



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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Third Sunday of Advent

December 14, 2025

Tree of Life

A note of joyful expectation marks today's worship. Isaiah announces that the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and Jesus points to the unexpected and transforming signs of God's reign. We wait with patience for the coming of the Lord, even as we rejoice at his presence among us this day: in word and holy supper, in church and in our homes, in silent reflection and in works of justice and love. We pray that God would open our eyes and ears to the wonders of Christ's advent among us.

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 hə́nqəmíñəṛṇ (Musqueam) and Sḵwə́wú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

GATHERING

LIGHTING OF ADVENT WREATH

Light One Candle to Watch for Messiah (ELW #240) vs 1 – 3

GATHERING SONG: Awake! Awake, and Greet the New Morn (#242)

GREETING

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

HYMN OF PRAISE (TOL p. 6)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Stir up the wills of all who look to you, Lord God, and strengthen our faith in your coming, that, transformed by grace, we may walk in your way; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 35:1-10

A reading from Isaiah.

The prophet describes the return from the Babylonian captivity as a joyous procession to Zion. God's coming reign will bring a renewal of creation in which health and wholeness will be restored. There is no need for fear, for God is coming to save.

¹ The wilderness and the dry land shall be glad;
the desert shall rejoice and blossom;
like the crocus ² it shall blossom abundantly
and rejoice with joy and shouting.

The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it,
the majesty of Carmel and Sharon.

They shall see the glory of the LORD,
the majesty of our God.]]

³ Strengthen the weak hands
and make firm the feeble knees.

⁴ Say to those who are of a fearful heart,
"Be strong, do not fear!

Here is your God.

He will come with vengeance,
with terrible recompense.

He will come and save you."

⁵ Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened,
and the ears of the deaf shall be opened;

⁶ then the lame shall leap like a deer,
and the tongue of the speechless sing for joy.

For waters shall break forth in the wilderness
and streams in the desert;

⁷ the burning sand shall become a pool
and the thirsty ground springs of water;
the haunt of jackals shall become a swamp;
the grass shall become reeds and rushes.
⁸ A highway shall be there,
and it shall be called the Holy Way;
the unclean shall not travel on it,
but it shall be for God's people;
no traveler, not even fools, shall go astray.
⁹ No lion shall be there,
nor shall any ravenous beast come up on it;
they shall not be found there,
but the redeemed shall walk there.
¹⁰ And the ransomed of the LORD shall return
and come to Zion with singing;
everlasting joy shall be upon their heads;
they shall obtain joy and gladness,
and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Luke 1:46b-55

^{46b} My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
⁴⁷ my spirit rejoices in God my Savior,
⁴⁸ **for you, Lord, have looked with favor on your lowly servant.**
From this day all generations will call me blessed:
⁴⁹ you, the Almighty, have done great things for me
and holy is your name.
⁵⁰ **You have mercy on those who fear you,**
from generation to generation.
⁵¹ You have shown strength with your arm
and scattered the proud in their conceit,
⁵² **casting down the mighty from their thrones**
and lifting up the lowly.
⁵³ You have filled the hungry with good things
and sent the rich away empty.
⁵⁴ **You have come to the aid of your servant Israel,**
to remember the promise of mercy,
⁵⁵ the promise made to our forebears,
to Abraham and his children forever.

SECOND READING: James 5:7-10

A reading from James.

In anticipation of the Lord's coming, Christians are called upon to cultivate patience rather than discontent.

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers and sisters, until the coming of the Lord. The farmer waits for the precious crop from the earth, being patient with it until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also must be patient. Strengthen your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is near. ⁹ Brothers and sisters, do not grumble against one another, so that you may not be judged. See, the Judge is standing at the doors! ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers and sisters, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (TOL p. 10)

GOSPEL: Matthew 11:2-11

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

John the Baptist expects the Messiah to bring God's judgment upon the earth (Matt. 3:11-12). From a prison cell, he wonders whether Jesus is the one who will do this. Jesus' response indicates that God's reign is indeed being fulfilled already through healing and restoration.

² When John heard in prison what the Messiah was doing, he sent word by his disciples ³ and said to him, "Are you the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?" ⁴ Jesus answered them, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: ⁵ the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, those with a skin disease are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. ⁶ And blessed is anyone who takes no offense at me."

⁷ As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken by the wind? ⁸ What, then, did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who wear soft robes are in royal palaces. ⁹ What, then, did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. ¹⁰ This is the one about whom it is written,

'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,
who will prepare your way before you.'

¹¹ "Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist, yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Pour out your Spirit in this place, O Lord, and may the wisdom of your Word and truth blossom in our lives and flourish our joy, though Jesus Christ, the One who is, was, and will always be.
Amen.

So our kids, their friends, and their friend's friends have been on this thing that quite honestly makes me want to poke my own eyes out. Kids ranging from elementary school to about early high school, basically the exact age of 2 of our kids, have been staying this stupid thing any chance they get. The worst part of it is that they think it's hilarious for no particular reason, so

they keep saying it and pointing it out and laughing whenever it happens. Maybe you know what I'm talking about. 6 7. 6 7. 6 7. For goodness sakes.

It's ok if you don't get it. No one does. But still, these kids think it's hilarious. Any instance of the digits 6 and 7 in that exact order in any situation, no matter how inappropriate, will make them look at each other, giggle, and make this hand motion that only adds to the head-slapping nonsense. Sure, we can look up the origins of this phenomenon, but it won't make it more understandable. We can try to figure out why it caught on, but it won't make them stop. We can even try to adopt it and start saying it ourselves, but it still won't make funny out of that which isn't funny. And to be honest, doesn't that seem to be the case with much of what the kids laugh at these days?

I mean, humour these days just isn't what it was like before. In my day, we had real comedy, like legendary stand-up routines that literally left me in uncontrollable laughing fits. We had classic and memorable movies that would make us laugh just by thinking about them and reciting their lines in our heads. And of course, we had timeless jokes like, "Hi hungry, I'm dad." Gets me every time.

But these days? These days kids laugh at these nonsensical memes like this 6 7 thing. They find humour in the most ridiculous sources that are more confusing than anything else. They just think the weirdest stuff can be considered funny. They don't understand how jokes should be smart and insightful and can serve as a commentary on the state of the world. They don't see how humour can come from a place of seriousness and maybe even pain, but it moves us to smile anyway. They just don't get that what they think is funny isn't actually funny.

And... when the heck did I turn into this grumpy old man? Thank goodness we don't have a front porch that I can sit on with my shotgun yelling at those young whippersnappers to get off my lawn.

But you know what I mean, don't you? Maybe not just around the humour of these days, but kids now aren't built the way they used to be. They aren't as resilient. They aren't as hardworking. And they most certainly aren't as religious as we are as it's so evident in our own greying hair and declining numbers.

Things just aren't the way they used to be.

Which is fine, I guess, because we all know and can accept the fact that things change. But aren't they supposed to change for the better? Doesn't progress mean moving forward? Shouldn't we be moving away from the dark, broken, and totally unfunny society that we're in now and towards, I don't know, more *joy*?

So it's in times like these, when I think about the state of the world and how I'm not really happy with where we are even after all these years of learning, growing, and progressing as a human race, that I can totally resonate with John the baptizer's very innocent and telling question, "Are you, Jesus, the one who is to come, or are we to wait for another?"

I mean John has it way worse than my kids squandering the rich tradition of impeccable humour that I passed down to them. John, at this point in the story, was in prison. Jailed for doing nothing more than speaking truth. For calling out poor judgement and a lack of morality.

All John did was stand up to the king of that land and point out his short-sighted hypocrisy, his depravity of ethics, and his selfish evil that had the king seduce his own sister-in-law. Actually, maybe I can see why the king decided to put John behind bars, but that doesn't make it right.

Because the world isn't supposed to be like that, is it? The world shouldn't be so full of corruption, lust for power, and petty vindictiveness, should it? The world wasn't meant to stay so broken and lost, especially if the promised Messiah is supposedly here in our midst, was it?

That's what John probably was thinking as he sat there shackled to the floor. He might have been disappointed that he was now sleeping in the dirt with various rodents and not given his three square meals of locusts and honey. He must have been disillusioned with how things didn't improve, continued to be devoid of joy, and that he wasn't freed as he was led to believe and was still behind bars.

And perhaps in more ways than one.

John was literally in jail, yes, but he was also imprisoned in his own inability to see past his preset ideas of how things should be. He was actually caged up, but he was also trapped in his own closed-mindedness that told him there is only one right way how things should be. John sat there disappointed in his incarceration, but was also stuck getting in his own way, holding himself down, keeping his eyes shielded from all that Jesus has been doing, is doing, and continues to do for the sick, the poor, and all those in need. All the hope in healing, all the peace in persevering, all the *joy* in Jesus' presence with, among, and through the people.

So then that makes me think, what jails us in our lives? What perhaps nonsensical non-negotiables do we hold on to that keep us from seeing, hearing, and feeling God with us? What preconceived closed-mindedness has kept our eyes from recognising that hope, peace, and joy in our lives?

Just a few minutes ago, I was complaining about the kids and their 6 7 meme and their complete lack of "normal" humour. But to be honest, those were my feelings at the beginning of when this whole thing started. And while I still don't think it's all that funny, I am seeing the joy that it brings to these kids. Enough that they almost hoot and holler when they see or hear those numbers in a big way. Enough that they are connected to each other with this not-so-inside joke. Enough that no matter what they're currently up to and maybe even feeling, just the mention of an instance of 6 7 can bring a smile to their face.

Enough, for me to even sort of sometimes maybe in a small tiny way, get into the hype. I use it to get my kids to laugh. I sometimes make fun of it so they know that I care about what they care about. I might even say it here and there, just to cheer them up. I said it to a kid at a field trip just earlier this week, and I tell ya it looked like that totally made his day.

Now I want to be very clear, it still isn't funny. I'm not saying that we all need to start laughing whenever 6 7 shows up. Nor do I think that it's something that has been ordained by God to bring the people together or anything like that. But I have to admit it is a point of connection for these kids who have faced a lot that they might not realise or comprehend through the pandemic. It is how some of us can find joy, not in the unfunny joke itself but in the joy of others who do find it funny. It is a place where we can find some sort of respite from the seriousness of the world, and be freed to just laugh. Laugh with our loved ones. Feel

connected through community. See the joy that Jesus brought and continues to bring in and around our lives.

And maybe not just through this goofy meme that makes no sense, but throughout life. Maybe we can see how we're freed from the things that shackle us in the darkness. Maybe we can see how we've been saved by God from being held back in our own cages of narrow-mindedness. Maybe we can see how Jesus is, was, and will always be with us and, in spite of whatever we're facing, lifts us up and grants us joy.

So on this 3rd Sunday of Advent, as we continue to look forward to one who is to come, may we see God's presence with us, here and now, that we might recognise how we're loved and joined together as a body of Christ, and brought into the hope that leads us into the peace that brings us an eternal and everlasting joy. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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

APOSTLES' CREED (TOL p. 12)

**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 wait and watch in this season of Advent, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "Lord, in your mercy," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

God, our Saviour, we proclaim your greatness to all the world, for your acts of healing and liberation. Lead us in our communities and lives throughout the generations, that all may place their hope in you. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer**.

God, our liberation, our spirit rejoices in you and all that you do to save us, heal us, and join us together as your church. May our ministries in our context and around the world be fruitful, that all people might be able to see your provision and compassion and grace. We especially lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those that 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 Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Comox and the pastors and leaders that serve them; as well as for our seminaries in Saskatoon and Waterloo and all their faculty, staff, and students. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, our sustainer, you look upon us with favour and blessed us with a planet full of beauty and wonder. Strengthen us in our care for all that you have made, that the holiness of your name be seen and heard in all of creation. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, our strength, you humble the mighty and lift up the lowly as you show us the equity of your justice. Instill a wisdom in all world leaders and politicians, that they might lead your same compassion and care. And we pray for the continued support of those that we've sponsored to come into this 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. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God, our aid, you promise us mercy and you deliver us from all that oppress us and you restore us into wholeness. Be with those of us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that we all continue to see your love shining in and around us. Especially we pray 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; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...
Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

God of eternal promise, you welcome us to live in community with all the saints, and you bring us into all joy and peace in our relationship with you. Inspire us with the faith of the past, that we can together move into the future with hope. Lord, in your mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your mercy through Jesus Christ, the Emmanuel.
Amen.

PEACE

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

HYMN FOR THE SEASON OF ADVENT: Come Thou Long-Expected Jesus (#254)

LORD'S PRAYER: P.17

Lord, remember us in your kingdom and teach us to pray.

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.

HYMNS OF HOPEFUL AWAITING:

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel (#257) vs 1, 2, 6, 8
Saviour of the Nations, Come (#263)

SENDING

BLESSING

God our Creator bless you and keep you,
God the Christ shine on you and be gracious unto you,
God of care and love look upon you with favour and grace, and grant to you all the peace that
surpasses all understanding, now and forever. **Amen.**

SENDING HYMN: Joy to the World (#267)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, live in joy.
Thanks be to God.