



**GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH**

**OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC**

**EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA**

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**Reformation Sunday**

**October 27, 2024**

**ELW Holy Communion, Setting 10**

Rooted in the past and growing into the future, the church must always be reformed in order to live out the love of Christ in an ever-changing world. We celebrate the good news of God's grace, that Jesus Christ sets us free every day to do this life-transforming work. Trusting in the freedom given to us in baptism, we pray for the church, that Christians will unite more fully in worship and mission.

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 Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in the name of our God, our refuge and strength, our very present help in times of trouble. For in God there is no fear, as we are made glad by the blessing and presence of God. So together we regard the works of the Lord our stronghold, we sing praise for all that God has done and continues to do, and we are made to be still in our knowledge of who God is, exalted over all the earth, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING HYMN:** A Mighty Fortress Is Our God (#504)

### GREETING

The reforming grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the freeing love of God, and the welcoming fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

**And also with you.**

**CANTICLE OF PRAISE** (p. 204)

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

O God you are our refuge and strength, our stronghold with whom there is no fear. Embolden us with your Word, teach us your ways, and remind us of the truth of the freedom in your holy name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:31-34

A reading from Jeremiah.

*The renewed covenant will not be breakable, but like the old covenant it will expect the people to live upright lives. To know the LORD means that one will defend the cause of the poor and needy (Jer. 22:16). The renewed covenant is possible only because the LORD will forgive iniquity and not remember sin. Our hope lies in a God who forgets.*

<sup>31</sup>The days are surely coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah. <sup>32</sup>It will not be like the covenant that I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt—a covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, says the LORD. <sup>33</sup>But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. <sup>34</sup>No longer shall they teach one another, or say to each other, “Know the LORD,” for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the LORD; for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM: Psalm 46

<sup>1</sup>God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.

<sup>2</sup>**Therefore we will not fear, though the earth be moved,  
and though the mountains shake in the depths of the sea;**

<sup>3</sup>though its waters rage and foam,  
and though the mountains tremble with its tumult.  
<sup>4</sup>**There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.**  
<sup>5</sup>God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be shaken;  
God shall help it at the break of day.  
<sup>6</sup>**The nations rage, and the kingdoms shake;  
God speaks, and the earth melts away.**  
<sup>7</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.  
<sup>8</sup>**Come now, regard the works of the LORD,  
what desolations God has brought upon the earth;**  
<sup>9</sup>behold the one who makes war to cease in all the world;  
who breaks the bow, and shatters the spear, and burns the shields with fire.  
<sup>10</sup>**“Be still, then, and know that I am God;  
I will be exalted among the nations; I will be exalted in the earth.”**  
<sup>11</sup>The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our stronghold.

#### **SECOND READING: Romans 3:19-28**

A reading from Romans.

*Paul's words stand at the heart of the preaching of Martin Luther and other Reformation leaders. No human beings make themselves right with God through works of the law. We are brought into a right relationship with God through the divine activity centered in Christ's death. This act is a gift of grace that liberates us from sin and empowers our faith in Jesus Christ.*

<sup>19</sup>Now we know that whatever the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. <sup>20</sup>For “no human being will be justified in his sight” by deeds prescribed by the law, for through the law comes the knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup>But now, apart from law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed, and is attested by the law and the prophets, <sup>22</sup>the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction, <sup>23</sup>since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God; <sup>24</sup>they are now justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup>whom God put forward as a sacrifice of atonement by his blood, effective through faith. He did this to show his righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over the sins previously committed; <sup>26</sup>it was to prove at the present time that he himself is righteous and that he justifies the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup>Then what becomes of boasting? It is excluded. By what law? By that of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup>For we hold that a person is justified by faith apart from works prescribed by the law.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION** (p. 205)

## **GOSPEL: John 8:31-36**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus speaks of truth and freedom as spiritual realities known through his word. He reveals the truth that sets people free from sin.*

<sup>31</sup>Jesus said to the Jews who had believed in him, "If you continue in my word, you are truly my disciples; <sup>32</sup>and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free." <sup>33</sup>They answered him, "We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone. What do you mean by saying, 'You will be made free'?"

<sup>34</sup>Jesus answered them, "Very truly, I tell you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

<sup>35</sup>The slave does not have a permanent place in the household; the son has a place there forever. <sup>36</sup>So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed."

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON**

Lord, may your truth ring in our hearts this day, that we might hear your promises, feel your love, and know the freedom that you offer in your name, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

If there's anything that I've learned about people during my almost half a century of life here on Earth, is that we really seem to like being in competition with each other. Sure, there are the fun and games with sports and, uh, games, but I find that in many other areas of life as well, we can't seem to help but to compare ourselves with others.

Since we started school we are graded and ranked based on our retention of knowledge. In the workplace the goal is to generally produce and produce and be rewarded for our performance. Even in our churches we find ourselves peeking over the shoulder of our neighbours to check how many people they get on a Sunday. And don't even get me started on our political elections that just happened.

I'm not saying this is wrong or we are wrong for being like this, it's simply an observation that life is just this way. And it's not just us in our modern times, I mean people have been comparing themselves to each other since Adam and Eve, Jacob and Esau, and Moses and Aaron, just to name a few. And even in the gospel stories that we read in the past few weeks were full of characters wanting to elevate themselves, with gems like:

"Why don't you live and do things in the proper way like us?"

or

"We stopped him from doing good because he wasn't part of our insider group"

or

"I haven't done a single thing wrong since my youth"

or even from last week

"We are the ones who should sit beside Jesus in his glory"

See what I mean? It's always, who's the greatest? Who has earned or deserves the best? Who does God love the most?

Because to many, reaching certain goals, achieving specific milestones, being seen as the hardest working are just a few examples of some of the criteria that helps us determine who is the best. And thus, who is worth more. And thus, who should have more. And thus, this never-ending rat race

continues to encapsulate us all as it permeates every corner of our lives. It affects how we see the world, each other, and even ourselves.

So we might brag about our accolades and pat our own backs and self-esteem. We might defend ourselves or maybe go on the offense when our self worth is challenged. We might make wild and perhaps even false claims about who we are and what we can do in order to put others in their place, and us in ours.

You know, something like, “We are descendants of Abraham and have never been slaves to anyone.”

That was the defensive response directed at Jesus after he told his followers that his truth would set them free. I mean, Jesus isn't wrong here, of course he isn't. But I guess this choice of words could be misconstrued to sound a bit offensive, so much so that they clap back with, “what do you mean by saying ‘you will be made free?’”

I mean, we're familiar with this passage right? We should be as we get it like every Reformation Sunday, and you know we love our Reformation Sundays and especially the Bratwurst we usually have after the service. So we get what Jesus is saying. We understand what he means. We might even chuckle at these Jewish folk in the story, whose whole cultural and religious history is about being freed from slavery, as they make this claim that they were never even slaves to begin with.

But of course they would do that, right? We might have done the same if we were put in that position, without the benefit of about 2000 years of hindsight, that is. I mean if someone called us subservient or something, we probably would take offense to that too. If someone were to insinuate that, I don't know, that our spouse or partner has more authority in our relationship than we do, we might just knee-jerk deny it, even if it were true. If our place in the hierarchy of the world, our position in the scale of importance, or the level of power that we like to think we have is put in question, we might at least be tempted to lash back to reclaim our dignity and honour, just as these ancient Jewish folk did.

So I wonder then, if this is actually the sin that Jesus is talking about. I mean, it seems like we're all trapped in our hierarchies, these comparisons, the power struggles of the world. We need to be liberated from under the burden of this attitude of determining once and for all who is the greatest. We need to be freed by the truth that Jesus gives.

But what truth is he talking about?

Earlier this week I came across this old article from the religious blog site Patheos, entitled “The Real Story Behind Genesis” by Zach Christensen, where he explains how back in the day creation stories weren't all that uncommon, and argues that they weren't written for the purpose that we usually think they are. In that they weren't supposed to capture any kind of historical accuracy or anything, but rather they're just stories explaining who we are and what we're about. Through allegory and metaphor they teach us our role on this planet and our relationship to all that is. So they aren't so much about the “what” as much as the “why.”

And he highlights the Babylonian creation story, that describes how the Earth was created through violence among the gods. According to this story, people were formed from a mix of the blood of the slain gods and the clay of this newly created earth, and they made to serve the surviving gods and their lives of leisure. Christensen says that this particular story and the others like it tells us, “...that human beings are innately worthless and consigned to endure the evil curse of labour without any meaning.” Yikes.

But our creation story is different from that. While it does talk about the formation of the earth and its creatures and us as people, it is much more intimate. More relational. It has our God breathing God's

own Spirit into us and forming us in God's own image, not as slaves but as God's children joined together by a covenant of grace, redemption, and the life that truly is life.

That is the creation story that we hold on to. It doesn't say that we're made only to work, toil, and try to earn our place in the world. Instead it says that we are created out of the love of God, much like how babies are made out of the love of their parents, and how we are placed to care for the world not because we have to but because we have a relationship with its Creator, who made us to be just a little less than divine. This is by God's design. Not by what we have done or can do or want to be seen as. Rather, we are formed to be this out of love.

But if we're honest, we seem to resonate more with the Babylonian creation story, don't we? We feel like we need to be placed in hierarchies that we can move up and conquer. We feel like we need to work our fingers to the bone in order to shape our identities and place in the world. We feel like we need to discipline ourselves, put ourselves through trial and hardship, and show the world that we are good enough by our own rights and our own doing. This mentality, that all this is all one big competition to see who comes in first and is best, is what I believe Jesus is saying that we are slaves to and need to be freed from, liberated out from under, reformed from thinking that this is truth.

You see, we don't need to climb that hierarchical ladder, but not because we made ourselves to be good enough. We don't need to feel like we're in constant competition with each other, but not because we're already just that much better than everyone else. We don't need to be a slave of this mentality that we must perform and produce in order to be God's people, but not because we're so great just as we are and have never been slaves to anyone.

No, we don't have to do those things because through the covenant and promises that God has for us, each and every one of us, all of us who ever have been and are yet to come, people of all walks, ethnicities, genders, backgrounds, and even positions and paycheques, are saved from the burdensome and debilitating notion that we, by things we have done or have left undone, are anything less than God's beloved. And as God's beloved, we are redeemed and lifted up into forgiveness and welcomed to live in God's kingdom and community forever.

My friends, this is the truth that a benedictine monk named Martin Luther wanted to share with the church and the world a little over 500 years ago. This is the truth that we as followers of Christ across this and all nations continue to preach and proclaim. This is the truth that is divinely and graciously given to us and sets us all *free*.

So on this Reformation Sunday, may we know the true freedom that is given to us, saving us by grace and reforming us by love, through the faith of Jesus Christ our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** Word of God, Come Down on Earth (#510)

**CREED** (p. 104)

Reformed to live as free people of God, let us confess the Christian faith with the Apostle's Creed:

**I believe in God, the Father almighty,  
creator of heaven and earth.  
I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord,  
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,  
born of the virgin Mary,  
suffered under Pontius Pilate,  
was crucified, died, and was buried;**

he descended to the dead.\*  
On the third day he rose again;  
he ascended into heaven,  
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,  
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

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

### PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called to live in the freedom of God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, in your liberating mercy," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, in your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

God our refuge and strength, you are our help in times of trouble and in you there is no fear. Strengthen us in our ministry of hope and peace, that we might inspire all people with your message of love and freedom from sin. 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 St. Peter's Estonian Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their interim pastor Andres Rebane; and for Peace Lutheran Church in Vernon and the pastors and leaders that serve them. Lord, in your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

God our provider, the mountains and seas and all that you have made proclaim your glory, and through them we see your abundant blessing and grace. May our stewardship of this planet be pleasing to you and reflect the love that you've first given us. We pray for all people living in areas affected by harsh weather and natural disasters, that all might find safety and security. Lord, in your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

God our redeemer, the nations shall not be shaken when your justice and grace reign in our hearts. Grant genuine humility to all world leaders and politicians, that we might all move toward true peace with our neighbours. We also remember in prayer our newly elected and re-elected officials in our province and around this country, that they are able to work together toward a better tomorrow. Surround with your continued support those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Barhane; and Solyana Amanuel; as well as for those that have not yet arrived: Maেকে Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. Lord, in your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

God our stronghold, in you we find healing and wholeness as your love washes over us all. Be with those among us who are ill, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and may we all find refuge in the freedom that you give. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Debbie; Beulah; Bev and family; 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...  
Lord, in your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer**.

God our sovereign lord, we stand in awe at the majesty of your name and you are exalted in all the earth. You welcome us to freely live with you and all the saints of all times and places, and you inspire us to live with faith in community. Remind us always of our connection with you and your people, that we might boldly stand in your truth forever. Lord, in your liberating mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your truth and grace, through 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 places give thanks and praise to you, almighty God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who teaches us the truth about your freeing grace and liberating love and joins us together with the choirs of angels, hosts of heaven, and church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

#### **HOLY, HOLY, HOLY** (p. 207)

#### **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

O God, how majestic is your name in all the earth. Your mercy reigns throughout the earth, and it permeates into our communities and hearts. We stand in awe of all that you do, and we offer to you our worship and praise and thanks. For in you there is freedom, by your grace we are redeemed, and through your Son Jesus we know of your salvation and eternal welcome into your kingdom.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his disciples for a meal, where he took the 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."

Then after they ate, he took the cup, gave thanks, and passed it around the table for them 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 we are gathered around this table in remembrance, in worship, and in awe, together proclaiming this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**



O God our Creator, be present with us in this meal as you bless us with all that you do and all that you are, granting us a freedom and peace that surpasses all understanding and reveals to us a love that never ends, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

**LORD'S PRAYER** (p. 112)

Together in the freedom 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 equalizing and freeing love.

**Thanks be to God.**

**COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 208)

For by Grace You Have Been Saved (#598)

Rise, Shine, You People! (#665)

**PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

We thank you, O God, for strengthening our hearts through this feast of life and salvation. Shine the light of Christ on our path, that we may do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with you, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING**

**BLESSING**

God, the Source of grace and peace,  
God, the Saving Word of life,  
and God, the Spirit of truth and freedom  
bless you all, now and forever.

**Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** Lord of Light (#688)

**DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, live freely by God's reforming grace.

**Thanks be to God.**

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