



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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First Sunday of Advent

November 30, 2025

Tree of Life

The new church year begins with a wake-up call: Christ is coming soon! In today's readings both Paul and Jesus challenge us to wake from sleep, for we know neither the day nor hour of the Lord's coming. Isaiah proclaims the day when God will gather all people on the holy mountain and there will be no more war or suffering. Though we vigilantly watch for the promised day of salvation, we wait for what we already have: Christ comes among us this day as the word and meal that strengthens our faith in the promises of God.

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 hən̓q̓əmi̓ñəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather this day in the hope that our God is here among us in this house of the Lord. We stand in awe within the gates of the city that God has built, assembled as a tribe and united as a body of Christ, where we together praise, pray, and prosper in the peace and righteousness of God, through Jesus our Saviour and bright morning star.

Amen. Thanks be to God.

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

And in our gathering, we bless the God of Jacob, who promises to transform weapons of war and hatred into tools of growth and community. As we light this first candle of this wreath, may we be roused from sleep, wrapped in light, and led into the hope in God's promises of presence, purpose, and peace.

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (#240) verse 1

O God of our hope, come,
let us walk in the light of the Lord. Amen.

GATHERING SONG: Hark! A Thrilling Voice Is Sounding! (#246)

GREETING

The providing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the promised love of God, and the ever-present community of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

And also with you.

HYMN OF PRAISE (p. 6)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Good and Glorious God, we know that you promise to be present in and around our lives, in ways that we cannot always recognise or even fathom. By the power of your Spirit, may this truth fill us with the hope that your peace will reign throughout the earth, through Jesus Christ who loves us and brings us into salvation.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 2:1-5

A reading from Isaiah.

The visionary message presented in this reading focuses on a future day when God establishes a universal reign of peace. Divine decisions will make war obsolete, and the worshipping community responds: "Let us walk in the light of that Lord now!"

¹ The word that Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem.

² In days to come
the mountain of the LORD's house
shall be established as the highest of the mountains
and shall be raised above the hills;

all the nations shall stream to it.

³ Many peoples shall come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may teach us his ways
and that we may walk in his paths.”

For out of Zion shall go forth instruction
and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

⁴ He shall judge between the nations
and shall arbitrate for many peoples;
they shall beat their swords into plowshares
and their spears into pruning hooks;
nation shall not lift up sword against nation;
neither shall they learn war any more.

⁵ O house of Jacob,
come, let us walk
in the light of the LORD!

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 122

¹ I was glad when they said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the LORD.”

² **Now our feet are standing
within your gates, O Jerusalem.**

³ Jerusalem is built as a city
that is at unity with itself;

⁴ **to which the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD,
the assembly of Israel, to praise the name of the LORD.**

⁵ For there are the thrones of judgment,
the thrones of the house of David.

⁶ **Pray for the peace of Jerusalem:
“May they prosper who love you.**

⁷ Peace be within your walls
and quietness within your towers.

⁸ **For the sake of my kindred and companions,
I pray for your prosperity.**

⁹ Because of the house of the LORD our God,
I will seek to do you good.”

SECOND READING: Romans 13:11-14

A reading from Romans.

Paul compares the advent of Christ to the coming of dawn. We live our lives today in light of Christ's coming in the future.

¹¹ Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is already the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; ¹² the night is far gone;

the day is near. Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light; ¹³ let us walk decently as in the day, not in reveling and drunkenness, not in illicit sex and licentiousness, not in quarreling and jealousy. ¹⁴ Instead, put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 10)

GOSPEL: Matthew 24:36-44

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus describes his second coming as a sudden, turbulent event that will bring about deep change to our normal, day-to-day lives. Therefore, he urges people to stay awake, be aware, and wait expectantly, because the Son of Man will come unannounced.

[Jesus said to the disciples,] ³⁶ “About that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ For as the days of Noah were, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For as in the days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day Noah entered the ark, ³⁹ and they knew nothing until the flood came and swept them all away, so, too, will be the coming of the Son of Man. ⁴⁰ Then two will be in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴¹ Two women will be grinding meal together; one will be taken, and one will be left. ⁴² Keep awake, therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming. ⁴³ But understand this: if the owner of the house had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and would not have let his house be broken into. ⁴⁴ Therefore you also must be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Let your Word, O God, ring from the mountains and your Spirit shine forth in the earth, that we might hear you, see you, and feel you in and around our lives, through Jesus Christ our Saviour and our hope.

Amen.

So, it's beginning to look a lot like Christmas. Not just here at the church, but in the malls, on the streets, even at our home we started slowly but surely putting up the decorations that I have nothing to do with. Or else. And not to mention, as with every Christmas season, and as you might have guessed with how I started this sermon, songs by Bing Crosby are already starting to ring our ears, and if they weren't before, I'm pretty sure they are now.

But let's test that theory, shall we? We'll play a little game that I'll call... uh... “game”. I'll start off a Bing Crosby song and you see if you can get the next word or line.

First up: "I'm dreaming of a white Christmas. Just like..."

Next one: "Chestnuts roasting on an open fire. Jack Frost..."

Last one (because we have to get on with this sermon): "I'll be home for Christmas. You can..."

Yeah so this week I learned that it's actually *plan on me*. Am I the only one who thought it was always "count on me"?

It was so weird for me when the radio was talking about it, how pretty much *everyone* thought this famous lyric was "count on me", so much so that some professional covers of the song *do* even say "count" and not "plan". And even though the radio insisted that the original is "plan" and not "count", the first thing I did was pull out my trusty Bing Crosby Christmas vinyl LP 8-track cassette CD (ok I just streamed it from my phone), but I needed to hear the actual song, just to make sure. And yup, it's "plan" alright.

And I tell ya, my mind was blown. I went as far as to ask others if they thought the same as me. I even asked my kids who were like, "What's a Bing Crosby?" But even when they don't know the guy, they knew the song well enough to still think that the missing word was "count." Well, except for one of them who thought the next word was "Christmas." Yup, "you can Christmas on me." Anyway, it wasn't just 2 out of 3 of my kids, but pretty much everyone else I asked, like all 5 of them, thought it was count. *sigh* Seriously, I don't know if I can do this anymore, guys.

I mean, how could we as a society have been so wrong? How could our collective memory, or at least among those I asked about this, fail us so badly? How could I be so mistaken?

And yes, it's just a song. Getting the lyric right or wrong is pretty inconsequential unless you were lip syncing it on Saturday Night Live or something. But in the long run, it just doesn't matter. It makes no difference. Life continues and carries on.

But be that as it may, why does it still bother us so much? Or at least, it bugs me enough that I'm talking about it at length in this sermon.

The thing is, and I've talked about this a lot in the past, we don't like to be wrong. So much, in fact, that when we are trapped in the corner and are about to be proven as such, we often try to change the rules so we'd actually be right. We shift the goal posts so it'll turn out that it's not us who is wrong, but they are. Or maybe we gaslight them and insist that we're not the problem, but it's them.

And I'm not just talking about old Christmas tune lyrics, but in so many different areas of life. Like when we're reprimanded at work, we make excuses. When we're stopped by cop, we claim ignorance of the law. When we're at it with our spouse, partner, or friend, we want to keep going and going until they're the ones to concede and admit that not just that they're wrong, but that we're right. As usual.

But what does all this have to do with the 1st Sunday of Advent, you ask? Well the thing is, I've known people who do this when trying to make heads or tails of Jesus' teachings, especially the kind that we get today. But these words are like two thousand years old, they have been debated over, translated and translated and often times sourced from other translations, and taken apart and put together again so many times that no one really knows what the original words are anymore.

But that doesn't stop people from guessing. Ascertaining. Even insisting that they are the bearers of that truth.

Don't get me wrong though, there's nothing wrong with believing in something, of course not, that's like the whole premise of my job. There's nothing wrong with having an opinion even if it's divisive or a hot take. And there is certainly nothing wrong with having *faith*.

The problem is when that faith leads to anything but hope. Often, especially in our religious climate now, faith has been leading to a sense of superiority, in that those who are "in the know" think that they are better, more educated, and deserving of our utmost respect. Faith has brought about a notion that those among the faithful have become the gatekeepers of truth and morality, giving them the right to put anyone who doesn't agree with them down and maybe even label them as heathens, evil, and "on the wrong side of history." And ironically, faith seems to have brought more division than unity, what with all the wars, denominations, and in fighting among churches, congregations, and communities.

This religion thing has become such a "who's in" and "who's out" kind of thing.

So what are we to do? What can we do? What is the lesson for this 1st Sunday of Advent, the first day of the church year, the Sunday in which we are to be inspired by hope?

Well, the thing is, Jesus, in not so many words, tells us that it just *doesn't matter*.

I don't mean our faith, opinions, or belief don't matter, but what I mean is that I hear Jesus telling us that our thinking that we're right but are more likely to be wrong doesn't matter. That these divisions that we try to artificially impose on the other won't lead to where we think they'll lead. That the arguing, the fighting, the one-upping of each other on theology, doctrine, and practice are not, have never been, and will never be the point.

See too often religion has been used to take away rights instead of uplifting them. It's been used to oppress instead of liberate. It's been used to put others in their places of not good enough, not moral enough, not loved enough by God.

However, Jesus doesn't do any of that. Rather, he continually tells us that we are loved. He tells us that we are saved. He tells us that he is with us, always.

And that is what matters. See Jesus didn't give criteria for this promise. He didn't send us a to-do list on how we can summon him and his salvation. He didn't include an "as long as you..." clause. No, there are no conditions for God entering into the world through the Immanuel. There are no disqualifiers that would change who we are and whose we are. There is nothing, not in death or life, things present or things to come, or anything else in all of creation that will separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

So whether we think the world will end a certain way or not. Whether we vote this way or that way. Whether we thought Bing Crosby said "count on me" or knew it was "plan on me" all along, God will love us, God will welcome us, and God will be with us, just as God has always been and God always will.

This is the hope of Christmas that we look forward to in Advent. This is the truth that drives our faith. This is why we can be who we are as beloved and forgiven, redeemed and saved, welcomed and included parts of the body of Christ. That even when things can be confusing, shocking, and disappointing, God's love for us won't change but rather we can lean into its strength and recognise how it strengthens us.

So go ahead, be wrong. Make mistakes. Sing different words and off key even, if that's the best you can do. Just know that through it all, the point was never to be right or the most moral or the most knowledgeable in faith and theology, but the point was always to just be loved, to be welcomed, and to be part of this eternal community together living in peace, joy, and hope.

So as we start this season of Advent and the church year, may we trust in the hope of God with us through Jesus, inviting us, forgiving us, and loving us as God's own people in the world. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: My Soul Proclaims Your Greatness (#251)

APOSTLES' CREED (p. 12)

With all of God's people living in the hope of our salvation, 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 to recognise and proclaim the presence of Christ in our midst, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "in your ever-present mercy, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**.

In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you welcome us in your house and you declare us as beloved. Instill in us all the hope of your promises, that we be strengthened and moved to serve you and neighbour in faith. In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we stand here within your gates with you and all the saints in worship and praise for all that you are and all that you do. May we always see and appreciate you with us in our midst, that we be humbled by the grace of your presence, and be moved to proclaim your truth. 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 leaders, congregations, and ministries of the ELCIC. In particular we pray for Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Prince George and the pastors and leaders that serve there; and for our very own Grace Lutheran Church here in Burnaby, and our mission to serve this neighbourhood.

In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you have built for us a home and have united us within it, and you reveal your love and presence with us in all that you have made. May we always see you with us in your creation, that our care and stewardship of this planet be faithful and mindful to those who will come after us.

In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, in all the tribes of the world there are those who praise your name, unifying us in spite of difference in culture and location. We pray for peace throughout the world, that your love for all people might reign in all our hearts and fill them with compassion and hope. Especially we pray for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into our country: Abraham Barhane; Solyana Amanuel; Filimon Abraha; as well as for those who have not yet arrived: Maekele Kiflu, Selam Haile, and their children; and Meri Gabramikael.

In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we pray for prosperity in health and wholeness for all our your people in this world, that your gracious love be present with us all always. We pray in particular for those who are ill, who mourn, or who feel lonely; and especially for Kathy and family; Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Beulah; Greg, Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Pastor Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Kelly; Betty; Tracy, Jacob, and Joshua; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you welcome us graciously to live with you and all the saints in your house forever. May the faithful lives of the saints of the past always inspire us to do good in the world, that all those in need might live in the hope of your love.

In your ever-present mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all those for whom we pray, trusting in your steadfast and eternal love, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen.

PEACE

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

MEAL

DIALOGUE (p. 14)

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 places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who comes to us as one of us, eternally in our midst through love and grace, joining us together 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 (p. 14)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Holy God, mighty and merciful, we give you thanks for all that you are and all that you do, ever present with us in the world and continually revealing to us the hope in your love and promises, empowering us to be your hands and feet of grace and peace. And you further reveal yourself in the life and teachings of your Son Jesus, who entered this world once and for all with an eternal message of hope and joy in your name, full of forgiveness and salvation.

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, 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 gave 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."

So it is by this bread and cup that we see you present with us, granting us love and peace and hope, even as we together declare this mystery of faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

We long for your Spirit, O God, help us to see you present in our lives, blessing this meal, instilling your Word in us, and strengthening us as your people, that we might faithfully proclaim your peace to the world, through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 17)

Joined together in the hope of the Lord, 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 hope that leads to peace.
Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 17)
The King Shall Come (#260)
Wait for the Lord (#262)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, you are present with us throughout our lives and you feed us with your Word and nourish us with your love. May we be refreshed by the truth of your promises and the hope in your grace, that we be humbled and empowered to be your people for all time, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the love of God with us throughout our lives,
the grace of God with us for all time,
and the hope of God with us here and now,
bless you and keep you, today and always.
Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Soon and Very Soon (#439)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, spread the hope of Christ with us in the world.
Thanks be to God.