



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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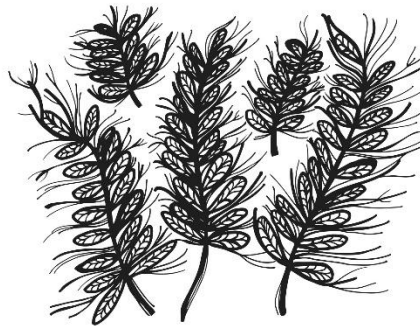
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Seventh Sunday after Epiphany

February 23, 2025

ELW Holy Communion, Setting Eight

Mercy. Mercy. Mercy. Joseph lives it in Egypt. Jesus preaches it in the gospel. The Spirit guides us into merciful lives with the power of forgiveness to reconcile what is fractured and divided. Such merciful living is the baptismal blessing of having put on Christ. It is the gift of the life-giving Spirit. It is a reflection of God's glory revealed in Christ.

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 this day in the name of our Lord, in whom we trust to strengthen us to do good in the world, in our communities, and in our lives. For God gives and provides for our needs and grants justice in due time. In a world full of selfishness and evil, we are given the hope that our prosperity will be found in blessing, righteousness, and an abundance of peace. And so we worship our God who is our stronghold in times of trouble, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

GATHERING SONG: Lord of Glory, You Have Bought Us (#707)

GREETING

The grace of our Lord Jesus that is full of peace, the love of God that is full of mercy, and the communion of the Holy Spirit that is full of welcome, be with you all.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 185)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of abundant mercy, you bring good in the midst of evil, rejoicing in the midst of sorrow, and life in the midst of death. Teach us your ways of righteousness and peace, that we might be able to love as you first loved us, in the name of Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Genesis 45:3-11, 15

A reading from Genesis.

Many years after being sold into slavery by his jealous brothers, Joseph reveals himself to them. Now the second-in-command in Egypt, Joseph reassures his brothers that God has used their evil intentions for good to preserve life during a devastating famine, and Joseph forgives them.

³ Joseph said to his brothers, "I am Joseph. Is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, so dismayed were they at his presence.

⁴ Then Joseph said to his brothers, "Come closer to me." And they came closer. He said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. ⁵ And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. ⁶ For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. ⁷ God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth and to keep alive for you many survivors. ⁸ So it was not you who sent me here but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt. ⁹ Hurry and go up to my father and say to him, 'Thus says your son Joseph, God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me; do not delay. ¹⁰ You shall settle in the land of Goshen, and you shall be near me, you and your children and your children's children, as well as your flocks, your herds, and all that you have. ¹¹ I will provide for you there, since there are five more years of famine to come, so that you and your household and all that you have will not come to poverty.' " ¹⁵ And he kissed all his brothers and wept upon them, and after that his brothers talked with him.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 37:1-11, 39-40

- ¹ Do not be provoked by evildoers;
do not be jealous of those who do wrong.
- ² **For they shall soon wither like the grass,
and like the green grass fade away.**
- ³ Put your trust in the LORD and do good;
dwell in the land and find safe pasture.
- ⁴ **Take delight in the LORD,
who shall give you your heart's desire.**
- ⁵ Commit your way to the LORD; put your trust in the LORD,
and see what God will do.
- ⁶ **The LORD will make your vindication as clear as the light
and the justice of your case like the noonday sun.**
- ⁷ Be still before the LORD and wait patiently.
Do not be provoked by the one who prospers, the one who succeeds in evil schemes.
- ⁸ **Refrain from anger, leave rage alone;
do not be provoked; it leads only to evil.**
- ⁹ For evildoers shall be cut off,
but those who hope in the LORD shall possess the land.
- ¹⁰ **In a little while the wicked shall be no more;
even if you search out their place, they will not be there.**
- ¹¹ But the lowly shall possess the land;
they will delight in abundance of peace.
- ³⁹ **But the deliverance of the righteous comes from you, O LORD;
you are their stronghold in time of trouble.**
- ⁴⁰ You, O LORD, will help them and rescue them;
you will rescue them from the wicked and deliver them, because in you they seek refuge.

SECOND READING: 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-50

In the Apostles' Creed, we speak of the "resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting." Using the metaphor of a planted seed and the story of Adam, Paul preaches passionately about the mystery of following Christ's perfect life into eternity.

- ³⁵ But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?"
- ³⁶ Fool! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. ³⁷ And as for what you sow, you do not sow the body that is to be but a bare seed, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain. ³⁸ But God gives it a body as he has chosen and to each kind of seed its own body.
- ⁴² So it is with the resurrection of the dead. What is sown is perishable; what is raised is imperishable. ⁴³ It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness; it is raised in power. ⁴⁴ It is sown a physical body; it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a physical body, there is also a spiritual body. ⁴⁵ Thus it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living being"; the last Adam became a life-giving spirit. ⁴⁶ But it is not the spiritual that is first but the physical and then the spiritual. ⁴⁷ The first man was from the earth, made of dust; the second man is from heaven. ⁴⁸ As one of dust, so are those who are of the dust, and as one of heaven, so are those who are of heaven. ⁴⁹ Just as we have borne the image of the one of dust, we will also bear the image of the one of heaven.
- ⁵⁰ What I am saying, brothers and sisters, is this: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 188)

GOSPEL: Luke 6:27-38

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus continues to address a crowd of his disciples. He invites his followers to shower radical love, blessing, forgiveness, generosity, and trust even on enemies and outsiders. Living in harmony with God's intent brings the reward of overflowing blessing.

[Jesus said:] ²⁷ "But I say to you who are listening: Love your enemies; do good to those who hate you; ²⁸ bless those who curse you; pray for those who mistreat you. ²⁹ If anyone strikes you on the cheek, offer the other also, and from anyone who takes away your coat do not withhold even your shirt. ³⁰ Give to everyone who asks of you, and if anyone takes away what is yours, do not ask for it back again. ³¹ Do to others as you would have them do to you.

³² "If you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. ³³ If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. ³⁴ If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive payment, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, to receive as much again. ³⁵ Instead, love your enemies, do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return. Your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.

³⁷ "Do not judge, and you will not be judged; do not condemn, and you will not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven; ³⁸ give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap, for the measure you give will be the measure you get back."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

God of all grace, by your Spirit you provide all we need for salvation, for wholeness, for abundant life. Draw us close to you in your kingdom, that we might discover and relearn the beauty of your promises and mercy, that moves us to live more as your people in the world, loved and forgiven through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

"If you don't have anything nice to say, don't...."

Ah, so you all do know this wise piece of wisdom. I guess that isn't a surprise seeing as how you're all decent church going folk, I'm sure it's probably come up in more than one sermon in the past. But it does seem like more and more people in general either *don't* know it or at least they don't heed to it, because I'll tell ya, the words that come out of some people's mouths... well, I guess that's not really a nice thing to say so maybe I shouldn't say it.

But that's just it, isn't it? If we were to really take the "if you don't have anything nice to say" thing to heart, I wonder if any of us would have anything left to say at all.

I mean, it sure seems like these days there aren't many reasons to be nice anymore, like there aren't too many nice things to comment on. And most definitely, at least in these here parts, it's like nice *people* have become far and few in between. And that's just kind of sad.

So we might stay quiet, because we don't have anything nice to say. Or maybe our "nice" thing we say is to point out the faults of the others in order to "help" them. Those that are hurting us, those that act out only in their self interests, those that, in our eyes, are breaking the world.

But that's ok though, right? I mean it's not like a non-nice thing that we're saying. Rather, it's probably pretty nice and even *loving* of us to graciously talk about how others are falling short, how they're not seeing the bigger picture like we are, how they would fare well to listen to our advice on how to shape up and be better. I mean, if only *they*, if they don't have anything nice to say, wouldn't say anything at all. Then maybe, just maybe, the world would be a better place. So we want to offer that advice that so very much applies to them. We want to point out the small ways in which they can be better for the benefit of everyone around them. We want to tell them how they fall short, so then maybe they would get it and change.

I mean, we have scripture on our side, right? There are so many tidbits of wisdom that would do them good if they would follow it. Even in today's gospel reading we get "don't judge, don't condemn, and forgive." We hear "be generous, do good, and love your enemies." And if that isn't enough, we also have "do to others as you would have them do to you."

Wise, right? It's like the formula for a better society. I guess that makes sense too, seeing as how these words are from Jesus and all. If only the world would hear this. If only those covertly corrupt individuals, those wolves in sheep's clothing, those nefariously selfish people be told this and put into their place. If only those we don't like for their obviously wrong ways, could be more like us.

Then and only then, maybe our relationship would be better, maybe whatever situation we're in wouldn't be so difficult, maybe things around the world in general would just be better. If only they'd listen. If only they'd be more loving. If only they would treat us how they want us to treat them.

And that's the other thing. All this good advice we hear in scripture and elsewhere usually applies better to *them*. We hear these wise words of wisdom and we automatically think that *they* should hear and heed to it. We, from our comfortable place of righteous advice, call *them* out.

Because... it's always someone else's fault, right? There's always someone else to blame. We can size up any bad thing that has happened to us and trace them down to the exact moment which we can point our finger at *them*. *They* are always messing things up. *They* are always doing things wrong. *They* are probably the closest thing we have to an actual enemy.

I mean, we're not in war with them or anything, it's just that... maybe we could live without them. It's not like we full on hate them, it's just that if we never see, hear from, or even think about them again, it'd be too soon. Maybe we might even intentionally not talk to them because we know that we just don't have anything nice to say.

I don't know if you've ever had these kinds of people in your life. I don't know if you have them in your life now. But the way things are going, I'm pretty sure that if you don't, you probably will in the not-so-distant future.

But to that, Jesus asks us to love. Put aside these hard feelings we have, and love. Open our hearts to see them as God does, as sinners in need of grace, and love.

Ok, if you say so Jesus. I mean we haven't killed them yet so isn't that mercy? Maybe we can tolerate them, but they still have to shape up, they still have to get their act together, they still have to love first. Until then it's not our fault that they're the way they are, so wrong, so off the mark, so *unlovable*.

I remember back in my seminary days, one of my professors told us to look at the people we like the least, those that bother us the most, those that we'd just rather not. And then he asked us to think about what it is about them that we don't like. Like what traits, what quirks, what personality defects that just irk us. And once we were all nicely riled up with irritation and anger, our prof dropped a bomb on us. Not a literal one of course, but it sure hit about as hard. He said that those things that we're thinking about, those annoying traits, those ridiculous quirks, and those personality defects that drive us totally bananas that put those people on our "least liked" lists... those are the ones that we have in ourselves. We share those traits, maybe not to the same degree but it's in us. We subconsciously or maybe even consciously see those parts of ourselves that we don't like in others, and we blow them up exponentially, and transfer that dislike from us onto them.

Oof. That is a hard pill to swallow.

But the lesson he was giving to us was to befriend these people, as in doing so we would be befriending that part of ourselves. Accept these people as they are and we begin to accept ourselves as we are. *Love them*, shortcomings and all, and we will learn to love ourselves.

This is what Jesus was saying too, although I'm not sure who got it from who. Jesus' words of forgiveness and grace aren't just for the other to follow, but it's for us to heed to as well. Jesus' command to love our enemies aren't just for them to love us, but for us to love them. Jesus' advice to do to others what we would have them do to us isn't just for them to shape up and act right, but for us.

So it's true when they say that our forgiveness isn't for their benefit, but for ours. In that when we forgive, we will be forgiven. When we are generous, we will receive. When we love, we will see just how we are loved.

While we might still want to point our fingers at the world for pointing its fingers at us, maybe we can see how God's forgiveness and reconciliation is bigger than all that. While we might want to stay mad at those who stay mad at us, maybe we can find the healing and peace in God's grace and mercy. While we might want to hate on those who actively hate on us, maybe our hearts can be opened to see and receive God's love. And then by the strength and hope we are given through the Spirit, maybe we too can show this love. Love for our neighbours. Love for our enemies. Love for even ourselves.

Because it is in that love that we might see the value and worth graciously given to us all, welcoming us all to live in community as the body of Christ, proclaiming how God saves us from our guilt, our shame, the sin that separates us from God and each other. This is the good news of God's gospel that we can declare, share, and always talk about and live.

So as we near the end of this season after the Epiphany, may we always be aware of God's love in our lives and in the lives of others, that it might be reflected in all that we say and do, through Jesus our Lord. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: God of Grace and God Of Glory (#705)

CREED

With all those welcomed into God's love and forgiveness, 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

Brought together to be the one body of Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, by your loving mercy," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, we give you thanks for the love you so graciously give, and we pray that we be able to reflect that love to all, even to our enemies. Grant us the compassion and empathy to live peaceably with you and each other in community. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, we give you thanks for the church, as you fill it with your Spirit of generosity and care. Lead us to forgive as we have been forgiven, and show us new ways in which we can be helpful in our service and care. We remember 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 Christ the King Lutheran Church in Surrey

and their pastor Nicholas Alexandre; and for the pastors, priests, and deacons serving in full communion congregations. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, we give you thanks for this planet that you have created for us to live in, that it be protected from further damage due to neglect and poor stewardship. Bless those who till the fields, those who care for the livestock, and all who work hard to provide food for the rest of us. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, we give thanks for the nations of the world, that we might all one day live in true peace. Be with all leaders and those that hold political influence that reconciliation might be on the agenda when furthering their respective jurisdictions, and that greed and power be put aside for the sake of all. We also pray 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 that have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Mery Gabramikael. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, we give thanks for your healing as it reaches out to those in need through your grace and mercy. Be with those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and fill us all with your love. We pray especially for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Debbie; Beulah; Sybil; Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; 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...
Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, we give you thanks for all the lives of the saints, as they continue to remind and inform us of faithful living. May the legacy of all whom we've loved and lost live strong in our hearts and communities that your eternal love might be seen and felt by all. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the grace and mercy found in 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 taught us how to love, live in grace, and accept your mercy,
that we might join with the choirs of angels,
the church on earth and the hosts of heaven,
in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 190)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

You are holy, O God, and you teach us to trust in you, as you place us in safe pastures and strengthen us to do good. Our delight is in you, O Lord, for you satisfy our desires for justice and peace. So we are still, and we wait, refraining from anger and evil, and with our hearts open ready to receive your Son Jesus, whom you've sent to show us your ways of righteousness and love.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took the bread, gave thanks, broke it, and said, "Take and eat, this is my body given for you. Do this for the remembrance of me."

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

For it is in this bread and cup that we can see your justice shine as clear as the light of the noonday sun, even as we proclaim this the basis of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

For we know that in you there is deliverance for the righteous, for you are our stronghold in time of trouble. You, O Lord, help us and rescue us, and in you we find refuge.

All honour and glory be to you, O God, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER

Gathered into reconciliation with all people, 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 that God welcomes all in love.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 191)

The Numberless Gifts of God's Mercies (#683)

What Wondrous Love (#666)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you have given us much and you nourish us with your truth and love. Be with us as we go from here, that we be strengthened to actively love kindness, do justice, and walk humbly with you, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May you all be blessed with strong visions, worthy work, the strength to persevere, reconciliation, peace, forgiveness, and above all, love, in the name of God the Shepherd, Saviour, and Spirit.

Amen.

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

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, be Christ's love for all.

Thanks be to God.