



## GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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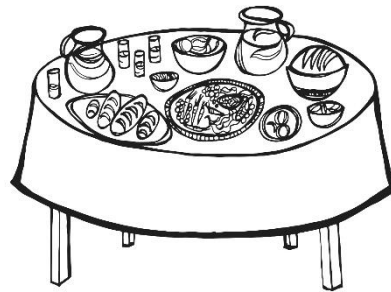
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### **Fourth Sunday in Lent March 30, 2025 ELW Holy Communion, Setting Three**

The psalm sets the tone this day: “Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven, and whose sin is put away!” Happy are those who have “become the righteousness of God” in the merits of Christ Jesus. Happy are those for whom the forgiveness of God has “rolled away . . . the disgrace” of former times. Happy is the father at the return of his prodigal son. Happy are we that our sins are forgiven for Jesus’ sake. Rejoice!

*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 hən̓q̓əmi̓ñəḥ̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in worship and thanksgiving, for our transgressions have been forgiven, our sin has been put away, and our guilt has been lifted by our Lord. In our confession and repentance, God is faithful and just and purifies us and delivers us from our shame. And so we return to God with happiness and joy, glad to be welcomed in the righteousness of God's truth and love, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING SONG:** Just As I Am, without One Plea (#592)

### GREETING

The forgiving grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the purifying love of God, and the wholistic communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

**KYRIE** (p. 203)

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Gracious God, you seek us when we are lost, and you draw us back into your loving embrace. Restore us in your righteousness and reconcile our hearts to you, that we might become ambassadors of your merciful love to all the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Joshua 5:9-12

A reading from Joshua.

*By celebrating the Passover and eating the produce of the promised land instead of the miraculous manna that had sustained them in the desert, the Israelites symbolically bring their forty years of wilderness wandering to an end at Gilgal.*

<sup>9</sup> The LORD said to Joshua, "Today I have rolled away from you the disgrace of Egypt." And so that place is called Gilgal to this day.

<sup>10</sup> While the Israelites were camped in Gilgal, they kept the Passover in the evening on the fourteenth day of the month in the plains of Jericho. <sup>11</sup> On the day after the Passover, on that very day, they ate the produce of the land, unleavened cakes and roasted grain. <sup>12</sup> The manna ceased on the day they ate the produce of the land, and the Israelites no longer had manna; they ate the crops of the land of Canaan that year.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

### PSALM: Psalm 32

<sup>1</sup> Happy are they whose transgressions are forgiven,  
and whose sin is put away!

<sup>2</sup> **Happy are they to whom the LORD imputes no guilt,  
and in whose spirit there is no guile!**

<sup>3</sup> While I held my tongue, my bones withered away,  
because of my groaning all day long.

<sup>4</sup> **For your hand was heavy upon me day and night;  
my moisture was dried up as in the heat of summer.**

- <sup>5</sup> Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and did not conceal my guilt.  
I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD." Then you forgave me the guilt of my sin.
- <sup>6</sup> **Therefore all the faithful will make their prayers to you in time of trouble; when the great waters overflow, they shall not reach them.**
- <sup>7</sup> You are my hiding-place; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance.
- <sup>8</sup> **"I will instruct you and teach you in the way that you should go; I will guide you with my eye.**
- <sup>9</sup> Do not be like horse or mule, which have no understanding; who must be fitted with bit and bridle, or else they will not stay near you."
- <sup>10</sup> **Great are the tribulations of the wicked; but mercy embraces those who trust in the LORD.**
- <sup>11</sup> Be glad, you righteous, and rejoice in the LORD; shout for joy, all who are true of heart.

## **SECOND READING: 2 Corinthians 5:16-21**

A reading from 2 Corinthians.

*One way to describe the gospel is the promise that in Christ everything is transformed into newness. All mistakes, all deliberate sins, all old history is reconciled with Christ's resurrection. This is Paul's strong message to the congregation in the city of Corinth.*

<sup>16</sup> From now on, therefore, we regard no one from a human point of view; even though we once knew Christ from a human point of view, we no longer know him in that way. <sup>17</sup> So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; look, new things have come into being! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and has given us the ministry of reconciliation; <sup>19</sup> that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting the message of reconciliation to us. <sup>20</sup> So we are ambassadors for Christ, since God is making his appeal through us; we entreat you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> For our sake God made the one who knew no sin to be sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 142)**

### **GOSPEL: Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32**

The holy gospel according to Luke.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*Jesus tells a parable about a son who ponders his father's love only after he has spurned it. The grace he receives is beyond his hopes. That same grace is a crisis for an older brother who believes it is his obedience that has earned his place in the father's home.*

<sup>1</sup> Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to [Jesus.] <sup>2</sup> And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them."

<sup>3</sup> So he told them this parable: <sup>11b</sup> "There was a man who had two sons. <sup>12</sup> The younger of

them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of the wealth that will belong to me.' So he divided his assets between them. <sup>13</sup> A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant region, and there he squandered his wealth in dissolute living. <sup>14</sup> When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that region, and he began to be in need. <sup>15</sup> So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that region, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. <sup>16</sup> He would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, and no one gave him anything. <sup>17</sup> But when he came to his senses he said, 'How many of my father's hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! <sup>18</sup> I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; <sup>19</sup> I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands." ' <sup>20</sup> So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. <sup>21</sup> Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' <sup>22</sup> But the father said to his slaves, 'Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. <sup>23</sup> And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate, <sup>24</sup> for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!' And they began to celebrate.

<sup>25</sup> "Now his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. <sup>26</sup> He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. <sup>27</sup> He replied, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf because he has got him back safe and sound.' <sup>28</sup> Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. <sup>29</sup> But he answered his father, 'Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command, yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. <sup>30</sup> But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!' <sup>31</sup> Then the father said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. <sup>32</sup> But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.' "

The gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

### **SERMON**

Almighty God, open our minds by your Spirit, that we might see you, hear you, and know of your love for us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

So full disclosure, this is my third version of this sermon. It's not because I enjoy writing sermons so much that I wrote three different ones for this exact day, but it's because something happened before I finished the second version that I honestly could not get it out of my mind. Don't ask me what happened to go from version 1 to version 2, because that wasn't really good sermon writing material.

Anyway, what happened that drove me to come up with this version 3 actually started over a month ago, when my wife noticed a fairly large transaction with Air Canada on one of our credit cards. This was kicking on the heels of another not-as-large transaction on another card that was flagged and taken care of right away. But this one? Not so much.

We called the bank, of course, to tell them that this wasn't us and they were pretty good. They cancelled the cards and issued new ones right away and they forwarded the case to their

investigations team or whatever. And that is where it all went sideways. I don't really want to bore you with the details (not now at least), but let's just say that after a lot of back and forth on the phone, they are still claiming that we're on the hook for \$1700. It's not over yet, but that's just where it is now. And it sucks.

I don't want to pay \$1700 for a flight that I didn't take. I don't want to fund some scammer's vacation to who knows where. I don't want to lose my hard earned money, for which I wrote like 3 sermons for one day, for no good reason. Mostly because that kind of money is hard for me to save up. And for an amount like that to just go up in smoke? I'm not fan.

But of course, right? Who would be?

I know losing this particular amount of money would hurt different people in different ways. Easier for those who have a lot of course, but harder for those who don't. I hate to say it, but money is important to all of us and is needed for pretty much everything we do. So it already hurts when we don't have much of it or it's not enough. It hurts when we lose it or mismanage it. And it really hurts when it's just taken away at no fault of your own.

And this takes us to the reading out of our gospel lesson today, where we get the parable that is most commonly known as the Prodigal Son. But while the situation of the younger son in the parable isn't exactly like mine, it is quite precarious nonetheless, and he does actually run out of money. I mean, we know this story, even if we somehow haven't heard it in church before. It's probably one of the most famous of Jesus' parables, aside from the Good Samaritan.

The younger son decides he wants his inheritance and go and see the world. His father obliges and off the son goes. But before too long, due to his extravagant living and apparently finite resources, he finds himself financially destitute and eating with both literally and ritually unclean animals. This would be rock bottom for anyone, but for someone who is at least insinuated to be very wealthy? It is worse than death. So he does what any riches-to-rags son would do, he goes home to ask for a job.

And again, we know the story, the father runs out to greet him and welcomes him home before he could even apologize or grovel or beg, and kills a fatted calf for a feast and grabs a ring and a robe and just spares no expense. Of course he would, his son is back. Albeit his number two of two sons, but that's still his son we're talking about.

But wait, there's more. At this part of the story, the plot twists. I mean if it just ended with the feast, then it'd be a nice clean package, and we'd be content with the story. But it doesn't end there. Instead we're reminded that there is another son that we haven't even heard from for like 14 verses, and he comes in with pent up fists in the air. He's angry that his brother is back, angry that there is a feast to that effect, and angry that he doesn't get the same treatment or fanfare as that younger brat regardless of how perfectly responsible he has been.

We hear the attitude of this older brother, the first born, the true heir to the throne, and often we would just shake our heads and just think typical older brother. Because really, there are a lot of negative stereotypes around the oldest child. Most of them true according to my experience as the youngest child, which by the way, has a lot of *false* stereotypes. But we know the stereotypes around the eldest offspring and we might think that is just what's going on here.

And maybe it is, but there is more than that. See like I said, this is the oldest, the responsible one, the one that will truly carry on the bloodline and legacy. While all the children will get an inheritance, the oldest will get about twice as much as everyone else. This is so they will have a better chance to actually carry on that bloodline and legacy, and continue propagating this family and name. We might look at this and think it isn't fair, especially if we're not the eldest sibling, but let's not forget that there is a lot at stake for that one child. So it's important that they have every advantage at their disposal to make sure they can do what they are expected to do for the family honour.

Furthermore, it wouldn't be uncommon then, for the younger son to ask for an early inheritance to take advantage of a good crop year or lower housing market or something, just to get a leg up on their carving out a name for themselves *apart* from the family. So when the younger son came back after losing his rightful portion, who do you think is flipping the bill for his welcome home feast? Who do you think raised and was saving that fatted calf for something special? Whose robe and ring do you think was given to that irresponsible son?

See, not only did the father give the younger son more than his fair share, he also *took away* from the older son, his share, and his chances at successfully carrying on the family legacy. The father didn't just put himself at risk, he put the generations after him at risk.

And so then maybe we can understand the older son's anger toward his father's graciousness in welcoming the other son back. We can kind of get the Pharisee's and scribes' indignation toward Jesus' generosity in eating with the lesser folk in the community. We might even feel justified in our own worries and concerns about the time, money, and other finite resources that might be directed at projects, initiatives, and even people that we might not think are worth it.

I mean, why should our hard earned money go to someone else? Why should we be penalized for their shortcomings? Why should our finite resources be shared with others?

And this isn't wrong, per se. We should be aware and careful of what happens with what is ours. We should be efficient and effective with what resources we have. We should be responsible with all that is entrusted to us.

But what the Pharisees and scribes didn't see, what the older brother didn't understand, what we might not be cognizant of, is that with God, there is an abundance of blessing that overflows our cups. With God, there is grace upon grace that showers over each and every one of us individually and communally. With God, there is enough.

So while the older brother grumbled because his pot was being dipped into, while the Pharisees and scribes complained about their fair share being shared with others that didn't earn it, while we might be worried that what we deserve might be given to someone else, rest assured that God gives as God gives, wholly and abundantly, and lavishly blesses us all with mercy, forgiveness, and love. God isn't a mystical Robin Hood who takes from the rich and gives to the poor. God isn't an elected government who has to tax and tax and tax in order to make sure people have enough services. God isn't a limited and finite resource that can ever be depleted. Instead, God abounds with abundant grace and mercy further than we could imagine. God reigns with infinite love in our hearts and in God's kingdom. God's welcome, community, and salvation remain limitless.

As we approach the end of this season of Lent, may we always be reminded of how God has no limits or bounds and will continue to hold us with unending arms of love, and forgiving us with a grace that stretches for eternity. Thanks be to God. Amen.

**HYMN OF THE DAY:** For by Grace You Have Been Saved (#598)

### **CREED**

Together with those living in God's 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**

Called and welcomed into God's everlasting arms of love, 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 all may respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you forgive us and put away our sin, and for that we are made glad. You call us and lead us into your community and kingdom. May our welcome of the stranger be as gracious as yours, that the news of your love spread across the nations. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, you impute no guilt on us, for your graciousness is beyond measure. Teach and guide us to reflect your love and grace to all people in our ministry and in our lives. We pray especially for 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 Spirit of Life Lutheran Church in Vancouver and their pastor Aneeta Saroop; and for North Thompson Ecumenical Shared Ministry in Barriere and Clearwater, and the ministers and pastors that serve there. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O God, we have sinned against you in our care for your creation. We have been wasteful and squandered our resources. Guide us in our stewardship and open our eyes to the ways in which we can act more responsibly with all that you have entrusted to us. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, our guilt and shame are great and cannot be concealed, but you continue to choose forgiveness over condemnation. Reveal your grace to all the nations of the world, that world leaders and politicians might end the fight for power and instead work toward peace. We pray especially for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into our 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; and Mery Gabramikael. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O God, we pray to you in our times of trouble and we trust that we will not be drowned in them. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your grace be apparent and strengthening for us. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Joe; 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.**

O God, we are glad and we rejoice in you, for your welcome is expansive and complete as you bring us into your kingdom with you and all the saints. Remind us always of our connection with those that we've loved and lost, and allow their continued faith inform our own faith and love throughout our lives. Lord, by your loving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your steadfast love and mercy shown to us by Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

## MEAL

### PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.  
**And also with you.**

### DIALOGUE (p. 144)

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 lifts us up out of our shame and reveals to all the grace and forgiveness found in your love,



that we might join with all 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. 144)

### **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

Holy and almighty God, like a loving parent, you search for us in the distance and you run to us to welcome us home. You go to great lengths to love us and reveal to us your plans of reconciliation and community. Through your Son, Jesus, you reach out to heal the sick, feed the hungry, deliver the oppressed, and show us all the true nature of your love and forgiveness.

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

And 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 bread and cup that we find wholeness, community, and inclusion into your kingdom, even as we together declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

Restore us to you, O God. Remind us of your blessing. Reveal to us your love, through the gracious forgiveness found in this heavenly food, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

### **LORD'S PRAYER**

Gathered together in grace 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 reconciliation to God and each other.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

**COMMUNION HYMNS:** Lamb of God (p. 146)

Our Father We Have Wandered (#606)

Softly and Tenderly Jesus is Calling (#608)

## **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, again you have fed and nourished us with this bread and cup of life, filling us with grace and welcoming us into community. Be with us as we go into the world, proclaiming your good news and revealing your love to all people, with Christ, through Christ, and in Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

May the Shepherd who reconciles us bless you and keep you,  
the Saviour who restores us shine on you and be gracious unto you,  
the Spirit who renews all of our lives, look up you with favour, and give you peace.

**Amen.**

**SENDING SONG:** Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing (#807)

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, live new lives filled with grace and mercy.

**Thanks be to God.**