



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Second Sunday after Epiphany

January 19, 2025

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

The Sundays after Epiphany continue to celebrate the revelation of God's glory to us as it was made known to the magi and to those on Jordan's banks at Jesus' baptism—today using wedding imagery. Our God rejoices over God's people as those being married rejoice over one another. By the power of the Spirit there are gifts galore for everyone. In Christ Jesus the best wine is saved for last. Taste and see.

We at Grace Lutheran Church strive to reflect and proclaim the love of God shown to us by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit by providing an inclusive and supportive environment through loving care and community service.

A warm welcome to all who are worshipping with us in person or online! We appreciate your contribution to the community today: with your voice, your presence, and just the blessing that you are. May you be nurtured by God's Word, empowered by the love of Christ, and stirred by the wisdom of the Holy Spirit in this service this day, for the sake of God's mission in the world.

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

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather together in the Spirit of worship, recognizing God's love and faithfulness that reach up to the heavens, God's strong righteousness and deep justice that is brought into creation, and God's salvation that saves us all. How priceless is this gift given to us, that we might take refuge in the care of our Saviour and in the abundance of God's blessing. For with God, there is life, light, and love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

GATHERING SONG: Jesus, Come! For We Invite You (#312)

GREETING

The overflowing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the abundant love of God, and the extravagant communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 185)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy God, through signs and blessings, our eyes are opened to your abundant grace in and for the world. May the surprising wonders of your love continually strengthen our faith, that our service and community be reflections of all that you are, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 62:1-5

A reading from Isaiah.

The people's return to Judah after the exile was marred by economic and political troubles. Nevertheless, the prophet declares, Jerusalem and Judah will be restored. God will rejoice over Jerusalem as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride, and the people are called to the celebration.

- ¹ For Zion's sake I will not keep silent,
and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest,
until her vindication shines out like the dawn
and her salvation like a burning torch.
- ² The nations shall see your vindication
and all the kings your glory,
and you shall be called by a new name
that the mouth of the LORD will give.
- ³ You shall be a beautiful crown in the hand of the LORD
and a royal diadem in the hand of your God.
- ⁴ You shall no more be termed Forsaken,
and your land shall no more be termed Desolate,
but you shall be called My Delight Is in Her
and your land Married,
for the LORD delights in you,
and your land shall be married.
- ⁵ For as a young man marries a young woman,

so shall your builder marry you,
and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride,
so shall your God rejoice over you.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 36:5-10

⁵Your love, O LORD, reaches to the heavens,
and your faithfulness to the clouds.

⁶**Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your justice like the great deep;
you save humankind and animals, O LORD.**

⁷How priceless is your love, O God!

All people take refuge under the shadow of your wings.

⁸**They feast upon the abundance of your house;
you give them drink from the river of your delights.**

⁹For with you is the well of life,
and in your light we see light.

¹⁰**Continue your lovingkindness to those who know you,
and your favor to those who are true of heart.**

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

A reading from 1 Corinthians.

The congregation at Corinth experienced division as people were comparing their spiritual gifts, thinking some to be superior to others. Paul invites this fractured community to trust that God's Holy Spirit has gifted them all perfectly for their mission together.

¹Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant. ²You know that when you were gentiles you were enticed and led astray to idols that could not speak. ³Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking by the Spirit of God ever says "Let Jesus be cursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴Now there are varieties of gifts but the same Spirit, ⁵and there are varieties of services but the same Lord, ⁶and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. ⁷To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ⁸To one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, ⁹to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, ¹⁰to another the working of powerful deeds, to another prophecy, to another the discernment of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. ¹¹All these are activated by one and the same Spirit, who allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: John 2:1-11

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Turning water to wine at the wedding at Cana is described as the first of Jesus' signs. Through many such epiphanies, Jesus reveals that he bears God's creative power and joyful presence into the world.

¹ On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there.

² Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. ³ When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." ⁴ And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to me and to you? My hour has not yet come." ⁵ His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." ⁶ Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. ⁷ Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them up to the brim. ⁸ He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the person in charge of the banquet." So they took it. ⁹ When the person in charge tasted the water that had become wine and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), that person called the bridegroom ¹⁰ and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." ¹¹ Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee and revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him.

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Gracious God, by the power of your Spirit, may our eyes be opened to your providence, our ears opened to your promise, and our hearts opened to your presence, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

You know, I may have mentioned this before, but I really don't like these miracle stories. Not just ones that are from Jesus, like today's very famous and even sought after water into wine miracle, but I'm talking about any of the miracles that we get from the Old Testament to the New. No matter who performed the miracle or the reason they performed it, they just don't do it for me.

I know, what a Debbie Downer, right? (sorry, Debbie)

But I think the reason why I don't really like them is because... well, they're nice and all, it's just that... I mean, good on those who were at the receiving end of them, but it's like... just... where are *my* miracles? Where are *my* magic healings and provisions? Where is God revealing Godself in *my* life?

Don't get me wrong, I do believe that God is present in and around our lives and all that, it just seems like God is *more* present and does *more* for the people we read about in the bible, supernatural miracle-wise, I mean. Like, I was never able to part any seas or lakes or barely even puddles to escape my pursuers. I never had mysterious bread fall out of the sky for me to eat whenever I was dying of starvation, even though I probably wouldn't eat it anyway because that sounds kind of gross. I never had a loved one come back to life or be healed sooner than

the natural recovery process that was predicted by modern medicine. I never get any of these kinds of things happen to me or for me.

So I read these stories and I can't help but wonder, because I never experienced similar kinds of things first hand, does that mean that I am not faithful enough or something? Am I not worthy to have some power from heaven sent down my way to help me out a little? Am I not as loved as those we read about in the bible?

And seeing as how I could probably list 20-30 people alive now that are easily more faithful, worthy, and lovable than I am, it's not that much of a stretch for me to think that it is just me. All I really have going for me are my looks.

But then I remember that not only did these things never happen for me, I don't know of them happening to anyone that I know of either, including those 20-30 more faithful, worthy, and lovable people that I just mentioned. Nor have I really heard them happening at all to anyone outside of the bible throughout all of the history, at least not from credible sources. Low quality and poor resolution videos posted on social media don't count.

So what gives?

I mean we read about these miracles all throughout the bible. We read about how helpful they are, how they bring community together, and how they keep the party going. They reveal God's intention, plan, and will. They show God's providence, grace, and love. They tell people that they aren't alone in their situations, but that God is with them always.

So why the heck don't we get them now?

Well, I wonder if by asking this kind of question, we might be focussing on the wrong thing, and in doing that, we might actually miss the point. I wonder if zero in on the negative implications to these stories, we might miss the positive ones. I wonder if we get caught up in the *what*, we might lose sight of the *what for*. I mean if we just look at the miracle in today's story, the ever popular water into wine, it's not hard for us to wonder a whole bunch of other things in this story, like who is getting married, why was Jesus invited, and how can we get to this level of desperation that we can get a miraculous outpouring of free booze?

I mean, we know this story don't we? Jesus is fresh from being baptized and has been invited to a local wedding. And we know that weddings in those days were a huge to-do, where they party it up for days on end. And it wasn't like these days, where we'd have a guest list of just the select 2 or 3 hundred of our closest friends organised in an A and B and maybe even C list, but everyone in the whole village or town and surrounding area would be welcomed, and they'd have to shut everything down just so that everyone can be there for this.

But we know what disaster happens next, early on in the party, the wine goes dry. Now, the text doesn't say if there was a panic or anything, but it certainly is implied with how Mary goes straight to Jesus to update him on the situation. Jesus doesn't seem to care much, telling Mary to mind her business, but Mary just tells the caterers to do whatever Jesus tells them to do.

See this raises some questions too, like what did Mary expect Jesus to do? Did she know that Jesus had the power to do something miraculous or was she just expecting him to distract

everyone, I don't know, with a reading from Isaiah or something while they got more wine from their supplier? Who even was she that they would bother to listen to her?

All these questions, right?

Don't get me wrong though, there's nothing wrong with having these kinds of questions in our minds. There's nothing wrong with wanting to understand the story better. There's nothing wrong just wondering. But the problem comes when our minds become flooded with thoughts that seem to be pertinent but actually aren't in the larger picture. When we are distracted by the who's and what's and why's and taken away from the "because God, man." When our focus leans toward human things and away from heavenly things.

And when that happens, we might start dissecting the miracle too much. Maybe rationalize it out of its meaning and scientifically explain it away. Maybe even wonder why them and not us so much that we lose the point.

See John's gospel doesn't call these miracles *miracles*, but rather they are called *signs*. And what do signs do? What are they for? Well, they point us in the right direction. Using words and symbols, they reveal information that is actually helpful for us. They bring focus.

The sign that we read today isn't about the party. It isn't about Jesus revealing his divine Messiahship to the people and shutting them up about their complaining. It isn't even really about keeping the week-long party going. Rather, it's about the living water that is used to baptise, to cleanse, and to satisfy. It's about the wine that is the new covenant, shed for you and for all people for the forgiveness of sin. It's about the presence of God in and around us, in every aspect of life, revealing to us grace, blessing, and peace.

See in this sign Jesus encapsulated the whole Christian life, including the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, and led people into community full of joy, celebration, and love.

And I think this is the point of this story, I think this is where our focus should be, I think this is what this sign was even for. To show us how God is present, how God brings us together as a community, and how God's intention, plan, and will are revealed. In the flowing waters of baptism and blessing, and in the nourishment and fulfillment from God's body and blood, giving us life and showering us with love.

So the question isn't why doesn't this happen to us, but more *how* does this happen for us. As mentioned we have the gifts of baptism and communion, we have the living water and the life of community, we have the welcome of God's Word and truth that tells us how we all belong in this church, this family, this body of Christ. We can see the miracles of relationship, reconciliation, and restoration. We can see God in the grace we give and receive. We can see the blessing in our community, our service to each other, and in the joy of knowing that we are all, each and every one of us, a beloved child of God.

Sure, they may not be supernatural miracles that defy all logic and scientific reason, but they are signs, pointing us to the God of welcome, grace, and joy. The God of community, relationship, and service. The God of abundant and overflowing blessing and love. They are given to us throughout our lives, we just have to recognise them. And that is the point.

So in this season after the Epiphany and beyond, may we always be aware of Christ in our lives, miraculously pointing us toward the grace and love of God, which leads us into community and right relationship with each other and all the saints, now and always. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Now We Join in Celebration (#462)

CREED

With all those blessed by God's abundant grace, 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 to see and recognise God's abundant blessing in and around our lives, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "in your loving mercy, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. In your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your love reaches the heavens and all the corners of the earth and you bless us within its abundance. May this love overflow in us, that it be reflected upon all whom we encounter. In your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your faithfulness is steadfast and fills our hearts with your grace. Strengthen our proclamation of this truth that its blessing to all be seen and felt through our service, our actions, and our relationships. 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 pray for Faith Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Brian Krushel; and for Gloria Dei Lutheran Church in North Vancouver and their pastor Vida Jaugelis. In your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your righteousness and peace are revealed in all creation, from the strong mountains to the deep oceans, and you graciously entrust it to us to live in. May our stewardship of this planet be pleasing to you, that its beauty and resources continue on throughout the generations. In your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your love and justice are priceless and all people can take refuge under the shadow of your wings. You watch over us and protect us even when we fall prey to evil and hatred. Be especially apparent in the areas of the world that face political turmoil and strife, and grant safety to all who are in danger and harm's way. We pray especially for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into this country: Abraham Barhane; Solyana Amanuel; and Filimon Abraha; as well as for those who have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children. In your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your blessing is abundant and fills us with your nourishing love that restores us back into wholeness. Shine your light especially on those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that we all might see the life that truly is life in you. We pray in particular 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; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

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

O Lord, your lovingkindness is seen and felt throughout eternity as your favour and grace know no end. Remind us always of our connection to you and all the saints as we are forever welcomed into your kingdom as the body of Christ. In your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the abundant blessing shown to us by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE

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 points us toward your abundant and steadfast love, that we might together with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the whole church on earth, forever praise your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 190)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Yes Lord you are holy and mighty, blessing us from the abundance of your love and grace and lifting us up in community and right relationship. May your Word of salvation always be present in our hearts, that we be strengthened and fulfilled for your service and be reminded of the life and ministry of Jesus, your Son, who was with you since the beginning of time.

And it was on that night that he was betrayed, when he sat with his friends for meal, that 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 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 otherwise ordinary food that we can see God's joy, feel God's blessing, and know God's abundance of favour, even as we declare this mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So then it is to you, O God, that we give thanks and ascribe all glory and honour due your name, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered together to see God's abundant blessing, 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, the abundance of God's love for us.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 191)

By Your Hand You Feed Your People (#469)

Eat This Bread (#472)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have fed us with your Word and nourished us with your blessing, and for that we give you thanks and praise. Be with us as we go from here and be apparent in our lives, that we might be able to draw strength from your love and grace as we walk with you and each other, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the love of our Shepherd hold you and keep you,
the grace of our Saviour shine on you and lead you into abundant blessing,
and the joy of the Spirit fill you with hope and bring you to peace, now and forever.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: Sent Forth by God's Blessing (#547)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, rejoice in the Spirit's abundant love and blessing.
Thanks be to God.

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