



GRACE LUTHERAN CHURCH

OF SOUTH BURNABY, BC

EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH IN CANADA

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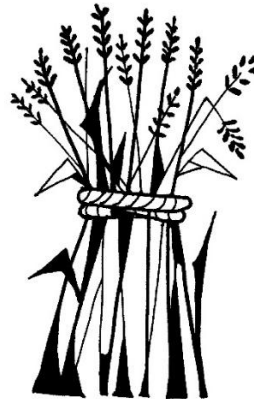
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Eighth Sunday after Pentecost

July 19, 2026

ELW Service of the Word

It is an age-old question: why is there evil in the world? In the parable of the wheat and the weeds Jesus suggests that both grow together until the harvest. With Paul, we long for the day that all creation will be set free from bondage and suffering. Having both weeds and wheat within us, we humbly place our hope in the promises of God, and from the Lord's table we go forth to bear the fruit of justice and mercy.

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 hən̓q̓əmiṇəm̓ (Musqueam) and Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish) peoples.

GATHERING

GATHERING SONGS: Rise, Shine, You People (665)
Rise Up, O Saints of God! (#669)

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.

CANTICLE OF PRAISE (p. 213)

PRAYER OF THE DAY (p. 215)

Almighty God, we thank you for planting in us the seed of your Word. By your Spirit, help us to receive it with joy, live according to it, and grow in faith and hope and love, through Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

WORD

FIRST READING: Isaiah 44:6-8

A reading from Isaiah.

There are no other gods besides God: the word of the LORD does not fail to come to pass. We can trust in God, through whom Israel—and we—are redeemed.

⁶ Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel,
and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts:
I am the first, and I am the last;
besides me there is no god.

⁷ Who is like me? Let them proclaim it;
let them declare and set it forth before me.
Who has announced from of old the things to come?
Let them tell us what is yet to be.

⁸ Do not fear or be afraid;
have I not told you from of old and declared it?
You are my witnesses!
Is there any god besides me?
There is no other rock; I know not one.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

PSALM: Psalm 86:11-17

¹¹ Teach me your way, O LORD, and I will walk in your truth;
give me an undivided heart to revere your name.

¹² **I will thank you, O Lord my God, with all my heart,
and glorify your name forevermore.**

¹³ For great is your love toward me;
you have delivered me from the pit of death.

¹⁴ **The arrogant rise up against me, O God, and a band of violent people seeks my life;**

they have not set you before their eyes.

¹⁵ But you, O Lord, are gracious and full of compassion,
slow to anger, and full of kindness and truth.

¹⁶ **Turn to me and have mercy on me;**

give your strength to your servant, and save the child of your handmaid.

¹⁷ **Show me a sign of your favor, so that those who hate me may see it and be put to shame;
because you, LORD, have helped me and comforted me.**

SECOND READING: Romans 8:12-25

A reading from Romans.

For Paul, true spirituality means that we experience the reality of the Spirit, which enables us to pray as God's children, keeps us in solidarity with creation, and gives us unseen hope that God will liberate us and creation from bondage to death and decay.

¹² So then, brothers and sisters, we are obligated, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—¹³ for if you live according to the flesh, you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. ¹⁴ For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. ¹⁵ For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received a spirit of adoption. When we cry, "Abba! Father!" ¹⁶ it is that very Spirit bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, ¹⁷ and if children, then heirs: heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if we in fact suffer with him so that we may also be glorified with him.

¹⁸ I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us. ¹⁹ For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God, ²⁰ for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope ²¹ that the creation itself will be set free from its enslavement to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. ²² We know that the whole creation has been groaning together as it suffers together the pains of labor, ²³ and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. ²⁴ For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope, for who hopes for what one already sees? ²⁵ But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

The word of the Lord.

Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION (p. 216)

GOSPEL: Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43

The holy gospel according to Matthew.

Glory to you, O Lord.

Jesus tells a parable about the coexistence of good and evil in this world. God's judgment will remove all evildoers and causes of sin, but not until the end of human history.

²⁴ [Jesus] put before [the crowds] another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field,²⁵ but while everybody was asleep an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat and then went away. ²⁶ So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. ²⁷ And the slaves of the householder came

and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' ²⁸ He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' ²⁹ But he replied, 'No, for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. ³⁰ Let both of them grow together until the harvest, and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.' "

³⁶ Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." ³⁷ He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; ³⁸ the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, ³⁹ and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. ⁴⁰ Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. ⁴¹ The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, ⁴² and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. ⁴³ Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"

The gospel of the Lord.

Praise to you, O Christ.

SERMON

Holy God, by your Spirit may your Word be spoken, your love felt, and your grace proclaimed, through Jesus Christ. Amen.

Have you ever lost friends?

I don't mean losing them to death, although that does happen and probably has happened to each one of us here. I don't mean losing to them in a game or competition of some kind, although that happens as well... just not to me really, because I'm pretty good at stuff. And I also don't mean losing friends because we've misplaced them somewhere, as last I checked they aren't exactly our property like that.

What I do mean is, have you ever had a falling out of some kind, a disagreement of sorts, or perhaps a fundamental shift in paradigm that made it clear that the relationship just couldn't continue? Maybe someone lied. Misrepresented themselves. Or even done something that irreparably and perhaps unforgivably harmed the other.

I've once lost several friends basically at the same time, over something really silly. It happened several years ago when Facebook was still at the height of its popularity. I randomly decided one day to edit the birthdate in my profile to be on that day when it actually wasn't, and then I repeated that action again and again daily for a few weeks. It was pretty funny to get the all these birthday wishes every day over this whole period of time.

Of course, some friends who knew when my actual birthday is caught on right away and just laughed it off. Then maybe within a week or so, some others started being like, "hey wasn't it just your birthday a couple days ago?" and were a bit more miffed. And then slowly but surely, I noticed my friend count dropping in such a way that I knew it wasn't a coincidence.

Honestly, it really didn't bother me too much as I think the friend lists on social media is kind of convoluted anyway and not really an accurate reflection of real-life friends. I wasn't even sure who the 10 or 20 people that left were, but I do remember thinking, "You're unfriending me over of a fake birthday gag? Like, that is your dealbreaker? Really?"

Maybe this is an extreme example, but I've heard of other superficial reasons that ended relationships. Things like cheering for the wrong sports team, or using the wrong platform on our phones and devices, or even holding celebrities or others of influence in the wrong regard. That might sound silly to us, but still, that begs the question, what is worth losing friends over?

Who they voted for? What their ideals are around gender and sexual orientation? What religion they hail from and their interpretation of it? These still might seem like superficial dealbreakers for us, but lately, they seem to have become non-negotiables for our communities, churches, and families, at least in my experience in this part of the world.

Believe it or not, this kind of segregation isn't new. We've always had reasons to draw lines in the sand. We've always had justifications to divide and separate. We've always had these dealbreakers.

I think this is the mentality that Jesus is trying to point out in our gospel lesson for us today. Continuing in his series of "the kingdom of heaven is like" parables that include some sort of agricultural reference, Jesus talks about this landowner who is maliciously attacked by an enemy who planted weeds in his garden. Oh, the humanity. Talk about dealbreakers, I'd drop anyone to comes between me and my nicely manicured lawn. But who planted the weeds and why isn't the point. It's what happens because of it that is.

In an attempt to fix this dastardly deed, the landowner's employees offer to efficiently and effectively remove the weeds and bring things back to the way they were and how they should be. I don't blame them, as that would be probably be any of our knee-jerk reactions. Just remove whatever that is bothering us, cut out whatever that we don't like, expel or excommunicate whatever that doesn't agree with us. Yank out the weeds in order to save the day. Separate the bad from the good to rectify the situation. Divide, detain, and destroy, in order to maintain balance and justice.

I mean, weeds are established as bad and no good for anyone. We know that weeds suck the resources that the other more desired plants need to survive. Just the very presence of weeds threatens the wellbeing of the wheat.

So I guess that makes them dispensable. Their label of "invasive species" makes their value is less than the others. The narrow definition that we give them becomes our dealbreaker.

Well, that's the case of actual literal weeds, but Jesus isn't talking about actual literal weeds. Rather, by his own explanation, he's talking about people. He's talking about the definitions and labels we have for each other. He's talking judgement and consequences based on identity, position, and our assumptions of them, but perhaps not in the way we might think.

Just the other day I saw on my YouTube feed some video with the title, "6 People you must NEVER help for ANY reason", with the "never" and "any" in full caps. And it even had the disclaimer "biblical warning" in brackets. I'll admit that I shook my head and made sure I didn't

watch the video long enough to give them the satisfaction of a view, but I did read the comments. And, thankfully, someone listed out those 6 types of people so I really didn't have to watch the video at all. The list included: those that cause division, those who refuse to work, those who manipulate and take advantage of generosity, those who approve of or practice evil, those who refuse to repent, and those who promote false doctrines.

And, perhaps to the untrained eye, that might seem like an ok list. Biblical, even. Seeing the many positive comments I sifted through confirmed as much. These are the people we'd rather not help. These are the sinners that we are better off without. These are the dealbreakers that should not go unchecked.

But the thing that I noticed as I read that list is that... well, we can fit anyone anywhere on it if we wanted to badly enough. We can shoehorn anyone we don't like into this category of people we shan't help. We can, with the help of some mental gymnastics, justify denying, ostracizing, and hating on others. In the name of Jesus, no less.

Is this what we were saved for?

Well, Jesus doesn't actually say to do this, be this, or even think this. In fact, he doesn't even allude to it. Rather, when the servants in the parable suggest to separate the weeds from the wheat, Jesus says to let them be. Allow them to live. Maybe even love them.

Whoa whoa whoa, we might think, that's a bit much. Loving them will be perpetuating evil in the world. It'll be allowing sin to run rampant. It'll give permission to lie, cheat, steal, and even change our birthdays on social media. We can't have that, can we?

But that's just it. We decide against our own definitions what needs to be fixed. We size up by our own criteria what is good or bad. We create our own dealbreakers as to who is in and who is out. We make our own boxes and boundaries around those we hate and declare that God must hate them too.

But Jesus reminds us through this parable that it isn't for us to judge what needs fixing. It isn't up to us to figure out who is good and who is bad. It isn't up to us to save the world.

Rather, that is for God in God's place. We are the witnesses of this grace, the proclaimers of this good news, and the bearers of this love, but we aren't the saviours of the world. We aren't the judges of the people. We aren't the gardeners who decide who is wheat and who is weed or even those who are a bit of both.

So instead of finding the reasons to segregate, instead of looking for ways to divide, instead of drawing those lines and putting up those walls between us and them; let's find the reasons to welcome all people, let's look for the ways we can be united in spite of how apart we seem, let's define each other not by the colour of our skin, the gender we identify with, or how we fit into whatever label or category, but by the grace of God that brings us all together as unique parts of the same community and kingdom. Let's learn to love.

Love in spite of difference. Love in spite of diversity. Love in spite of our definitions and dealbreakers.

So in this season after Pentecost, let's look at each other with newfound eyes, not to decide who is wheat or weed, good or bad, in or out, but instead to see how we fit in together as siblings equally loved, forgiven, and saved in this one body of Christ. Thanks be to God. Amen.

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

CREED (p. 217)

Together with all of God's people, 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

Given hearts purified by the Spirit, let us pray for the church, the world, and all those in need. Each petition will end with, "God, by your saving mercy," and you all may respond with **hear our prayer**. God, by your saving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you teach us your ways and we walk in your truth, and you strengthen us to do your work. May we always be inspired by your love, that we be able to reflect it out onto all we meet. God, by your saving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, you give us undivided hearts and in reverence to your name, we proclaim your good news to all people. Strengthen us in our ministry, that your love for all people be reflected in all that we do. We lift up in prayer our neighbouring faith communities; those who use our 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 Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church in Langley and their pastor Kristen Steele who is still on sick leave; and for St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Vancouver and the pastors and leaders that serve them. God, by your saving mercy, **hear our prayer**.

O Lord, we thank you with all our heart for the great love you have toward us, shown through all that you have made and provided. May our care for your creation be reflective of your grace, that its beauty and wonder be a testament to all that you have done. We continually

pray for this world and everything in it, that all might live in harmony and peace and mutual respect. God, by your saving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, the arrogant and violent rise up against your ways, but our eyes are always set on you. Grant your wisdom to all world leaders and politicians that together we can work our way toward peace. And we 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, Surafiel, Nohom, and Elita Gabramikael. God, by your saving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, you turn to us in mercy and give us your strength and salvation. Be with all among us who are sick, who mourn, or who feel lonely, that your love and grace fill us with the joy and peace of your promises. Especially we pray for Kathy and family; Bryan and Chona; Ron, Tess, and Mineko; Greg and Aikiko; Bev and family; John and Betty; Sukhwant; Pastor Kristen; Pastor Carol; Laura; Kandie; Will; Chris; Larry; Walter; Piet; Kelly; Betty; Ngan Kew (nan CUE); Matt; Patty; Sarasawathi (SAR-ah-sa-WAH-tee); and all those we name aloud or quietly in our hearts at this time...

God, by your saving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

O Lord, your favour for us is shown through your promises and grace, granting us citizenship in your kingdom and a place in your family. Your help and comfort are seen in the lives of the saints that inspire us in our own faith and ministry. May we be strengthened by the connection we have with them and each other, and may your community last forever. God, by your saving mercy, **hear our prayer.**

Into your hands, O God, we commend all for whom we pray, trusting in the gracious restoration of our souls, given to us by Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

PEACE (p. 218)

The peace of Christ be with you always.

And also with you.

CANTICLE OF THANKSGIVING (p. 219)

THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD (p. 220)

Let us pray.

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God,
we give you thanks and praise.

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, wisdom for life with you. For your Word of life, O God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God,
we give you thanks and praise.

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever.
Amen.

LORD'S PRAYER (p. 221)

Gathered into one by 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.**

SENDING

BLESSING (p. 221)

The Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord's face shine on you with grace and mercy.
The Lord look upon you with favor and give you peace.
Amen.

SENDING SONG For the Fruit of All Creation (#679)

DISMISSAL (p. 222)

Go in peace. Serve the Lord.
Thanks be to God.