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**Third Sunday of Easter
May 4, 2025
Now the Feast and Celebration
Hymnal Supplement (1991)**

The disciples make a big splash and eat breakfast with the risen Jesus. Wading in the water (remembering baptism) and eating with Jesus (celebrating holy communion) is our weekly encounter with the risen Christ. Jesus asks us again and again: Do you love me? And Jesus invites us, again and again, to follow him, bringing the Easter life to others.

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

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather in exaltation of our Lord, who has heard our cries, lifted us up, and restored us back to health. So in our faith, we sing praises. In our holy remembrance, we give thanks. Even in our wailing, we can dance for we have been clothed with the joy of God's deliverance and given the strength in the Lord's favour. Let our hearts sing to God in our thanksgiving, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Look Who Gathers at Christ's Table (ACS #977)

GREETING

Alleluia! Christ is risen!

Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The restoring grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the merciful love of God, and the life-giving fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

NOW THE FEAST (HS p. 4)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Living God, you meet us in the unexpected places of our lives and you surprise us with the abundance of your grace. Feed us by your Word and fill us with your Spirit, that we might be able to faithfully follow you all the days of our lives, with Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Acts 9:1-20

A reading from Acts.

Saul (later called Paul) was an ardent persecutor of all who followed the Way of Christ. This reading recounts the story of his transformation beginning with an encounter with Jesus Christ on the way to Damascus.

¹ Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord, went to the high priest ² and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem. ³ Now as he was going along and approaching Damascus, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. ⁴ He fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" ⁵ He asked, "Who are you, Lord?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. ⁶ But get up and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do." ⁷ The men who were traveling with him stood speechless because they heard the voice but saw no one. ⁸ Saul got up from the ground, and though his eyes were open, he could see nothing; so they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. ⁹ For three days he was without sight and neither ate nor drank.

¹⁰ Now there was a disciple in Damascus named Ananias. The Lord said to him in a vision, "Ananias." He answered, "Here I am, Lord." ¹¹ The Lord said to him, "Get up and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul. At this moment he is praying, ¹² and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on

him so that he might regain his sight.” ¹³ But Ananias answered, “Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much evil he has done to your saints in Jerusalem, ¹⁴ and here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who invoke your name.” ¹⁵ But the Lord said to him, “Go, for he is an instrument whom I have chosen to bring my name before gentiles and kings and before the people of Israel; ¹⁶ I myself will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.” ¹⁷ So Ananias went and entered the house. He laid his hands on Saul and said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on your way here, has sent me so that you may regain your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.” ¹⁸ And immediately something like scales fell from his eyes, and his sight was restored. Then he got up and was baptized, ¹⁹ and after taking some food, he regained his strength.

For several days he was with the disciples in Damascus, ²⁰ and immediately he began to proclaim Jesus in the synagogues, saying, “He is the Son of God.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 30

¹ I will exalt you, O LORD, because you have lifted me up
and have not let my enemies triumph over me.

² **O LORD my God, I cried out to you,
and you restored me to health.**

³ You brought me up, O LORD, from the dead;
you restored my life as I was going down to the grave.

⁴ **Sing praise to the LORD, all you faithful;
give thanks in holy remembrance.**

⁵ God’s wrath is short; God’s favor lasts a lifetime.
Weeping spends the night, but joy comes in the morning.

⁶ **While I felt secure, I said,
“I shall never be disturbed.**

⁷ You, LORD, with your favor, made me as strong as the mountains.”
Then you hid your face, and I was filled with fear.

⁸ **I cried to you, O LORD;
I pleaded with my Lord, saying,**

⁹ “What profit is there in my blood, if I go down to the pit?
Will the dust praise you or declare your faithfulness?

¹⁰ **Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me;
O LORD, be my helper.”**

¹¹ You have turned my wailing into dancing;
you have put off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy.

¹² **Therefore my heart sings to you without ceasing;
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever.**

SECOND READING: Revelation 5:11-14

A reading from Revelation.

The vision of John recorded in Revelation offers a glimpse of cosmic worship around the throne. At its center is “the Lamb who was slain.”

¹¹ Then I looked, and I heard the voice of many angels surrounding the throne and the living creatures and the elders; they numbered myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands,

¹² singing with full voice,

“Worthy is the Lamb that was slaughtered
to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might
and honor and glory and blessing!”

¹³ Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea and all
that is in them, singing,

“To the one seated on the throne and to the Lamb
be blessing and honor and glory and might
forever and ever!”

¹⁴ And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” And the elders fell down and worshiped.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (HS p. 8)

GOSPEL: John 21:1-19

The holy gospel according to John.

Glory to you, O Lord.

The risen Christ appears again to his disciples by the sea where they were first called. After echoes of the fishing and feeding miracles, he gives a final reminder of the cost of a disciple's love and obedience.

¹ After [he appeared to his followers in Jerusalem,] Jesus showed himself again to the disciples by the Sea of Tiberias, and he showed himself in this way. ² Gathered there together were Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of his disciples. ³ Simon Peter said to them, “I am going fishing.” They said to him, “We will go with you.” They went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

⁴ Just after daybreak, Jesus stood on the beach, but the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. ⁵ Jesus said to them, “Children, you have no fish, have you?” They answered him, “No.”

⁶ He said to them, “Cast the net to the right side of the boat, and you will find some.” So they cast it, and now they were not able to haul it in because there were so many fish. ⁷ That disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, “It is the Lord!” When Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment, for he had taken it off, and jumped into the sea. ⁸ But the other disciples came in the boat, dragging the net full of fish, for they were not far from the land, only about a hundred yards off.

⁹ When they had gone ashore, they saw a charcoal fire there, with fish on it, and bread.

¹⁰ Jesus said to them, “Bring some of the fish that you have just caught.” ¹¹ So Simon Peter went aboard and hauled the net ashore, full of large fish, a hundred fifty-three of them, and though there were so many, the net was not torn. ¹² Jesus said to them, “Come and have breakfast.” Now none of the disciples dared to ask him, “Who are you?” because they knew it was the Lord. ¹³ Jesus came and took the bread and gave it to them and did the same with the fish.

¹⁴ This was now the third time that Jesus appeared to the disciples after he was raised from the dead.

¹⁵ When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, “Simon son of John, do you love me more than these?” He said to him, “Yes, Lord; you know that I love you.” Jesus said to him, “Feed my lambs.” ¹⁶ A second time he said to him, “Simon son of John, do you love me?”

He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Tend my sheep." ¹⁷ He said to him the third time, "Simon son of John, do you love me?" Peter felt hurt because he said to him the third time, "Do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. ¹⁸ Very truly, I tell you, when you were younger, you used to fasten your own belt and to go wherever you wished. But when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will fasten a belt around you and take you where you do not wish to go." ¹⁹ (He said this to indicate the kind of death by which he would glorify God.) After this he said to him, "Follow me."

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

SERMON

God of all life and love, by your Spirit may our sight be restored, our minds renewed, and our hearts redeemed, through your Word Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

This has been a pretty big week for so many reasons. From horrific events to funerals to federal elections to income tax deadlines, it's been kind of hard to think about anything else. And just when you thought that things couldn't be more hectic or crazy, the Marvel Cinematic Universe's latest movie release, *The Thunderbolts*, finally hit theatres this last Friday as well.

Now, I want to be clear that I'm not trying to make light of all the other things that happened this past week, not at all, but I just had this feeling that many, if not all of you, just can't help but wonder if I was able to carve out the time to go watch this movie. Well, I'm glad you asked, because I totally did.

Again, I'm not making light of any of other things that actually mattered this past week at all, but it's just that this movie that I'm sure less than 10% of the people in this room would ever watch, was really good in the sense that I feel like they touched on some important themes that were a little unexpected. See, the premise of this movie is that this group of misfits, some even former villains, team up to be this band of unlikely heroes. I know, total *Suicide Squad* vibes, but that is a DC property and we won't be talking about that today.

So I thought that the movie would be about these members of the *Thunderbolts* trying to redeem themselves to make up for their past sins. I thought that they would feel like they needed to be heroes to make up for all the bad that they've caused throughout their troubled and questionable lives. I thought they would see all the red in their respective ledgers, and so they had to team up and do all this good in order to wipe it out.

But without any spoilers, that isn't actually what the movie is about. With the exception of maybe one character, everyone in this star-studded cast learns that they aren't defined by their past mistakes and failures, that they aren't trapped in their traumatic histories of hurt and pain, that what they deserve doesn't have to be what they get.

I know, sounds kind of deep for a comic book movie, but these are themes for life as well, aren't they? I mean as I mentioned we had an election this past week, and the campaigns of like everyone has turned into just how the other candidate doesn't deserve to be elected because of their past. Dirt gets dug up, integrity is put in the spotlight, and judgements are

made. It's like how we size people up. It's how we decide what our opinion is of them. It's how we humanize or dehumanize the other.

The problems come, though, when they are judged only by their past sins and not by the potential of their aspirations. When their very identities become only a sum of their mistakes, failures, and shortcomings and not their triumphs and successes. When what they deserve is determined only by what wrong they have done, and not by what good they can do.

Well, yeah. Isn't that how it should be?

Maybe, but let me rephrase all of that before we set it in our minds. The problems come, though, when we are judged only by our past sins and not by the potential of our aspirations. When our very identities become only a sum of our mistakes, failures, and shortcomings and not our triumphs and successes. When what we deserve is determined only by what wrong we have done, and not by what good we can do.

Not so cut and dry anymore, is it. If we learned anything from our faith and all these years listening to these high-quality, top-notch, comic-book-alluding sermons like this one, we know this isn't how God works. That isn't how it should be. It isn't how it has to be.

Because if it were, then we wouldn't have the Apostle Paul and all his writings that make up like almost a quarter of our bibles. I mean that guy did everything he could to squash the early church and its teachings. If we were judged only by past mistakes, then we wouldn't have the disciples either as those guys couldn't comprehend Jesus' message, they weren't able to stick with him through thick and thin, they weren't even able to fish properly and effectively. If we only got what we deserve, then we'd never be forgiven, never be redeemed, never be saved.

So while the world might want to judge that way, we can find solace in the fact that God doesn't. That while we might identify others and be identified ourselves by the mistakes and wrongs of the past, God gives us an identity full of grace and mercy. That in the face of our spotty pasts and undeservedness, God chooses to bless us and call us beloved anyway.

This doesn't exactly make life easier though, does it. I mean things will still be difficult, awful things will still happen, we could be pushed into anger, judgement, and hate.

I mean, take the massacre that happened at the Lapu Lapu Day festival last week for example. What was meant to be a celebration to honour a cultural hero turned into heartbreaking violence and death. When we first heard of the news, of course our emotions went high. We were sad, dismayed, and even angry. And then as the week progressed, perhaps we started hearing more about the victims. We started hearing more about those who were affected. We started learning more details and connected more dots and we might find ourselves just asking more questions. How could this have happened? How could it have been prevented? Who can we blame?

And honestly, I don't have any answers to these questions. All I can say is that this did happen. We are hurting collectively as a city and country. Our hearts go out to the families of the victims and all those affected by this horrific act.

And perhaps that is where the healing can happen. In that while the act that took 11 lives and affected countless others was completely and absolutely senseless, we remember that those who died were not. We see the rallying together of the community to honour those lives lost. We see the deep love that was shared with the victims and all those affected. We see the beauty in each and every one of those lives, and we can honour the fact that while the world won't be the same without them, the world is also better because of them. Not because of what they have done or hadn't done, but because they were loved, because they loved, and because they shared in the love that connects us all.

See in that peculiar conversation that Jesus had with Peter in today's gospel reading, Jesus wasn't asking Peter to prove his love by feeding and tending to the sheep, but he was saying that the love we share moves us to live in community, compassion, and care. The love that is shown to us moves us to see how we don't deserve it but we get it anyway. The love that God gives us moves us to look past the past, and see the beauty in our lives and in the lives of others, as we are all just as broken, just as sinful, and just as saved and identified as God's children.

I know, we might still want to point fingers at the failures and shortcomings of others. We might want to label others as undeserving of anything good. We might want to identify others as a sum of their shady pasts. But our faith tells us that we are more than that, we are made to be better than that, and we are loved much more than we could ever deserve.

Again, this doesn't mean that bad things won't happen and we won't feel sadness or pain, but it does mean that even in those times of our hurts and brokenness, we continue to be regarded as God's children. We continue to be given much more grace and mercy than we could ever comprehend. We continue to be loved and given the capacity to love in return as we are invited and welcomed and supported by this community of others who also share in that same love.

So you see, we aren't a sum of the sins of the past, but we are a product of the beauty of God's gracious love, that joins and connects us all as the one body of Christ, beaten, broken, scarred and all, but also redeemed, reformed, and resurrected into community and meaning and purpose.

As we continue in our healing of the traumas of the past, may we move into the future in accepting the forgiveness of God, answering the call of the Spirit, and empowered by the love of Jesus that extended to us all. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Lord of Light (#688)

CREED (HS p. 11)

With all of God's people lifted up and strengthened by 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 by the Spirit to follow God through Christ, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, “in your boundless mercy, O God” and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. In your boundless mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

God of all graciousness, by the power of the resurrection you lift us up out of our guilt and shame and you call us into your community and eternal kingdom. Continue strengthening us for your service, that the world might be renewed by your gospel. In your boundless mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

God of all worship and praise, by the power of the resurrection you lift us up as a body of Christ as you gather us together in service and ministry. Remind us of your call to be your children, that we might remain faithful even in the face of doubt. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use this building for worship, work, and play; our full communion partners: the Anglican Church of Canada and the Moravian Church in Canada; and our bishops, rostered ministers, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular, we pray for Lutheran Church of the Cross in Victoria and their pastor Lyndon Sayers; and for all the prison chaplains across this country and those they serve. We also offer a special prayer for the discernment of our National Church as we elect a new National Bishop in just a few short months. In your boundless mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

God of all creation, by the power of the resurrection you lift up life where we thought there could be no life, and you show us the resilience and strength of this planet. May we continue learning about this world that we live in, and how we can properly and responsibly care for it. In your boundless mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

God of all justice, by the power of the resurrection you lift up the oppressed, the marginalized, and the suffering, and you gave them the strength to stand up against evil and tyranny. Build up in us a sense of your peace, that we all might learn to work together with all leaders and politicians, citizens and common folk to bring forth your kingdom based on the good news of your gracious love. We also pray 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 Meri Gabramikael. In your boundless mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

God of all healing, by the power of the resurrection you lift us up out of our ailments and frailties and bring us back into wholeness with you in the Spirit. Remind us of your love and peace when we are ill, that we might always rely on you for our strength. We pray especially 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; Kelly; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time... In your boundless mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

God of all eternity, by the power of the resurrection you lift us up out of our fear of death, and you remind us of how you've connected us with all the saints of every time and place. May we draw strength from the faith of the whole body of Christ, that we might see you present and working in all areas of life. In your boundless mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your amazing love shown through the resurrection of your Son, 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, to at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who lifts us up out of our shortcomings and welcomes us into your fold, where we can join with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the whole church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (HS p. 15)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

O God you answer us when we cry out to you. You lift us up from the dead and restore us to health. For your wrath is short, and your favour lasts a lifetime, bringing us the joy of your love and the strength of the mountains. You show us mercy even in our failures and weaknesses and you reveal to us all the grace of your redemption that is shown to us through your Son Jesus, whom you've sent to us as one of us, healing the sick, feeding the hungry, and giving hope to the poor in spirit.

For on the night that he was betrayed, Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took the bread, gave thanks, broke and shared it saying, "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."

For it is in this bread and cup that we see you, O God, helping us through our fears, our wailing, and our troubles, even as we declare the mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

Continue to fill us with joy, O God, and may our hearts sing to you without ceasing and our feet be turned to dancing, for all glory and honour are yours, as we give you thanks for all that you have done, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (HS p. 18)

Lifted up and strengthened 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 God's gracious mercy for us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (HS p. 18)

What Wondrous Love Is This (#666)

I Love to Tell the Story (#661)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

O God, we give you thanks for choosing to bless us with your love and nourishing us with your Word. Be with us as we go from here, renewed by your calling and strengthened by your grace, that we might faithfully serve and follow you, through Jesus Christ our risen Saviour. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who is seated on the throne bless you and keep you,
the Lamb who was slain shine on you and be gracious onto you,
the Spirit who lifts us up into life look upon you with favour and give you peace.
Amen.

SENDING SONG: Go to the World (ACS #991)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, to love and follow Christ.
Thanks be to God.

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