



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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**Baptism of Our Lord
January 11, 2026
ELW Holy Communion, Setting 10**

In the waters of the Jordan, Jesus is revealed as the beloved Son of God. Through this great epiphany, Jesus fulfills all righteousness and becomes the servant of God who will bring forth justice and be a light to the nations. In the waters of baptism we too are washed by the Word, anointed by the Spirit, and named God's beloved children. Our baptismal mission is to proclaim good news to all who are oppressed or in need of God's healing.

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

GATHERING

CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather this day in worship, to ascribe to our God all glory due to God's name. For the voice of the Lord is powerful, in calling creation into being, in speaking order amidst the chaos, and in declaring us as God's own beloved. And so as we are strengthened by this voice, may we reflect our blessings of peace and praise the Lord always, through Jesus Christ. **Amen. Thanks be to God.**

GATHERING HYMN: Christ, When for Us You Were Baptized (#304)

GREETING

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

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 204)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

God of all power and might, your voice thunders over the floods of life and your love is embedded in the water from which we are created. Speak to us this day as you speak through your physical manifestations in the world: in water, in bread and wine, and in your Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 42:1-9

A reading from Isaiah.

God's servant is endowed with God's spirit in order to bring justice to the nations. The servant will not exercise authority boisterously or with violence, nor will weariness ever prevent the fulfilling of the servant's task. God's old promises have been fulfilled; the servant's new assignment is to bring light to the nations.

¹ Here is my servant, whom I uphold,
 my chosen, in whom my soul delights;
I have put my spirit upon him;
 he will bring forth justice to the nations.

² He will not cry out or lift up his voice
 or make it heard in the street;
³ a bruised reed he will not break,
 and a dimly burning wick he will not quench;
 he will faithfully bring forth justice.

⁴ He will not grow faint or be crushed
 until he has established justice in the earth,
 and the coastlands wait for his teaching.

⁵ Thus says God, the LORD,
 who created the heavens and stretched them out,
 who spread out the earth and what comes from it,
 who gives breath to the people upon it
 and spirit to those who walk in it:

⁶ I am the LORD; I have called you in righteousness;

I have taken you by the hand and kept you;
I have given you as a covenant to the people,
a light to the nations,
⁷ to open the eyes that are blind,
to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon,
from the prison those who sit in darkness.
⁸ I am the LORD; that is my name;
my glory I give to no other,
nor my praise to idols.
⁹ See, the former things have come to pass,
and new things I now declare;
before they spring forth,
I tell you of them.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 29

¹ Ascribe to the LORD, you gods,
 ascribe to the LORD glory and strength.
² **Ascribe to the LORD the glory due God's name;**
 worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.
³ The voice of the LORD is upon the waters; the God of glory thunders;
 the LORD is upon the mighty waters.
⁴ **The voice of the LORD is a powerful voice;**
 the voice of the LORD is a voice of splendor.
⁵ The voice of the LORD breaks the cedar trees;
 the LORD breaks the cedars of Lebanon;
⁶ **the LORD makes Lebanon skip like a calf,**
 and Mount Hermon like a young wild ox.
⁷ The voice of the LORD
 bursts forth in lightning flashes.
⁸ **The voice of the LORD shakes the wilderness;**
 the LORD shakes the wilderness of Kadesh.
⁹ The voice of the LORD makes the oak trees writhe and strips the forests bare.
 And in the temple of the LORD all are crying, "Glory!"
¹⁰ **The LORD sits enthroned above the flood;**
 the LORD sits enthroned as king forevermore.
¹¹ O LORD, give strength to your people;
 give them, O LORD, the blessings of peace.

SECOND READING: Acts 10:34-43

A reading from Acts.

Peter crosses the sharp religious boundary separating Jews from Gentiles and proclaims the good news of God's inclusive forgiveness in Jesus' name to Cornelius, a Roman centurion. As a result of Peter's preaching, Cornelius and his family become the first Gentiles to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ.

³⁴ Peter began to speak to [Cornelius and his household]: “I truly understand that God shows no partiality, ³⁵ but in every people anyone who fears him and practices righteousness is acceptable to him. ³⁶ You know the message he sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all. ³⁷ That message spread throughout Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John announced: ³⁸ how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power; how he went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. ³⁹ We are witnesses to all that he did both in Judea and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, ⁴⁰ but God raised him on the third day and allowed him to appear, ⁴¹ not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses and who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. ⁴² He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one ordained by God as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³ All the prophets testify about him that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 205)

GOSPEL: Matthew 3:13-17

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Before Jesus begins his ministry, he is baptized by John, touched by the Spirit, and identified publicly as God's child.

¹³ Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan, to be baptized by him. ¹⁴ John would have prevented him, saying, “I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?” ¹⁵ But Jesus answered him, “Let it be so now, for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness.” Then he consented. ¹⁶ And when Jesus had been baptized, just as he came up from the water, suddenly the heavens were opened to him and he saw God’s Spirit descending like a dove and alighting on him. ¹⁷ And a voice from the heavens said, “This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased.”

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

O God, you are wise and benevolent, and you speak to us words of love and grace. Speak to us now through the power of your Spirit, that we might better know you, hear you, and see you in and around our lives, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

So I didn't really want to talk about this because of how politically divisive it is, but you likely have heard the name Renee Nicole Good, the woman who was fatally shot in an ICE incident in Minnesota this past week. This of course caused an uproar in the community and online, and dug even deeper the chasm that separates the opposing sides that have divided the country so harshly and so starkly for too long.

When I first saw the news, I told myself to let it go. It is someone I don't know in a country I don't live in. But I couldn't. So, as I always impulsively and reluctantly do with these things, I read the comments. Those on the articles that allowed them, those on the random social media posts that came up on my feed, and even some of those from my friends on the matter. And I saw exactly what any of you saw if you made the unfortunate decision to read the comments as well.

And still, my heart sank.

Why so much arguing, gaslighting, and justifications? Why so much labelling, finger-pointing, and whataboutisms? Why so much division, marginalizing, and hate?

That's all I could see, from both sides of the coin. People debating on who did this and who deserves that. They argued on intention and motivation. They pigeonholed the shooter and the one who got shot into these little categories in which they could prosecute, judge, and call for the execution of if they weren't deceased already. It was so bad that really, it started to feel like it didn't even matter what actually happened as whatever facts that were presented were twisted and contorted to become "new evidence" of either side's predetermined argument. I saw the same exact video of the scene several times and suddenly everyone became a forensic scientist from CSI and figured it all out, because depending on who posted it, in the chat everyone was able to use it and interpret it to fit their own narrative of who is to blame.

At this point, I should say that I fully acknowledge and admit that I wasn't there. I didn't see what happened from start to finish. So I know that I'm not qualified to give definitive answers to these questions. But what I can say is that either side of the argument seems to be absolutely convinced that they are in the right, and that their side is the victim of the situation. And so fuels the endless cycle of hate perpetrated from each side against the other, with each new piece of information only solidifying their already presumed conclusion that they, again, are in the right and the victim in this horrible situation.

And in these situations, these divisive, polarizing, hate-filled situations, there just doesn't seem to be any room for grace, compassion, and love.

Reading about the situation itself can be bad enough, but often it's this aftermath that we're talking about that really gets to me. I kind of wish that something would happen, like a major force that everyone would listen to, would... I don't know... break open the heavens and declare what should be done. Give us the solution. Maybe even tell us how we should treat each other.

Oh wait, that did happen. We read about it in today's gospel text. I mean, this specific incident in Minneapolis wasn't addressed by Matthew of course, but I do think that Jesus' baptism, while for him, it was also for us in the world then, today, and always. See, often we wonder why was Jesus even baptized to begin with. John, who baptized Jesus, wondered the same. He knew who Jesus is and how he's here to baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire, and how it makes little sense for Jesus to be baptized with John's baptism of repentance.

But Jesus said that it's proper.

Proper? Why would it be? How could it be? What does he even mean?

Well, I think that while Jesus does a lot in his ministry in general, it seems like he does a lot of *redefining*. Like he gets us to unlearn so we can relearn. He changes paradigms, interpretations, and outlooks on life. And I think that's what he's doing here. John's baptism is one of repentance, yes. But Jesus is here redefining it to be something else. Something more in line with what Jesus is about. Something that I believe God wanted for us from the beginning.

Did you know that this baptism story, albeit with slightly different details and description, is one of just a handful of stories that appear in all 4 gospels? The others would be of course the whole Passion Narrative from the Palms to the empty tomb, including the cleansing of the temple although some gospels don't put them together chronologically. And there's the feeding of the 5 thousand. And that's it. These were the ones that were important enough for all 4 of the gospels to include in giving their full picture of Jesus.

And in all these stories, except maybe the overturning of tables, I see themes of grace, mercy, and *love*. I guess that shouldn't be a surprise as that is basically the Cole's notes of Jesus' whole ministry as recorded in scripture and even to this day through the Spirit. I mean there's a reason why my sermons always seem to land on at least one or more of these themes.

See while John's baptism was a sign of our repentance, Jesus redefined it to be an act of God's grace, mercy, and love for us all. I often describe baptism as a "way that God physically comes to us to give us a hug." And that is what I think is happening at Jesus' baptism. He is getting a very public hug, displayed for the world, enveloping all of creation, and declaring once and for all that this is God's Son, with whom God is well pleased.

And so it is for us in our baptisms and throughout our lives. God comes down in physical ways, be it through water, bread and wine, or a welcoming community of diverse folk. And in those physical ways, God brings us near, holds us, and tells us that we are loved.

Because we all need that, don't we? We all need to be reminded from time to time that we are loved. Like when the chips are down, you are loved. When we're having an awful day, you are loved. When it feels like we're up against the world, you are loved.

And so it's interesting that all of the events of Jesus' life that is shared among all 4 of our gospels are about love. It's not about law and order. They're not about justice and retribution. They're not even about having all the answers and being right in order to call others out and put them in their place. But they're about the grace that forgives, the mercy that welcomes us, and the love that saves us all.

So while I hear and read about stories like the Renee Good case, while I see so much argumentative hatred coming from all angles, while we might wonder what could be classified as fact or alternative facts, news or fake news, truth or blatant lies, I think it would behoove us to remember that we aren't called to exact revenge. We aren't called to belittle and demean others. We aren't called to hate. Rather we're called to reflect God's grace on all those who don't deserve it. We're called to forgive those who have wronged us, those who weren't good to us, and even ourselves when we wrong or aren't good to others. We're called to love, just as we have first been loved.

I know, easier said than done. And we often don't know what that love even looks like. But I can tell you what it doesn't look like, it doesn't look like the vitriol we see on social media. It doesn't look like the racism, sexism, and supremacist ideals that are so prevalent these days. It doesn't look like hate.

So I want to finish off with this very famous quote from one of my favourite preachers, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr, from his "Love Your Enemies" sermon: *Why should we love our enemies? The first reason is fairly obvious. Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*

Let's be reminded that we are loved, just as Jesus is loved. Let's remind others that they are loved, just as we are loved. And let's treat each other in light of this identity, with welcome, with forgiveness, and with the fact that we are all collectively and truly loved, and with us, God is graciously and mercifully pleased. Thanks be to God. Amen.

HYMN OF THE DAY: Down Galilee's Slow Roadways (ACS #916)

CREED (ELW p. 104)

Together with all those declared as God's beloved, 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

Declared as beloved by the power of God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "by your loving mercy, O God," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer.** By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, we praise you for your acts of grace in our lives that reveal to us your welcome and compassion. May we reflect your blessings to us out into the world, that all might know of your tender care.

By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you are mighty and strong and we ascribe to you the glory due to your name. May our worship be faithful and our lives and ministry be full of witness to the wonders of your love. We remember in prayer 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 lift up our BC Synod's Global Mission Companion, the Evangelical Lutheran Church – Peru, their president Ofelia Davila, and their other partner synods: the Texas-Louisiana Gulf Coast Synod and their bishop Trace Breashears Schultz; and the La Crosse Area Synod in Wisconsin and their bishop Felix Malpica.

By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your voice is upon the waters and your glory thunders in the skies and throughout creation, as your beauty is seen in the wonders of all that you have made. Strengthen us in our stewardship and help us to act responsibly in caring for all that you've entrusted to us.

By your blessed mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your voice is powerful and full of splendor, flashing like bright lightning into our lives with wisdom and justice. Instill this wisdom in all world leaders and politicians that the nations of the world might be governed with grace and be able to move toward peace. 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.

By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you give us strength and you bless us with peace, as you are with us throughout our times of trouble. Bring your healing to all those among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, and restore us all into your wholeness. Especially we pray for Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Greg; Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Pastor Kristen; Laura; Kandie; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Kelly; Betty; Ngan Kew (nan CUE); and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you sit enthroned in the heavens as king forevermore, welcoming us as your people and anointing us as saints. May the lives of all your faithful people inspire us in our own journeys, that we be reminded always of our connection to you and each other, by the power of your Spirit.

By your loving mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your gracious welcome and peace, granted to us through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE (p. 106)

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, that we should at all times and places give thanks and praise to you, O God, through our Saviour Jesus Christ, who reveals to us the truth of your gracious welcome and love, joining us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven, and the church on earth in praising your name with this unending hymn:

HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (p. 207)

THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE

Indeed, O God, you are holy, mighty, and merciful, and your love has no end. For you lift us up out of sin and, just as we are, you declare us as beloved. And in the fullness of time to send to us your Son Jesus, to show us your very inclusive welcome into your community and kingdom, revealing to us all the connectedness we share in your name.

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 and said, “Take and eat, this is my body broken for you. Do this for the remembrance of me.”

And then after they ate, he took the cup, gave thanks, and 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.”

It is through this bread and cup that we can be reminded of who we are and whose we are, even as we together declare the mystery of our faith:

Christ has died.

Christ is risen.

Christ will come again.

It is to you, O God, that all honour and glory belong, for your love and grace surpass understanding and lift us up to be joined with you and all the saints of all times and places, through Jesus Christ, our Saviour and baptized Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 112)

Welcomed into God's kingdom by the 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 declaring us as beloved.

Thanks be to God.

COMMUNION

COMMUNION HYMNS: Lamb of God (p. 208)
Spirit of Gentleness (#396)
What Feast of Love (#487)

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Holy God, again you have fed and nourished us with your Word and truth, and you have revealed to all the love that shines in and around our lives. Strengthen us in our walk with you and each other, that our bond as your children reflect always your unending grace, through Jesus our Lord. **Amen.**

SENDING

BLESSING

May the God who calls us beloved speak blessing upon you,
the God in whom we are baptized empower you as sons and daughters,
the God who alights our lives like a dove look upon you with favour and bring you peace, now and forever.

Amen.

SENDING HYMN: Go, My Children, with My Blessing (#543)

DISMISSAL

Go in peace, love each other with no partiality.

Thanks be to God.