



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Sixth Sunday after Pentecost

July 9, 2023

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Ten

The mystery of God's ways is sometimes hidden from the wise and intelligent. Jesus associates with those often excluded from the religious community. Like Paul, we struggle with our own selfish desires and seek God's mercy and forgiveness. We gather to be refreshed by Christ's invitation: "Come to me, all you that are weary." Gathered around word, water, and meal, we find rest for our souls.

A warm welcome to those who are here worshipping in-person and on-line with us today! Here at Grace Luthera 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) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in the name of our Lord, who is gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. For our Lord is good to all and has compassion for all of us in need. And so we praise and bless this God, proclaiming God's everlasting kingdom and dominion, and the gracious power over sin and death, which lifts us up into salvation and new life, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Come to Me, O Weary Traveler (ACS #1017)

GREETING

The reassuring grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the restoring love of God, and the rejuvenating fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 204)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God our saviour and friend, you call us to lay down our burdens and find rest in relationship with you and each other. Help us to learn this how to be gentle and humble of hearts, that our burdens be light and our yoke easy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Zechariah 9:9-12

A reading from Zechariah.

The coming messianic king will inaugurate an era of disarmament and prosperity. Because of God's covenant with Israel, the people are designated as "prisoners of hope."

⁹Rejoice greatly, O daughter Zion!
Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem!

Lo, your king comes to you;
triumphant and victorious is he,
humble and riding on a donkey,
on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

¹⁰He will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
and the war-horse from Jerusalem;
and the battle bow shall be cut off,
and he shall command peace to the nations;
his dominion shall be from sea to sea,
and from the River to the ends of the earth.

¹¹As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you,
I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

¹²Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope;
today I declare that I will restore to you double.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 145:8-14

⁸The LORD is gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love.

⁹**LORD, you are good to all,
and your compassion is over all your works.**

¹⁰All your works shall praise you, O LORD,
and your faithful ones shall bless you.

¹¹**They shall tell of the glory of your kingdom
and speak of your power,**

¹²that all people may know of your power
and the glorious splendor of your kingdom.

¹³**Your kingdom is an everlasting kingdom; your dominion endures throughout all ages.
You, LORD, are faithful in all your words, and loving in all your works.**

¹⁴The Lord upholds all those who fall
and lifts up those who are bowed down.

SECOND READING: Romans 7:15-25a

A reading from Romans.

Life captive to sin is a catch-22 existence in which we know good but do not do it and do things we know to be wrong. Through Jesus Christ, God has set us free from such a futile existence.

¹⁵I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. ¹⁶Now if I do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good. ¹⁷But in fact it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me. ¹⁸For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do. ²⁰Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I that do it, but sin that dwells within me.

²¹So I find it to be a law that when I want to do what is good, evil lies close at hand. ²²For I delight in the law of God in my inmost self, ²³but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind, making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members.

²⁴Wretched man that I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? ^{25a}Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus chides people who find fault with both his ministry and that of John the Baptist. He thanks God that wisdom and intelligence are not needed to receive what God has to offer.

[Jesus spoke to the crowd saying:] ¹⁶“To what will I compare this generation? It is like children sitting in the marketplaces and calling to one another,

¹⁷‘We played the flute for you, and you did not dance;
we wailed, and you did not mourn.’

¹⁸For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon'; ¹⁹the Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' Yet wisdom is vindicated by her deeds."

²⁵At that time Jesus said, "I thank you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶yes, Father, for such was your gracious will. ²⁷All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸"Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Comforting God, by your Spirit may the burdens of our souls be lifted, that we might see and experience the support and joy in living in your community, with your holy people, in your holy name. Amen.

So earlier this week my friend had alerted me to a Lutheran Church down in the States that was using a new Creed instead of the regular Apostle's Creed that we pretty much use every week here. This isn't an unusual practice to change up the Creed by any means, often churches would update the words of their liturgy to have more inclusive and perhaps modern and clear language. This Creed that my friend told me about and I subsequently read, was no different in that respect.

It talks about God not having a gender, how Jesus sees everyone as a child of God, and how the Spirit is not tied to any one ethnicity but is here for all. It talks about the church being a diverse multi-faceted people with many gifts and talents that works together for God's glory. And at the end of it, it says that love is love is love, and asks God for help in increasing our faith.

Nothing wrong with it, right? Theologically sound, talking about the main points of our faith that should be mentioned in a Creed, and uses language that is... on the most part... appropriate for worshipping communities. But as it is with a lot of "new" things in the church, the critics come out of the woodwork.

Like I said, I never heard of this Creed before my friend told me about a few days ago but it apparently was written like two years ago. And after doing a quick search I was bombarded with articles upon articles, TikToks over IG reels over YouTube shorts, and just endless reactions, all saying how this Creed is heretical, theologically incorrect, and an abomination. One comment even said something like "calling the Holy Spirit by anything other than the Holy Spirit is the unforgiveable sin." Ok, even if that is how he understands that passage out of Matthew, this somewhat new Creed doesn't say anything about the Spirit other than the Spirit being welcoming to all people. I don't see the basis of his calling out the unforgiveable sin.

So why all the hate? It's just that... this Creed is called... the Sparkle Creed.

And here is where the controversy comes in. Don't get me wrong, I'm totally fine with people changing words around to suit their own contexts. I'm ok with seeing and recognising the needs of your congregation and trying to meet them. I would even encourage that we study the landscape of our neighbourhoods and surrounding areas and figure out how to make the face of God more apparent in it. And aside from a couple iffy words and terms here and there, this Sparkle Creed is fine.

It's just that... I think it's a really poor choice in names. Like with a name like that, of course the haters are going to hate. And that's a shame, because all of the goodness of this Creed is now lost because as soon as many people hear the name, the words are now falling on deaf ears. I mean, just looking at that unforgiveable sin comment and others like it tells me that people have already made their mind up about the Sparkle Creed before even reading it. They look at the title and figured that it would be something that is against what they already believe and threw away any possibility of learning something new. They had already decided that they didn't like it before even giving it a chance.

And that is sad. It's sad that all the work put into crafting a new, more inclusive-linguaged creed could be somewhat wasted because people couldn't see past the title. It's sad that we can't be more open-minded to things that might land outside the scope of our understandings and predetermined beliefs. It's sad that this generation is like children sitting in the marketplace, complaining that the world isn't catering to them.

And I guess not just this generation, but maybe every generation ever since Jesus first said these words some 2000 years ago. So maybe I'll challenge Jesus' choice of words here, the generation he was talking about wasn't acting like a bunch of children, but they were acting like a bunch of adults as this seems to be how adults actually are throughout history.

This believing that we're always right. This idea that we are owed the world or at least the utmost respect from everyone around us. This notion of privilege, thinking that we just inherently deserve everything we want because of we are the ones who just know better.

This what Jesus talked about, isn't it? He's talking about the complaining around the progression of faith that was going on. He was talking about the decided unbelief and rejection of God's inclusive message in the world, and the messengers sent to deliver it. He was talking about how the powers that be had already decided that they didn't like John the baptizer or Jesus for no other reason other than they already decided that they didn't. They made their decision first, they can validate them later.

And so we, sitting comfortable in our Lutheran chairs, confident in our progressive and inclusive faith, almost certain in our views of God's love and grace, look at that perverse generation of Jesus' time and we feel bad that they just didn't get it. We, in our modern-day times and understandings of the world are so advanced that surely Jesus would be proud of us, right? We, knowing what we know and what we know being right would mean that there is no way that Jesus was talking about us. Or so we'd imagine.

See if I'm being honest, when I heard of the reactions to the Sparkle Creed, I decidedly reacted toward these reactions in my own way. I read some titles of the articles and already I expected my eyes to roll more than once while reading them. I sized up my friend who told me about it in the first place and assumed what he'd have a certain attitude toward it and felt like I didn't

need to engage with that type of closed-mindedness. So really, how am I any different? How am I any better? How am I not included in this rebuke from Jesus? It's like we're all the same foul-smelling substance, but just a different pile. We share the same closed minds, assumptions, and pretensions. We are all like children.

But the kicker here is that Jesus tells us that we need to have attitudes like infants in order to see God's message and presence in the world.

Infants, who are innocent and unjaded by the hardships of life. Babies, who don't really have the capacity to hold grudges but would be a sucker for anyone who would show them love and a smile. Children, who would never shoot first and ask questions later, but might ask questions upon questions, even ad nauseum, out of a pure curiosity of their surroundings, of community and relationships, and of how we can live better in the world. See, it isn't their decisions that determine their faith, but their faith that determines their decisions. This is what Jesus is calling us to be like.

But we will fail. We won't get it right. We will continue to do what we don't want to do and not do what we know we ought to do and feel bad for it. We will stay in sin because we can never live up to the standard of perfection, we can never achieve the goal of holiness, we can never bear the burden of righteousness.

But even in that, Jesus tells us to come to him, all who are weary and in need of rest, for his burden is light and yoke easy. In Jesus, the pressure of being right, holier-than-thou, and acting not like children, is lifted and we are graciously forgiven and loved anyway. By the Spirit we are given new life and opportunity to see and recognise the presence of God in the world, in our communities, and in our very selves, bringing us up out of the guilt and shame of our shortcomings, and reminding us of our belonging in God's family of the fallen but lifted, broken but healed, sinners but forgiven.

And so I think that it's ok to use the Sparkle Creed in worship. I also think that it's ok to not. I think it's ok to have an opinion. And it's ok to not. It's ok to be weighed down by the burdens and worries of the ways of the world, but we are encouraged to acknowledge Jesus in our lives, offering us rest and support, reminding us that we are all dearly loved by the God who created the universe, welcoming us into the everlasting kingdom that is open to all and receives us just as we are.

So as we continue in this season after Pentecost, may we see each other as God sees us, sinners in need of rest, and bring glory to the same God for so graciously providing us just that, in the name of Christ, by the power of the Spirit. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Blessed Assurance (#638)

CREED (p. 104)

Together with all of God's people in worship, 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 rest and rejuvenation in the arms of Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with “in your liberating mercy, O God,” and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. In your liberating mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we know that you are gracious and full of compassion, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. May the ministry in our congregations and communities reflect your patience with us, that we all might learn to love and forgive just as we are loved and forgiven. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; our partners Anglican Church of Canada and now the Moravian Church in Canada; and our own church the ELCIC, and all our congregations, staff, rostered leaders, and bishops. In particular out of our BC Synod we pray for St. Peter’s Shared Ministry in Hudson’s Hope and the pastors and leaders that serve there; and for Christ Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Barbara Grootte. In your liberating mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you are good to all, and we can see your compassion in all your work in our lives and throughout creation. May our stewardship of all that you have made be pleasing to you, that this planet and all its beauty may be restored and maintained for the generations to come. We also pray for those living in areas that are prone to harsh weather and natural disasters, that they are able to be safe and out of harm’s way. In your liberating mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we praise you and bless you and we recognize the glory of your kingdom and the power of your name. May all world leaders, politicians, and people of influence see and recognize your truth and righteousness, that we might all work together to bring out true peace among the nations. We pray for the areas of the world that continue to face war, turmoil, and violence, that your love might burst through the darkness and bring all people together. We especially remember in prayer those that we’ve sponsored to come into our country: Solyana Amanuel; Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Filimon Abraha. In your liberating mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your love and welcome is everlasting and your compassionate hand of healing endures throughout the ages. You are faithfully and lovingly present among all those who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and you remind us all that we are not alone in our ailments but that

we are surrounded by a community of all the saints forever. We especially pray for Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Bryan and Chona; Beulah; Bev and family; Sukhwant; John; Cari; Laura; Kandie; Thomas; William; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Allen; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

In your liberating mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Lord, you uphold us all for all time, and you lift us up in communion with you and all the saints of all times and places. May the memories of those that we've loved and lost remain alive in our hearts, that the faith of the past might help inspire the faith of the future. In your liberating mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the sanctuary we find in your name, 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, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who calls us into community where we can find rest from our burdens and as a whole church on earth, joyfully join with the choirs of angels and hosts of heaven in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 207)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, we give you thanks for steadfast love that knows no end and eternal faithfulness that remains present with us for all time. We know that nothing can snatch us from your arms of grace, and we revel in the fact that we are welcomed, included, and blessed by your holy name. And through it all, you have sent to us your Son Jesus, who teaches us and leads us down your paths of righteousness and forgiveness, showing us the true depth of your mercy.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your son Jesus sat with his friends for a final meal together, 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 then after they ate it, he took the common cup, gave thanks, and passed it around the table for them to drink from saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. Do this for the remembrance of me."

It is in this heavenly food that we are reminded again of how we are joined to each other, together carrying our identity as your people, supporting one another in our welcome into your kingdom, living lives based on the truth of our 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 all that you have done and continue to do in the name 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 community with each other 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

Take and eat, the signs and symbols of God's grace and love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)

The Peace of the Lord (#646)

Rise, Shine, You People (#665)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have fed and nourished us with your Word and truth that remind us of our connection to you and each other. Strengthen us in our ministry and mission in the world, and may your love and grace be reflected in our community and all that we do, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who feels compassion for us all lead you to find the love and grace given to us, that the peace that comes from living with a gentle and humble heart lead us into right relationship and community, now and forever. **Amen.**

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

DISMISSAL

Go in peace to carry, to rest, and to love.

Thanks be to God.

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