



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecost

September 21, 2025

WOV Holy Communion, Setting Five: Bread of Life

As we are invited today to consider what it means to be managers (rather than owners) of all that we have, it is crucial to recognize that we are bought with a price. "Christ Jesus, himself human, . . . gave himself a ransom for all." Apart from the generosity of God we have nothing—we are nothing. By God's gracious favor we have everything we need.

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 those who are here worshipping in-person and on-line with us today! Here at Grace Lutheran we believe God is active in your life. Even you being here now is testament of God's calling and leading in your heart, which you have faithfully heeded. So we welcome you, and pray that today you will be nurtured and that the gifts that God has graciously given you will be stirred for the sake of God's mission in the world.

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

GATHERING

ANNOUNCEMENTS

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather with worshipful hearts to our Lord, singing hallelujah as God's servants, and blessing God's name from the rising of the sun to the time that it goes down. For the Lord is high above all nations, God's glory is above the heavens, and there is none like our God who is full of grace and mercy. And so we come in worship and praise, with our hearts bowed down in thanksgiving to our Lord, through Jesus Christ. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Rise Up, O Saints of God! (ELW #669)

GREETING

The compassionate grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the equitable love of God, and the welcoming fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. **And also with you.**

HYMN OF PRAISE: Glory to God (WOV p. 29)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Holy and merciful God, we give you thanks that in Christ Jesus you have entrusted us with the richness of your glory and the treasures of your grace. Make us faithful stewards of your good gifts, that your love be apparent and the welcome into your kingdom be revealed, where we can all live in harmony and peace with you and each other always, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

FIRST READING: Amos 8:4-7

A reading from Amos.

Amos was called by God to prophesy in the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Peace and prosperity in Israel led to corrupt business practices and oppression of the poor. The prophet declares that God will not tolerate such a situation.

⁴ Hear this, you who trample on the needy,
and bring to ruin the poor of the land,
⁵ saying, "When will the new moon be over
so that we may sell grain,
and the Sabbath,
so that we may offer wheat for sale?
We will make the ephah smaller and the shekel heavier
and practice deceit with false balances,
⁶ buying the poor for silver
and the needy for a pair of sandals
and selling the sweepings of the wheat."
⁷ The LORD has sworn by the pride of Jacob:
Surely I will never forget any of their deeds.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 113

- ¹ Hallelujah! Give praise, you servants of the LORD;
praise the name of the LORD.
- ² **Let the name of the LORD be blessed,
from this time forth forevermore.**
- ³ From the rising of the sun to its going down
let the name of the LORD be praised.
- ⁴ **The LORD is high above all nations,
and his glory above the heavens.**
- ⁵ Who is like the LORD our God, who sits enthroned on high,
but stoops to behold the heavens and the earth?
- ⁶ **He takes up the weak out of the dust
and lifts up the poor from the ashes.**
- ⁷ He sets them with the princes,
with the princes of his people.
- ⁸ **He makes the woman of a childless house
to be a joyful mother of children.**

SECOND READING: 1 Timothy 2:1-7

A reading from 1 Timothy.

The pastoral epistles offer insight into how early Christians understood many practical matters, such as church administration and worship. The church's focused prayer for others is an expression of the single-minded passion God has toward us in Jesus.

- ¹ First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for everyone, ² for kings and all who are in high positions, so that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and dignity. ³ This is right and acceptable before God our Savior, ⁴ who desires everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. ⁵ For there is one God; there is also one mediator between God and humankind, Christ Jesus, himself human, ⁶ who gave himself a ransom for all —this was attested at the right time. ⁷ For this I was appointed a herald and an apostle (I am telling the truth; I am not lying), a teacher of the gentiles in faith and truth.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (WOV p. 31)

GOSPEL: Luke 16:1-13

The holy gospel according to Luke.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells the curious story of a dishonest manager who cheats his employer and then is commended by him for having acted so shrewdly. Jesus wonders why his own followers are less creative and diligent in their stewardship given that they are managers of a far more valuable household.

¹ Then Jesus said to the disciples, “There was a rich man who had a manager, and charges were brought to him that this man was squandering his property. ² So he summoned him and said to him, ‘What is this that I hear about you? Give me an accounting of your management because you cannot be my manager any longer.’ ³ Then the manager said to himself, ‘What will I do, now that my master is taking the position away from me? I am not strong enough to dig, and I am ashamed to beg. ⁴ I have decided what to do so that, when I am dismissed as manager, people may welcome me into their homes.’ ⁵ So, summoning his master’s debtors one by one, he asked the first, ‘How much do you owe my master?’ ⁶ He answered, ‘A hundred jugs of olive oil.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill, sit down quickly, and make it fifty.’ ⁷ Then he asked another, ‘And how much do you owe?’ He replied, ‘A hundred containers of wheat.’ He said to him, ‘Take your bill and make it eighty.’ ⁸ And his master commended the dishonest manager because he had acted shrewdly, for the children of this age are more shrewd in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light. ⁹ And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of dishonest wealth so that when it is gone they may welcome you into the eternal homes.

¹⁰ “Whoever is faithful in a very little is faithful also in much, and whoever is dishonest in a very little is dishonest also in much. ¹¹ If, then, you have not been faithful with the dishonest wealth, who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹² And if you have not been faithful with what belongs to another, who will give you what is your own? ¹³ No slave can serve two masters, for a slave will either hate the one and love the other or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.”

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

SERMON

Saving God, by your Spirit may we faithfully hear your Word calling us into your community, full of grace and mercy, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

So let me get this straight...

In the gospel lesson that we just heard, Jesus tells a parable about this rich guy who is about to fire the manager of his property because he heard a rumour that the manager wasn’t doing a very good job. “Squandering” was the word used, and I guess that sounds like a fireable offense. This of course sends the manager in a bit of distress as he faces his impending unemployment, so to save his own skin he decides to further mismanage the property in order to get people on his side, by cutting the debts they owe his boss by up to 50%. But the kicker is when the rich guy catches wind of what the manager did, he doesn’t get madder or anything, but rather he goes and hires that manager back. And not even so he can fire him again for slashing his prices, but the rich man actually honours this manager and praises him for his good work.

The heck?

Now I should say that I’m not super well versed in business or managing property or even how to be rich, but keeping someone on the payroll who costs you money seems to me like a really bad practice. Again, I don’t know much, but I know the difference between an asset and a liability, and this manager totally sounds like a liability.

So how does this make any sense? How can a rich man be happy when he's making less profit and even thanks the guy who was behind the loss? This just doesn't sound like something that should ever happen, let alone taught about and praised. We can see how it's not fair, how it's not right, how it's almost wrong for Jesus to even say it.

And if Jesus is wrong about this, then what else could he be wrong about?

Now before you fire me for being a heretic for calling Jesus out like this, I should say that I actually don't think Jesus is wrong here. And before you fire me for thinking that we should be honoured for ripping off our bosses, I don't think that either. Confusing, I know. But I don't think Jesus or the parable is the problem here. Rather, I think it's us.

Us and this slew of assumptions we hold onto.

Sure, we might say that our assumptions are more like educated guesses, but at their core, they are still assumptions. Like when we heard "rich man" didn't we automatically think about a greedy, exploitive, and pretentious person who only got rich off the backs of the working class? And when we heard "manager" didn't we think that he was a hard worker who was fired unjustly? And then when he started slashing prices, didn't we think he did it out of a vindictive attitude to get back at his boss?

I know I did. And that's why this parable was so confusing to me. In that light it doesn't sound like a lesson I'd want to learn or teach my kids or any of you for that matter. But when we look at the parable again and try to suspend those assumptions, we see that Jesus doesn't say any of those things at all. In fact, this story doesn't give us much detail about anything at all. So let me propose a flip in this story, a change in paradigm, a slight shift in how we see these main actors and thus how we can interpret Jesus' words here.

Like, what if the rich man wasn't a mean old Ebenezer but actually kind and benevolent? What if he was responsible in how he ran his property and provided good, meaningful work, fair wages, and a place of community for those under his employ? And what if the rumours about the manager were true and he mismanaged by paying the workers less, padding the invoices, and skimming off the till? Like what if he was actually corrupt and his boss caught him and that is why he was getting fired?

And then, maybe this was the wake up call the manager needed and he saw the error of his ways, saw how his actions were burning bridges rather than building them, and he wasn't representing his boss' kindness in how he did his job. And so when he cut the debts, maybe he wasn't getting back at his boss at all, but rather he was asking for exactly what they owed minus his own self-imposed tax.

So maybe the rich man didn't commend the manager for stealing from him, but for no longer stealing from others in his name.

And so Jesus' commentary on this, about how the children of this age are more shrewd, is comparing how the world conditions us to look out only for ourselves and take advantage of the morally gray opportunities as long as it benefits us, to how God teaches us to be compassionate, gracious, and merciful. So Jesus wasn't teaching us to be more shrewd but to be more considerate, not more individualistic but more relational, not more divided but more supportive of each other in community and love.

I know, really different from our initial assessment based on our assumptions, right? But to me, makes much more sense, tracks much more with what Jesus is about, and is actually good news in revealing to us who we are, who we're called to be, and how we can participate in making this world a better place.

And I can't help but wonder, what else do we make assumptions about? How else do we miss what God is saying to us? How do our set and strict opinions and paradigms reshape our feelings of others, ourselves, and how God should act and react in who is condemned and who is saved?

Last week we talked about a certain death that happened in the States, and how it drove further the wedge between people and brought more division than anything else. This event gave both sides more ammo, more reasons to blame the other, more justification to hate. And now in the event's aftermath, there continues to be so much conjecture, speculation, and assumption. I admit that I followed a lot of it on social media, and from what I could tell all the posts, comments, and rants from both sides had very little evidence to back them up. I just saw more generalizing and scapegoating. It was like every opinion that I saw, every interpretation, every take on the situation came from the premise that the other side was plain wrong. That was their starting point. It was on that assumption that all their arguments were based on.

But what if we changed that narrative instead? What if we shifted that paradigm? What if rather than just automatically assuming the other side is bad, we assume they're good? I'm not saying that we should pretend that evil doesn't exist or that we should just ignore it, but I'm wondering what would happen and how could the world change if we just gave the benefit of the doubt before jumping to conclusions? What if we looked at the differences of opinion with open minds rather than already deciding that we can't learn anything from those we dislike and disagree with? What if we choose to love over hate?

Then maybe we would be able to see the good in people, even if we still think they're misguided. Maybe our hard feelings toward those we don't agree with will soften a little and we start to understand them a bit more instead of shutting them out completely. Maybe, just maybe, we will be able to recognise God working in them and in us, raising up all people to be the body of Christ, proclaiming grace and peace in the midst of a divided world.

I mean, isn't that a better way to live? Wouldn't that more allow us to feel God's presence among us? Don't you think that this is what God wants for us, created us to be, even died for? That we could understand and grasp just how loved and forgiven and saved we are?

See our God isn't a God of division and besting the other. Our God isn't one of war and political power. Our God isn't even about shrewd managing of our resources and assumptions. Rather, our God is about the grace in welcoming those who are different, those with whom we don't agree, and even those who hurt us. Our God is about the joy in seeing the beauty in each other, in diversity, and in the community in which we all belong. Our God is about the benevolent love that includes, forgives, and reveals to us all truth, wisdom, and discernment.

So in this season after Pentecost, may we continue to strive in our recognition of God in the world, building bridges and tearing down walls, that we might see each other not just as right or wrong, but as loved and forgiven and included in the body of Christ. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Build Us Up, Lord (ELW #670)

CREED (WOV p. 18)

With all of God's welcomed and made equal, 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, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into hell.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.**

**I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen**

PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

Called into relationship and service to God and each other, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your humbling mercy, O God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we praise your name as you bless us again and again with your equitable love and grace. May we always remember the gift of community that you bring us together in, that we might treat each other with dignity and respect. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your name is praised from the rising of the sun to the time it sets. May the song of your unending grace ring to the ends of the earth and flow through our community and ministry. 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 Living Faith Lutheran Church in Sechelt and their interim pastor Richard Hergesheimer and Presbyterian interim minister Glenn Inglis; and for Lord of Life Mission in Sandspit and their interim pastor Jim Whaley. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, your glory is high above the earth and the heavens, and you look down on all that you have made with love and grace. Strengthen our care and stewardship of this planet, that your face can be clearly seen in the beauty of creation. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, there is none like you, for you are enthroned on high yet you choose to come to us with a hand of grace and mercy. Give all world leaders, politicians, and people of influence a sense of your love, that we might learn to work together toward peace. 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 family; and Meri Gabramikael. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you lift us up out of the dust and ashes of our lives and bless us with your grace. Be with all who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely that your promise of grace and community be reflected in all that we do. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; the Wong family; the Joughin family; Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Pastor Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Hwee Yang; Kelly; Betty; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, by being joined together with all the saints of all times and places by your grace, we are reminded of the joy found in your name. May the faithful lives of the past serve as examples for us, strengthening us to be effective beacons of your hope and love. By your humbling mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your everlasting welcome and redemption, through Jesus Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PEACE (WOV p. 20)

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
And also with you.

DIALOGUE (WOV p. 36)

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 offer thanks and praise to you, O God, through Christ our Lord; who shows us the way of humble relationship and service, and joins us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the whole church on earth to praise your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (WOV p. 36)

GREAT THANKSGIVING

Thanks be to you, O God, for being our rock, our shield, and our very hope in this troubled world. For you show us your grace and mercy and lift us up as your people, and you equip us with your truth and empower us by your love, that your presence among us can be revealed to

all. And through the life and teachings of Jesus Christ, you set forth the example of what it means to live as your people in ministry and service.

For on the night that he was betrayed, it was Jesus who 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 supper 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 see the justice and peace that comes from you, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

So it is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, through Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (WOV p. 25)

Together with all those welcomed into God's love, 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 grace given to us all.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (WOV p. 39)

Let Us Talents and Tongues Employ (ELW #674)

Jesu, Jesu, Fill Us with Your Love (ELW #708)

POST-COMMUNION PRAYER

Holy and merciful God, again you have fed us with your love and your Word, and revealed to us how your grace is present in our lives. Bless us as we go from here, and may our encounters be reflections of your unending mercy, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

BLESSING

May the God of hope sustain you,
the God of our salvation keep you,
and the God of all our relationships and community walk with you, now and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Let Streams of Living Justice (ELW #710)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, seek what is good and acceptable.
Thanks be to God.

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