type that they are now. They for sure weren't regarded back then as they are regarded in our time, as the centers of our world, as the light in our eyes, as our future that we need to teach well and let lead the way. You know, so we can show them all the beauty they possess inside...

No, in those days children would land very squarely in the "seen but not heard" category, except they weren't really seen much either. The kids had no rights, no voice, they weren't even seen as humans until they reach the age of adulthood. So very different from today.

So thinking about that, Jesus telling his disciples to welcome these kids was a big deal. It was sort of a counter cultural thing, because these kids wouldn't even be at the same events as the adults to even be welcomed. It would have been a foreign concept for them as they may not have even interacted with a kid since they were kids themselves. It wouldn't have been as easy for them as it would be for us.

Maybe it'd be as hard for them to welcome kids as it would be for us to welcome those parents that annoy us, those people that can't control their children, those folk who can't drive worth a darn.

Suddenly I can see why Jesus' words were so hard to swallow back in those days.

Still, maybe some of you think that still isn't that hard. That you can welcome those poor-driving-parents. But I wonder if there is a people group, a type of person, a certain demographic that you would have a hard time welcoming. Maybe it's someone who acts in a way that you never would act. Maybe it's a group that hails from a different nation, different

church, different political slant. Or maybe it's the really rich who don't show any type of accountability when they do what they do and say what they say online and beyond.

It'd be harder to welcome those people, right? We might have to muster all of our morality and ethical strength to pull that off. We might have to really lean on our faith and trust that Jesus knows what he's talking about here.

Because if you think about it, this conflict that we have with others, these times that we complain about those we might or might not encounter, these people that we have a hard time welcoming, it's all about who we think is the greatest, isn't it? Sure, we might not go out and literally argue with them about who should be considered the greatest and all that, but our disapproval for a lot of things comes out of our thoughts and feelings of superiority, doesn't it?

Like, we complain about this person because they don't do things the way we do them... you know, the right way. Or we feel frustrated with the actions of this group because that isn't how we would act, which is the only proper way of course. Or we have a hard time welcoming a certain demographic because we've equated them as completely inferior, not as great or smart as we are, unworthy of even being welcomed.

And to that, Jesus says that we need to be a servant to all. Huh. I don't know about the rest of you, but I'd rather just welcome children. But Jesus telling us to serve others actually helps us to see how all are worthy, us and those who aren't us, alike. By saying the first is last isn't a confusion of terms or positions, but it is abolishing those terms and positions altogether. That's why Jesus materializes a kid out of nowhere and tells them to welcome such a child. Because in doing so we'll see that we are them, and they are us, and we are all in this together in the great grand scheme of life.

But it's still hard, isn't it. We like to belong in a hierarchy because then we are praised for what we deserve and recognised for what we do. We can clearly look down on who is below us and puff out our chest when we're like those above us. We get a sense of accomplishment when we successfully climb that ladder.

But Jesus is telling us that it isn't about who is at the top rung of that ladder. It isn't about ranking each other. It isn't about besting others in order to be called the greatest. But it's about service to show how all have worth. It's about the grace to acknowledge that our way might not always be the only right way. It's about the love that we can show others as it was first shown to us.

Shown to us as expansive, wholistic, and inclusive. Shown to us as universal, unconditional, and grace-filled. Shown to us as a parent loves their child.

So as we continue in this season after Pentecost, may we always see and recognise the value and worth in others, not because of what they have done or can do, but because God has selected them to be God's children and joint-heirs to the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Children of the Heavenly Father (#781)

CREED (p. 104)

Untied together by the grace of Christ, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.*
On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Led into humble service to God and all people, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, in your welcoming mercy," and you may respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, in your welcoming mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, by your name you save us and in your might you defend our cause. You hear our prayers and answer our supplications. May your promises strengthen us and move us to serve, minister, and love. We lift 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 remember Living Faith Lutheran Church in Sechelt and their interim pastor Richard Hergesheimer and United minister Glenn Inglis; and for Lord of Life Mission in Sandspit and their interim pastor Jim Whaley. God, in your welcoming mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you are our helper and the sustainer of life. This planet that you have created for us to live in is full of your majesty and wonder. May our stewardship of what you have entrusted to us be pleasing to you, that your creation's beauty be able to endure throughout the ages. God, in your welcoming mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, the world seems to be full of evil and faithlessness, but you remain faithful and just and you watch over us and guide us in your truth. May your loving presence continue to fill our hearts that we be able to see all people through your eyes of grace and welcome. We pray for our province and country as we move into provincial and municipal elections, that the right people are put into place where positive change can happen. We also pray for 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. God, in your welcoming mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, your name is good and we praise you for all that you have done. You watch over us and care for us in our time of need. Be especially with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love can be apparent in all our lives. In particular, we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Bev and family; Ellwood; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Bishop Kathy; Pastor Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Hwee Yang; Ephraim; Georgina; Teddy and family; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

God, in your welcoming mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, you rescue us from trouble and you welcome us into your eternal kingdom to live with you and all the saints forever. Remind us always of this promise, that our actions might reflect the reality of our everlasting connection with you and all people of all time. God, in your welcoming mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trust in the redeeming salvation of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE (p. 106)

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

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 in all places
give thanks and praise to you, almighty and merciful God,
through our Saviour Jesus Christ;
who welcomes us all into your love and joins us
with all the choirs of angels,
with the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
that we can praise your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 207)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O God, you save us and defend us. You give ear to our prayers and you help us and sustain our lives. We praise your name, for you rescue us and watch over us, and in due time you have sent to us Jesus, to be with us as one of us, teaching us the vast expanse of your love and grace, reaching us all to the ends of the earth.

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 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."

So it is in this food before us that that we see God's equal regard for us all, displayed to us in this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

To you, O God, be all honour and glory, for your welcome for us all is great and merciful and full of the love of Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Welcomed into God's kingdom 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 see God's inclusive welcome for us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)

Let Us Ever Walk with Jesus (#802)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we give you thanks for again feeding and nourishing us with this heavenly food and your truth and knowledge. Be with us as we go from here, empowering us to be witnesses of your expansive and inclusive love and grace, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May God our heavenly parent,
God our gracious redeemer,
and God the Spirit who unites us all,
bless you, keep you, and shine on you favour and peace, now and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: I Want to Walk as a Child of the Light (#815)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be gentle and honest and see the value in yourself and others.
Thanks be to God.

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