



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Twentieth Sunday after Pentecost

October 6, 2024

ELW Holy Communion, Setting 10

Today's gospel combines a saying that makes many of us uncomfortable with a story we find comforting. Jesus' saying on divorce is another of his rejections of human legislation in favor of the original intent of God's law. Jesus' rebuke of the disciples who are fending off the children should challenge us as well. What does it mean to receive the kingdom of God as a child does?

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 this day in the name of our Lord, whose name is majestic in all the earth, whose glory is chanted above the heavens, and whose work includes caring for and loving us. For even in our sin and brokenness, we are made to be just a little less than divine, crowned with grace and mercy, and lifted up as children of God. And so together with the beasts of land and sea and air and all of creation, let us worship our Lord, whose name is majestic in all the earth.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING HYMN: All Are Welcome (#641)

GREETING

The majestic grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the powerful 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

Faithful God, we give you thanks that your love for your creation spreads to every person and every heart. Receive us as your beloved children and show us the joy of being in your presence that we might abide with you always, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Genesis 2:18-24

A reading from Genesis.

Genesis 2 stresses that people are not meant to live in isolation but in relationship. Out of love for humanity, God creates them male and female, to provide companionship for each other and to become with each other "one flesh." The Hebrew words used here are ish (man) and ishshah (woman).

¹⁸The LORD God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper as his partner." ¹⁹So out of the ground the LORD God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. ²⁰The man gave names to all cattle, and to the birds of the air, and to every animal of the field; but for the man there was not found a helper as his partner. ²¹So the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh. ²²And the rib that the LORD God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. ²³Then the man said,

"This at last is bone of my bones
and flesh of my flesh;
this one shall be called Woman,
for out of Man this one was taken."

²⁴Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 8

¹O LORD our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!—

²**you whose glory is chanted above the heavens out of the mouths of infants and children;
you have set up a fortress against your enemies, to silence the foe and avenger.**

³When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers,
the moon and the stars you have set in their courses,

⁴**what are mere mortals that you should be mindful of them,
human beings that you should care for them?**

⁵Yet you have made them little less than divine;
with glory and honor you crown them.

⁶**You have made them rule over the works of your hands;
you have put all things under their feet:**

⁷all flocks and cattle,
even the wild beasts of the field,

⁸**the birds of the air, the fish of the sea,
and whatever passes along the paths of the sea.**

⁹O LORD our Lord,

how majestic is your name in all the earth!

SECOND READING: Hebrews 1:1-4; 2:5-12

A reading from Hebrews.

Quoting from the psalms, this passage from Hebrews emphasizes that Jesus, the one through whom God created everything and who sits at God's right hand, is also the one who experienced human suffering and death in order to blaze the path of salvation for us.

¹Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. ³He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, ⁴having become as much superior to angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

^{2:5}Now God did not subject the coming world, about which we are speaking, to angels. ⁶But someone has testified somewhere,

“What are human beings that you are mindful of them,
or mortals, that you care for them?

⁷You have made them for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned them with glory and honor,

⁸subjecting all things under their feet.”

Now in subjecting all things to them, God left nothing outside their control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to them, ⁹but we do see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

¹⁰It was fitting that God, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many children to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings. ¹¹For the one who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one Father. For this reason Jesus is not ashamed to call them brothers and sisters, ¹²saying,

“I will proclaim your name to my brothers and sisters,
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Mark 10:2-16

The holy gospel according to Mark.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus announced and enacted in history the new reality of God's surprising activity. These two stories demonstrate this new reality: Women and children are accepted and valued, not dismissed as inferior to adult men.

²Some Pharisees came, and to test [Jesus] they asked, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?" ³He answered them, "What did Moses command you?" ⁴They said, "Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her." ⁵But Jesus said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶But from the beginning of creation, 'God made them male and female.' ⁷'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸and the two shall become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ⁹Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

¹⁰Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹¹He said to them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹²and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery."

¹³People were bringing little children to him in order that he might touch them; and the disciples spoke sternly to them. ¹⁴But when Jesus saw this, he was indignant and said to them, "Let the little children come to me; do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. ¹⁵Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it." ¹⁶And he took them up in his arms, laid his hands on them, and blessed them.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O Lord, just as you spoke to us through the voices of the prophets, may you speak to us now through the truth of your word, the wisdom of your grace, and the power of your Spirit, through Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

This... gospel text, am I right? We've gotten a few doozies this year, ranging from Jesus' rebukes toward Pharisee and disciple alike to him commanding his disciples not to tell anyone about him, from Jesus' predictions of his suffering and death to him warning his disciples of the weeping and gnashing of teeth, from Jesus telling us to submit to earthly authorities to John the Baptizer being beheaded by one of those very authorities. Don't get me wrong, we had some nice feel-good ones in there too, but these are just some of those that we would just have a hard time responding with "glory to you, O Christ."

And today's is one of them. Sigh. Divorce. Awkward much?

It's awkward because we all have someone in our family who is divorced and we see the brokenness it caused. We all know someone who is divorced and we feel the hurt and pain that came from it. We might be divorced ourselves, or maybe just came close to it, and we know the harsh feelings that it could bring.

And so when Jesus talks so bluntly about this and such uncomfortable subjects, we kind of cringe away. We might close our ears and pretend we can't hear whatever words he says. We might even look to see what the other texts for today have to offer and talk about them instead. I've heard some people even go so far as to discount whole sections of the bible because it doesn't agree with their particular worldview at the time.

As tempting as any of that may be, that's not what we're going to do today. No, today we're going to drive straight into this uncomfortable and awkward text. Today, we're going to try to ascertain just what Jesus is trying to teach us. Yeah, I better not mess this up...

The thing is, though, like we were sort of talking about the past couple weeks about how we can't help but interpret scripture through our contemporary lenses, I think today's and the other uncomfortable texts are no exception. Maybe that's even a reason why we're uncomfortable with them, not just because of how we're interpreting that particular text, but how we see the whole bible in general.

I mean, we're told a great many things about what the bible is supposed to be for our lives. Things like it being a guide book, a list of dos and don'ts, and maybe even an instruction manual for life. And there are others who would call it a history book, a mystical book, or a book of formulas that help us unlock the secrets of life. Still there are others who romanticize it a bit and say that it's a book of love stories, a collection of poems or prose describing lives full of true love, or even a love letter to us from God.

But I think most of us would consider the bible to be a book of morals. Which isn't exactly wrong, mind you, but I wonder if it's how we apply that to our lives that needs to be looked at. I wonder if by calling it a book of morals really means that it's that guide book, that list of dos and don'ts, or that instruction manual for life that we mentioned a couple seconds ago. Basically, I wonder if that makes this bible a rule book, full of laws that we must follow, strict as can be.

And to be honest, it's ok if you see it that way. It's ok to live your life disciplined, on the straight and narrow, and to the letter. It's ok to see God in your life and in the world through order and obedience. It's ok if that works for you. But I wonder if the bible as a book of morals can be seen in a different way, one that is more freeing, liberating, and redeeming. A way that allows us to live our lives and still see God's grace and mercy for our us all. A way in which these uncomfortable texts that we're talking about aren't made to be so awkward and oppressive and finger-pointing for us, but in a way that is enriching, encouraging, and life-giving.

So I wonder if as a book of morals, our bibles aren't so much about laws around how we should act and treat each other, but like we sort of talked about last week, more about descriptions of who we are and how we should see each other.

I know, it's a very subtle difference. Because how we treat each other will change how we see each other, wouldn't it? Like today's gospel seems to be telling men to treat women and

children with respect, and there's nothing wrong with that. Because in doing so, then maybe community could flourish, people would feel more welcome, and then life in general would be better for a greater number of people.

But it's sometimes hard to do that, isn't it? I mean, people can be annoying, women and men included. Treating each other with respect when they're annoying would be difficult. People can be frustrating, kids and adults alike, and treating them with respect might feel like we're enabling them to be frustrating. People, of all walks and backgrounds, of all genders and ages, of all political or religious opinions, can rub us the wrong way, disagree with us in the most obtuse ways, and even infuriate us. So forcing ourselves to treat them with respect can be darn near impossible. And when we see passages like today's as a command and law to respect people, we feel like we can't ever do it so we chalk up one more to sin. More shaming, guilt-inducing, and oppressive sin.

However.

When we see this book of morals as a description on who we are and how we can see each other, that is, as people created equally in the image of God, as fellow sinners saved by grace, as siblings in Christ, then it's becomes more natural for us to respect each other, it'd be easier for us to empathize, we can be quicker to forgive. If we can see how similar we are in spite of difference, how we are loved in spite of how much we dislike each other, how we are given so much in spite of how little we deserve, we can better regard each other as we are regarded by God: as God's own beloved, redeemed, and welcomed people invited to live forever in the community and kingdom of God as Christ's own body in the world.

This isn't to say that we'll all get along and there will be no more anger and even hatred. This isn't to say that people will no longer be annoying and frustrate us. This isn't even to say that there will be no more divorce. I mean, things will happen and we just won't always get along and agree on everything with everyone. But it does mean that perhaps the fighting will decrease. The belittling of others might be less frequent. The de-humanizing of other humans, which in our minds will justify us in treating them poorly, will be more difficult for us as we see and recognise the value of humans, the worthiness of the other citizens of this planet, the way our God, the Creator of the universe continues to love even those just as this God continues to love even us.

I think this is what Jesus means when he says we approach the kingdom as a child, in that children have a more innocent way of looking at life, not yet jaded by the hierarchies, artificial statuses, and selfish entitlements that the world teaches us. But children can easier see people as equals, can easier listen to others and their opinions, and can easier respect before demanding respect. Well, in general at least, not always true with those annoying ones. *shake fist*

But still, all this isn't easy for us as we are more set in our ways. It isn't easy for us as we are more exposed to the harsh realities of this broken world. It isn't easy for us as sometimes we'd rather things be black and white and fully spelled out for us step by step. But I believe the more we realise how much we are loved and forgiven, the quicker we can learn how to love and forgive.

And believe me, we are, all of us, each and every one of us, all of us sitting in the room and those online and those who never even hear these words, are dearly loved and forgiven by God. This isn't a hard and fast rule that we must follow, but it is a reality that informs us of who we are and how we can regard each other, see each other, and love each other.

So as we continue in this season after Pentecost, may we continually see how God's love and grace permeates our lives, so we might be able to act as agents of this love and grace for all people, equally invited and welcomed by God to live in community and God's kingdom forever. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Although I Speak with Angel's Tongue (#644)

CREED (p. 104)

Together with all of God's beloved children, 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 into right relationship and community, 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 are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Majestic Lord, your name is revered in all the earth, and we look to you for leading and guidance. May we follow your ways of community and service, that all that we encounter might learn of your love in our lives. We remember in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those that use this building for worship, work, and play; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Dunbar Lutheran Church in Vancouver and the pastors and leaders that serve them; and for our Synod staff and Synod Council who work tirelessly in the behind-the-scenes of our collective ministry. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Loving Lord, you are mindful of all that you have created, holding it up in love and care. May our stewardship of all that you have entrusted to us be pleasing to you, that this planet might continue to provide for all its creatures for the generations to come. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Gracious Lord, you made us as your children and you have given us authority to rule over these lands. Be with all governments and world leaders and give them the strength to lead with diligence, mercy, and gentleness, that we might one day live in peace. We pray for the continued support of 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: Maekela Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Healing Lord, you provide for all that we need and ask, and you fill us with your saving grace. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love can shine in and through us all together as a community under you. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; 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...

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

Majestic Lord, you reign for all eternity, and you welcome us to live with you and all the saints in your kingdom. May the memories of those that we've loved and lost stay strong in our hearts, that their influence of faith might always inform us in our journey of life and community. By your redeeming mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your saving grace, shown to us by 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, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who reminds us of how we are created to be in relationship with you and each other, that we might righteously 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 (p. 207)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

O Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth. For you have shown us nothing but grace and mercy and you lead us on paths of righteousness and community. You empower us in our relationship with you and each other, and you give to us the gift of forgiveness, shown to us most fully through the life and work of Jesus Christ.

Who, on the night that he was betrayed, sat with his disciples for a meal, where he took the bread, gave thanks, broke, and shared it with them saying, "Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

And after they ate, he took the cup, gave thanks, and passed it around the table for them to drink from saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this bread and cup that we can see how we are welcomed into your kingdom, your house, your family, even as we together declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, for you unite us together to live and work and serve for and through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Gathered together into community 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 our welcome as one.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)
Christ Is Made the Sure Foundation (#645)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, we again give you thanks for feeding and nourishing us with your Word and truth, leading us down paths of righteousness and relationship. Bless us in our community and service that our work and ministry be fruitful and fulfilling to the honour of your name, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the grace of God our Creator lift you up; the love of God the Christ hold you close, and the blessing of God our companion be upon you all, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Blest Be the Tie That Binds (#656)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, live as welcomed in God's kingdom.

Thanks be to God.

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