



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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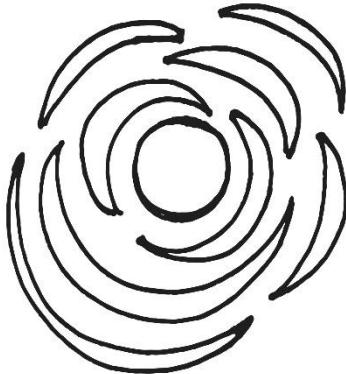
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### Second Sunday of Christmas

January 4, 2026

Tree of Life

Within the gospel reading's profound words lies the simple message that God is revealed in a human person. Though we may try to understand how the Word existed with God from the beginning of time, the wonder we celebrate at Christmas is that the Word continues to dwell among us. Christ comes among us in the gathered assembly, the scriptures, the waters of new birth, and the bread and the wine. Through these ordinary gifts we receive the fullness of God's grace and truth.

*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 hən̄q̄əm̄iñəm̄ (Musqueam) and S̄k̄w̄x̄w̄ú7mesh (Squamish) speaking peoples.

## GATHERING

### CALL TO WORSHIP

We gather to worship our Lord, to praise our God, who has strengthened us and blessed us as God's own children. For God establishes peace and satisfies us with truth and knowledge, and with power heals us and brings us into wholeness. And so we sing and give thanks, for God's Word has been made flesh and lives among us, as Jesus Christ our Saviour and brother. **Amen.**  
**Thanks be to God.**

**GATHERING SONG:** O Come, All Ye Faithful (#283)

### GREETING

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

**HYMN OF PRAISE** (TOL p. 6)

### PRAYER OF THE DAY

Loving God, you have adopted us as your children, to be joint-heirs with your Son, Jesus Christ, your Word made flesh. Empower us as your witnesses and proclaimers of your truth, that your glorious reign of peace and love be seen and recognized by all, through the presence of that same Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## WORD

### FIRST READING: Jeremiah 31:7-14

A reading from Jeremiah.

*God promises to bring Israel back to its land from the most remote parts of exile. In Zion Israel will rejoice over God's gift of food and livestock. Young women will express their joy in dancing; God will give gladness instead of sorrow.*

<sup>7</sup> Thus says the LORD:

    Sing aloud with gladness for Jacob,  
        and raise shouts for the chief of the nations;  
    proclaim, give praise, and say,  
        “Save, O LORD, your people,  
            the remnant of Israel.”

<sup>8</sup> See, I am going to bring them from the land of the north  
    and gather them from the farthest parts of the earth,  
among them the blind and the lame,  
    those with child and those in labor together;  
    a great company, they shall return here.

<sup>9</sup> With weeping they shall come,  
    and with consolations I will lead them back;  
I will let them walk by brooks of water,  
    in a straight path where they shall not stumble,  
for I have become a father to Israel,  
    and Ephraim is my firstborn.

<sup>10</sup> Hear the word of the LORD, O nations,  
    and declare it in the coastlands far away;

say, "He who scattered Israel will gather him  
and will keep him as a shepherd does a flock."

<sup>11</sup> For the LORD has ransomed Jacob  
and has redeemed him from hands too strong for him.

<sup>12</sup> They shall come and sing aloud on the height of Zion,  
and they shall be radiant over the goodness of the LORD,  
over the grain, the wine, and the oil,  
and over the young of the flock and the herd;  
their life shall become like a watered garden,  
and they shall never languish again.

<sup>13</sup> Then shall the young women rejoice in the dance,  
and the young men and the old shall be merry.

I will turn their mourning into joy;  
I will comfort them and give them gladness for sorrow.

<sup>14</sup> I will give the priests their fill of fatness,  
and my people shall be satisfied with my bounty,  
says the LORD.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**PSALM: Psalm 147:12-20**

<sup>12</sup> Worship the LORD, O Jerusalem;  
praise your God, O Zion,  
**<sup>13</sup> who has strengthened the bars of your gates**  
**and has blessed your children within you.**

<sup>14</sup> God has established peace on your borders  
and satisfies you with the finest wheat.

**<sup>15</sup> God sends out a command to the earth,**  
**a word that runs very swiftly.**

<sup>16</sup> God gives snow like wool,  
scattering frost like ashes.

**<sup>17</sup> God scatters hail like bread crumbs.**  
**Who can stand against God's cold?**

<sup>18</sup> The LORD sends forth the word and melts them;  
the wind blows, and the waters flow.

**<sup>19</sup> God declares the word to Jacob,**  
**statutes and judgments to Israel.**

<sup>20</sup> The LORD has not done so to any other nation;  
they do not know God's judgments. Hallelujah!

**SECOND READING: Ephesians 1:3-14**

A reading from Ephesians.

*In Jesus, all of God's plans and purposes have been made known as heaven and earth are united in Christ. Through Jesus, we have been chosen as God's children and have been promised eternal salvation.*

<sup>3</sup> Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, <sup>4</sup> just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of

the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.<sup>5</sup> He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will,<sup>6</sup> to the praise of his glorious grace that he freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace<sup>8</sup> that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and insight<sup>9</sup> he has made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure that he set forth in Christ,<sup>10</sup> as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth.<sup>11</sup> In Christ we have also obtained an inheritance, having been destined according to the purpose of him who accomplishes all things according to his counsel and will,<sup>12</sup> so that we, who were the first to set our hope on Christ, might live for the praise of his glory.<sup>13</sup> In him you also, when you had heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and had believed in him, were marked with the seal of the promised Holy Spirit;<sup>14</sup> this is the pledge of our inheritance toward redemption as God's own people, to the praise of his glory.

The word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

**GOSPEL ACCLAMATION:** (p. 10)

**GOSPEL: John 1:10-18**

The holy gospel according to John.

**Glory to you, O Lord.**

*John begins his gospel with this prologue: a hymn to the Word through whom all things were created. This Word became flesh and brought grace and truth to the world.*

<sup>10</sup> He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world did not know him. <sup>11</sup> He came to what was his own, and his own people did not accept him. <sup>12</sup> But to all who received him, who believed in his name, he gave power to become children of God,<sup>13</sup> who were born, not of blood or of the will of the flesh or of the will of man, but of God.

<sup>14</sup> And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. <sup>15</sup> (John testified to him and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me.' ")

<sup>16</sup> From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. <sup>17</sup> The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. <sup>18</sup> No one has ever seen God. It is the only Son, himself God, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

The gospel of the Lord.

**Praise to you, O Christ.**

**SERMON**

Loving God, by the power of your Spirit, may the truth of presence be revealed, that we might see your face in each other and know that you are with us always, through your Word made flesh, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

So I hope you're all recovered from the crazy holiday season we're coming out of. It's always a bit harder, I feel, when Christmas lands mid-week like it did this time around, as in a way it feels more disruptive. Like when Christmas lands in the weekend or just outside it, then it seems like

we have more time to prepare for our gatherings and various other things, and then more time to really rest up on the other end before we're hit with life and routine again.

Like, I was just looking forward to the kids being off school so I could spend more time with them, and now they're already back in school tomorrow. The past two weeks just flew by. And to make matters worse, it's 2026! I'm sure it'll sink in for me that it's not 2025 anymore in like May or June, as I'm still getting used to not being the 90s anymore. But my goodness, are the years going by quickly. I don't know if it's my middle age creeping in or what, but I find myself dwelling in my nostalgic feels a lot more lately. I mean, even more than before, for those of you who have seen the toys in my office...

What I mean is, with each passing year, I tend to look back at my life and compare it to where I am now. I think and reflect on what I've done to leave a mark on this world and my contribution to society in general. I'm fully aware and accept that I'm at a point of my life where there was more before then there will be after, and so I guess these thoughts are natural as my own mortality becomes more of a reality than some far fetched theory.

And I find that more often than not, as I reminisce and reflect, I admit that I can feel kind of... disappointed in myself.

I know, I know, I've done amazingly well, all things considered. It's just that... well I remember back in high school we had to write out 10-year goals. I put all the typical things, like a high-paying job, a spouse of some kind, maybe a kid or two, a big house, and of course a high-performance sports vehicle capable of a sub-10-second quarter-mile. Pretty normal goals for a late high schooler if you asked me.

Well, 10 years had passed and at 27 I was living in the seminary dorm, single-ish as all heck, and up to my eyeballs in student loans even after selling my low-displacement, high 16-second car to help pay for it all. Not exactly what I dreamed of. And then even after seminary I kind of made new 10 year goals for myself, aaaand let's just say my kids aren't the genius child prodigies that were supposed to make me rich. So I guess I'm just bad at predicting stuff.

I should say that I don't mean that my years have been a waste or that I don't love my kids or that I don't enjoy the giant behemoth of a van that I'm driving now. I don't even mean that I'm unhappy with where I am in life. I'm just saying that often, especially at times like these when we just entered into a New Year which happens to be a significant birthday year for me, it's really easy to just question. To wonder about what we've done, if we've done enough, and how we'll be remembered. And maybe even... regret, as is the case for me at times.

Regret that I didn't do more. Regret that I didn't achieve more. Regret that I'm just *not more*. As in, not more compared to my peers, not more according to some of the expectations I've perceived from others, not more up against my own pseudo-goals that I've pseudo-set for myself.

Even as I was struggling with these texts we get today for this 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas, while I was doing research and studying trying to write this meh-at-best sermon, while I kept waking myself up while doing all of this, I couldn't help but wonder why is it still so hard for me to write these things? Why do I still have so much trouble when it comes to sermonizing and

preacherdizing (aside from the made up words)? Why does it seem like, even after nearly 2 decades of this role, am I not as good as I think I should be?

And to be honest, when we're up against texts like this, it's not hard to see why I was having trouble. Not only do we get these basically every 2<sup>nd</sup> Sunday of Christmas if we even observe it that year, but we also had this same-ish gospel reading on every Christmas Day *and* Christmas Eve, which we *do* get every year. I know, for Christmas Eve we only read it as we light the candles, but still.

It's a familiar text, albeit a bit confusing as far as familiar texts go. And because of its familiarity and confusability, we might gloss over it and not really hear or look for what God is saying to us. Sure, it's not exactly the same as the Christmas text as the first part is optional and so I opted not to use them today, and we get a few more verses at the end, but it's still basically the same.

It's like, yeah we know that in the beginning there was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God. We know that all things came into being through him. And we know that ultimately the Word became flesh. I mean again, this is what we talk about every Christmas so why do we need to go over it again just a couple Sundays after? No wonder we often skip this day in favour of Epiphany, which honestly I was like *this* close to doing because of this text.

But as I was feeling what I was feeling and reflecting on what I was reflecting on, this text... this oh so familiar and confusing text... jumped out at me. Or at least, one part of it did. In verse 12 it says that we are given the "power to become children of God."

The power to become children of God?

But where, pray tell, does this power come from? The text says not from blood, not from the will of the flesh, not from the will of humans, but from God.

Sure, it says that we have to accept and believe that God's Word made flesh has some good things to teach us, but that power still comes to us from God. We might question and be confused and maybe even doubt, but that power still is revealed to us in God. We might fail, be bad, and not live up to our goals and expectations, but that power still is given to us by God.

See in spite of all that we've done or left undone, in spite of where we are or aren't in life, in spite of our age whether young or old or some weird hybrid of the two like I like to tell myself I am, God chooses us, calls us, and brings us into community.

This doesn't mean that we shouldn't set goals for ourselves. This doesn't mean that we will hit every target we aim for. This doesn't even mean that we won't have regrets. But it does mean that whatever failures we might find ourselves in, we continue to be welcomed into God's kingdom. Whatever brokenness or pain we might feel, we are healed by God's grace. Whatever bad feelings we might be feeling about ourselves, others, or the world in general, God still gives us the power to be children of God.

So I think it's appropriate that we start this and every Christmas season with this text and end it right after the New Year with it as well. The Nativity show us who Jesus is as God with us, and then as we move into the rest of the year, it is revealed who we are as God's children. And we

are reminded that life, wherever it may take us, whatever it might throw at us, and whoever it gives to and takes away from us, isn't truly life until we can grasp how we are flawed but forgiven, how we are saved in our struggles, how we are so imperfectly perfect and perfectly imperfect, but God chooses to be with us, care for us, and give us meaning and purpose anyway.

So as we move from this Christmas season into the time after the Epiphany, may we never lose sight of who we are and whose we are, that even when we feel like we're not up to snuff, we can be reminded that actually, we totally are. All thanks and praise be to God. Amen.

#### **HYMN OF THE DAY:** Good Christian Friends, Rejoice (#288)

#### **APOSTLES' CREED (TOL p. 12)**

Together with all blessed by God's truth, 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 be children of God, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with "by your great and powerful mercy, O God," and you are all invited to respond with **hear our prayer**. By your great and powerful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, we worship and praise you, for you have strengthened and blessed us with your love. May we continue to be faithful witnesses to your grace, that the world might see and recognise your presence among us always. By your great and powerful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer**.

Holy God, you have satisfied us with your gracious peace in our communities and congregations, and we strive to be faithful in our ministry and service to others. Continue leading and guiding us in all that we do, that your love be reflected through us. 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 Christ Lutheran Church in Kelowna and their pastor Barbara Groote; and for all the shared ministries across our Synod and national church. By your great and powerful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, your creation is beautiful and diverse and you nourish it with the elements that it needs. Strengthen us in our stewardship of this planet, that we can be responsible with all that you've entrusted to us. By your great and powerful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, you have declared to us your statutes and judgements, but we continue to take matters in our own hands and trust our wisdom over yours. Forgive us of our arrogance and continue to teach and guide us and all world leaders that we might learn the humility and grace to live with one another in 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 great and powerful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, you have entered in the world with a Word of grace and peace, bringing healing and redemption. We pray for this healing for those in our midst who are sick, mourn, or lonely, that we all might continually recognise your love through our community and relationships. We pray 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; Ngan Kew; and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

By your great and powerful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Holy God, you are with us through all times and in all places, and you connect us with each other and all the saints as the one body of Christ. May those that we've loved and lost remain in our hearts always, that their lives continue to live on through and in us and in our community. By your great and powerful mercy, O God, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in your everlasting presence in our lives, 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 holy and almighty God, through your Son, Jesus Christ, who resides with us and in our communities and hearts, joining us with the choirs of angels, the hosts of heaven and the church on earth, to praise your name with this unending hymn:

**HOLY, HOLY, HOLY (TOL p. 14)**

## **THANKSGIVING AT THE TABLE**

O Lord our God, we worship you and praise you, for you have strengthened us as a community and body, and you bless us, as your children with peace. You provide for us and protect us, and you dwell among us through your Son Jesus, your Word made flesh, whom you have sent to us to live with us as one of us, teaching us your statutes and judgements as well as your grace and mercy.

For on the night that he was betrayed, your Son Jesus sat with his friends for a meal, where he took the bread, and with thanksgiving he broke and shared it with them saying, “Take and eat, this is my body broken for you, do this for the remembrance of me.”

Then after they ate, he in the same way took the cup, gave thanks, and shared that with them and said, “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 God’s presence is made tangible and real, even as we declare this mystery of faith:

**Christ has died.**

**Christ is risen.**

**Christ will come again.**

All honour and glory be to you, O God, through Jesus Christ, for your presence among us, in this assembly, through this bread and cup, in your Word made flesh. May your name be blessed, with Christ and the Holy Spirit, as one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

## **LORD'S PRAYER (p.17)**

Gathered around the presence of 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 present among us.

**Thanks be to God.**

## **COMMUNION**

### **COMMUNION HYMNS**

Lamb of God p. 17

Love Has Come (#292)

Of the Father's Love Begotten (#295)

### **PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION**

Holy God, you have given us more than we could ask or imagine, bringing us together as a community, calling us your own children, and feeding us with your love and truth. Strengthen us to be your hands and feet in the world, that your gospel be heard and known, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

## **SENDING**

### **BLESSING**

May God's Word, Wisdom, and Wonder,  
who turns our mourning into joy,  
bless and comfort you with everlasting presence,  
and lead you into the incarnation of truth and love, now and forever. **Amen.**

**SENDING HYMN:** The Bells of Christmas (#298) vs. 1, 4, 5, 6

### **DISMISSAL**

Go in peace, live lives of love.

**Thanks be to God.**