

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH
EPIPHANY 4 - CELEBRATING ILLUMINATION
Reverend John R. Hanson
Sunday, January 30, 2022, 8:00 & 10:30 a.m.

PRELUDE

Julie Hanson

INTRODUCTION

Grace is not just a “yes” to love and compassion and acceptance and forgiveness. Grace is also a “no” to hatred and apathy and condemnation and exclusion. The “yes” is often easy to speak and to receive, but the “no” is much harder and can lead us into confrontation and conflict. Yet, the “no” is as important as the “yes,” for without either one, grace is not really grace at all. May we be led into a better understanding of God’s grace.

THEME AND VERSE

God alone is our refuge and hope, our shelter and protection. From our very first breath to our last, God’s love and compassion never fail. We are to bear witness to God’s acts of mercy and love and to proclaim God’s glory to all who will listen. Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations.” (Jeremiah 1:4)

PRAYERS OF THE PEOPLE

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION God is good. **All the time.**

GOSPEL: Luke 4:21-30

After Jesus reads and claims Isaiah’s prophecy for himself, Jesus confronts the people of Nazareth with a “No!” because, like their ancestors, they are offended by the idea that God can work in and through “outsiders,” because the people refused to accept the teachings of the prophets. This offends them, and so they attempt to kill Jesus.

²¹Then [Jesus] began to say to [all in the synagogue in Nazareth,] "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." ²²All spoke well of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth. They said, "Is not this Joseph's son?" ²³He said to them, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself!' And you will say, 'Do here also in your hometown the things that we have heard you did at Capernaum.'"

²⁴And he said, "Truly I tell you, no prophet is accepted in the prophet's hometown. ²⁵But the truth is, there were many widows in Israel in the time of Elijah, when the heaven was

shut up three years and six months, and there was a severe famine over all the land; ²⁶yet Elijah was sent to none of them except to a widow at Zarephath in Sidon. ²⁷There were also many lepers in Israel in the time of the prophet Elisha, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian."

²⁸When they heard this, all in the synagogue were filled with rage. ²⁹They got up, drove him out of the town, and led him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they might hurl him off the cliff. ³⁰But he passed through the midst of them and went on his way.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION All the time. **God is good!**

CONFESSION AND FORGIVENESS

We gather together to worship

in the name of the Father, and the Son, + and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory God. We come before you, loving God, have mercy on us, for we have all sinned and fallen short of your glory.

We make our confession to you. You understand our corrupted nature much better than we do, and you show us your light and hope. You anticipate our need for forgiveness and provide a way of healing which is open to every sincere soul. You have tireless patience, relentless mercy, and refuse to be put off by our foolishness. Continue to heal us, loving God, in ways we really need. Wipe out our shame. Restore to us the joy of your saving grace and grant us your peace. Amen!

The love of Christ Jesus is patient and kind. His love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. His love will never end. May we live secure in the saving love of God with guilt wiped away and hope restored.

In the name of Christ Jesus with the Father and the Holy Spirit, we pray. Amen!

SHARING OF THE PEACE

CHILDREN'S SERMON

"Where do I fit in?"

PRAYER OF THE DAY

You have called us, Lord Jesus, not because we have earned it but because you are gracious. You heap your goodness upon us, and the complexity of your ways exceeds all our ability to comprehend. Increase in us the desire to respond to your call and the capacity to love as you would have us love. Create in us the desire that we might go where you send us and speak the Word that you give us. In your precious name we pray. Amen!

READING: Jeremiah 1:4-10

God calls Jeremiah to be a prophet and consecrates him at his conception before he was in the womb. Jeremiah's task is to preach God's word in the midst of the difficult political realities of his time. He is to make God known not only to Judah but also to the nations.

⁴Now the word of the LORD came to me saying, ⁵"Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born, I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations."

⁶Then I said, "Ah, Lord GOD! Truly I do not know how to speak, for I am only a boy."

⁷But the LORD said to me, "Do not say, 'I am only a boy'; for you shall go to all to whom I send you, and you shall speak

whatever I command you. ⁸Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, says the LORD."

⁹Then the LORD put out his hand and touched my mouth; and the LORD said to me, "Now I have put my words in your mouth.

¹⁰See, today I appoint you over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to pull down, to destroy and to overthrow, to build and to plant."

READING: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Christians in Corinth prided themselves on their noble and godly gifts. Paul reminds them that God gives us many gifts through the Holy Spirit, but the purpose behind all of them is love. Paul defines the kind of love that shown in Jesus Christ (what love is and what love is not).

¹If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. ³If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

⁴Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant ⁵or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; ⁶it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. ⁷It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

⁸Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. ⁹For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; ¹⁰but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end. ¹¹When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. ¹²For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. ¹³And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

HYMN

“Ah, Holy Jesus”

Green # 123

Ah, holy Jesus, how hast thou offended that we to judge thee have in hate pretended?
By foes derided, by thine own rejected, O most afflicted.

Who was the guilty? Who brought this upon thee? Alas, my treason,
Jesus, hath undone thee! 'Twas I, Lord Jesus, I it was denied thee; I crucified thee.

Therefore, kind Jesus, since I cannot pay thee, I do adore thee, and will ever pray thee,
Think on thy pity and thy love unswerving, not my deserving.

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SERMON - *What does your champion look like? The glory of God is often revealed when and where it is least expected. Take note, lest the glory of God pass through our gathering unnoticed.*

HYMN

“Stop the Clanging”

TUNE Green # 50

Let my voice be ever changing from the noise I used to be;
End my useless ceaseless clanging, set my captive audience free.
Let love, your love, love and more love as from you now flow from me.

Let me hear the word from your lips, teach me how the world should be.
Fill me now with your pure purpose; let me not be full of me.
Let love, your love, love and more love tune me to your harmony.

I would seek no greater gift, Lord, than to learn to love like you;
No great wisdom nor profound word can achieve what love can do.
Let love, your love, love and more love also be my gift for you.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

WORDS OF INSTITUTION

THE LORD'S PRAYER

BLESSING & PRAYER FOR COMMUNION

God of incomparable love, you have shown us in Jesus of Nazareth that all people are embraced by your graciousness. Enable us to relax ourselves into that fellowship that living closer to you and to one another, we may experience the pulse and purpose of our existence and be enabled to live lovingly and bravely as brothers and sisters of the one Savior. Amen!

BENEDICTION & SENDING

God loves Gentile as he does Jew, and sinner as he does saint. God promises we will never walk alone. There is no fault in our lives that is beyond God's power to forgive nor any gift that is too small for God to celebrate and use. God is transforming all things into a beauty exceeding our holiest expectations.

We have seen his glory; may we serve him gloriously.

May God, the Father, Jesus, the Son and the Holy Spirit bless us. God bless the ground beneath our feet, God bless the roads which we travel, God bless all with whom we stay each night and day.

Amen! We go to love and serve in Jesus' name!

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Worship, as an action, continues to change.

Use this space to guide your thoughts as the Spirit may lead you.

Use this time to center your distractions in order to help activate your worship.

The two major themes in this week's reading stand out in clear relief: Firstly, God's grace is not always a comfortable and gentle thing to experience. Integral to God's free grace is the work of justice which distresses the comfortable and self-assured (the "no") even as it comforts the distressed (the "yes"). Jeremiah is told that his message will not only build up but break down; The love that Paul speaks about is not an easy or comfortable way to follow but challenges our self-centeredness and lethargy toward others; and finally, Jesus makes it clear that his ministry is not "friendly" and non-disruptive, but a life-changing, all-inclusive confrontation of self-righteousness and injustice.

Secondly, as with Jesus' near execution in Luke, those who choose to follow Christ in his life-giving work, must expect that they will find themselves in confrontation with jealousy and those who propagate it. This will inevitably lead to sacrifice and suffering. The work of grace is

not all acceptance and healing. Sometimes it is a wounding battle – not least because we are called to love even those we challenge.

As Christ-followers, it is all too easy to seek to bring Jesus and his Gospel into service of our own desires and agendas. It is easy to accept grace for ourselves, but deny it to others – even in Jesus' name. It is easy to remain silent when Jesus is used as justification for abuse, oppression, greed, hatred or arrogance. But grace does not call us to silence, or to compliance with that which hurts and destroys.

The strength of grace is to resist what keeps others from grace – defending the powerless, speaking for the voiceless and lifting up the downtrodden – all while still seeking to love those against whom we stand.

Inevitably, this justice-focused grace, will bring us into situations of confrontation and conflict, but they can be navigated with both strength and compassion, if we will learn from Jesus. Who, in your community, needs justice-focused grace to defend and heal them (the “yes”)? Who needs justice-focused grace to confront and disturb them (the “no”)? And where, in our own hearts, do we need grace to confront and disturb us?!

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