

Gettysburg United Methodist Church

July 7, 2021

Isaiah 55:1-11

(NRSV)

*Ho, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and you that have no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
2 Why do you spend your money for that which
is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not
satisfy?
Listen carefully to me, and eat what is good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
3 Incline your ear, and come to me;
listen, so that you may live.
I will make with you an everlasting covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
4 See, I made him a witness to the peoples,
a leader and commander for the peoples.
5 See, you shall call nations that you do not
know,
and nations that do not know you shall run
to you,
because of the Lord your God, the Holy One of
Israel,
for he has glorified you.
6 Seek the Lord while he may be found,
call upon him while he is near;
7 let the wicked forsake their way,
and the unrighteous their thoughts;
let them return to the Lord, that he may have
mercy on them,
and to our God, for he will abundantly
pardon.
8 For my thoughts are not your thoughts,*

*nor are your ways my ways, says the Lord.
9 For as the heavens are higher than the earth,
so are my ways higher than your ways
and my thoughts than your thoughts.
10 For as the rain and the snow come down from
heaven,
and do not return there until they have
watered the earth,
making it bring forth and sprout,
giving seed to the sower and bread to the
eater,
11 so shall my word be that goes out from my
mouth;
it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

Meditation

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

Grace describes the way God relates to us, and with all people. Grace is an undeserved gift that can't be earned, which we do not merit, of which we are totally unworthy. Grace is God's absolutely free gift to us. Grace accepts us where we are and loves us because we are. "But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us." (Rom. 5:8)

God's grace begins working in our lives when God reaches out to seek a relationship with us. Remember Jesus' parable of the lost sheep? (Lk. 15:1-7) There was a shepherd who had one hundred sheep. When one of them was lost, he left the ninety-nine behind and went looking for the lost one, not stopping until he found it. That's how God's grace works in our lives. When we go astray (and all of us do — "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have all turned to our own way." Is. 53:6a), we break our relationship with God. It's not possible for us to restore

(Continued on page 2)

“Amazing grace, . . .

(Continued from page 1)

that relationship on our own, just as a lost sheep can't find the way back to the flock—that's why we need God's grace.

The Good Shepherd comes looking for us even before we know who he is. It's grace that reaches out to us when we don't realize our need to reach out to God. It's grace that shows us that our lives are empty without a relationship with Christ. Grace tells us that God loves us as we are and desires a relationship with us. Grace informs us that God loves and forgives us no matter who we are, what we've done, or how far away we've wandered from God. Grace convicts us of our sin, and convinces us that Jesus died to forgive our sin and reconcile us with God. The grace that leads us along the road to faith is called Prevenient Grace, meaning the grace that goes before.

God's grace continues when that relationship becomes real, when we say “yes” to God's grace, and find a loving relationship with God. It's nothing we can earn or merit or achieve for ourselves. It's the gift of God's grace. Remember the story of the Prodigal Son? (Lk. 15:11-32) The younger son begged to receive his inheritance early from his father, went to a foreign land, and wasted it in extravagant living. When it was all gone, he had nothing, not even food to eat. He thought that he could go back to his father, and *maybe* his father would accept him as a servant. He no longer believed that he deserved to be called a son. But his father welcomed him with open arms as his son, and celebrated his return, even though the son had done nothing to deserve it. That moment when he received his father's embrace was an act of grace, an act that restored his relationship with his father even though it was undeserved.

So it is with God and us. Grace leads us to faith in Christ; faith is our acceptance of God's offer of repentance and forgiveness (we're saved by grace through faith). For some of us this act of reconciliation happens at a particular moment in time; for others it may be a gradual process. Either way, it's an act of God's grace. The aspect of grace that reconciles us with God is called Justifying Grace.

Once we're reconciled with God, God's grace continues to work in us and through us. Grace teaches us to see others through the eyes of Christ, to accept them as they are, to try to understand them and see the world through their eyes. Grace empowers us to love others as ourselves, and to work for freedom, peace, and justice for all people. Grace has prepared good works in advance that God wants us to do. Grace can transform our character to make us more like Jesus—more loving, more joyous, more peaceful, more accepting of others, and more willing to give and accept help. Grace brings us together with other people as we learn to love and forgive. The grace that continues to work to transform our lives and uses us to transform the world is called Sanctifying Grace.

Do you recognize the ongoing work of God's grace in your life? Do you know his love and see his hand at work? God is always gracious to us. May he teach us to treat others with grace equal to the grace God has shown us.

Prayer

Most gracious God, we thank you for your unfailing love for us. When we go astray, you seek us as a shepherd seeks lost sheep. You restore our relationship with you, and enable us to restore our relationships with others. You work through us to help others and to transform the world. Give us faith to accept your grace, and help us to see your presence in our lives.

Give us the strength to be gracious to others. Teach us to accept others as they are, to see their needs and concerns, and to reach out to them in love. Equip us to work for peace with justice in the world. We pray especially for people with health concerns, for people who have lost family members and friends, and for people who face any kind of material or spiritual need. Heal them and make them whole in the power of your grace. We pray for America, and for all the nations of the world, for the preservation and increase of freedom and peace.

May your grace guide us every day. Fill us anew with the joy and peace of your Holy Spirit, that we may worship you in all that we say and do; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

. . . how sweet the sound.”

Adams Rescue Mission Golf Tournament

Join the 7th Annual Golf Tournament to benefit the Adams Rescue Mission at The Links at Gettysburg on September 18. Register online at www.adamsrescuemission.org. Sponsorship opportunities still available. Call Heidi with questions 717-334-7502 x 26.



Bountiful Blessings

Once again we are in need of more shampoo, tooth paste and dish liquid for this program. Any donations can be placed in the labeled bin near the office doors. Thank you so much.

Car Wash

The participants of the Bountiful Blessings program will be providing a free car wash, from 9:00 - noon on Saturday, July 17th, to you, the congregation of GUMC, as a thank you for your support and for providing supplies when the “cupboard was getting bare”. Please stop by on that day as it will help these folks with their responsibilities to the program as well. Some will also be inside cleaning the tables in Fellowship Hall and wiping pews.

Weekly Prayer Concerns

To add someone to this prayer list, please call the church office.

This week's list (as of 7/6/2021) is:

Rodney Truscott
Penny Daugherty
Scott Bowers
Imogene Hunt's brother
Florence Davis
Mary Fleming
Ben Fisher
Rev. Meredith Ball
Family and friends of Charles Reeder (Cathy Libera's father who passed on 6/27)
Chuck and Rochelle Lutz
Judy Woolston
Erin Voss (Bill & Dale Shade's niece)

Members in Assisted Living / Skilled Care Homes:
Edith Bulman (SpiriTrust Lutheran, York);
Shirley Hammond (Morning Glory, Littlestown); Missy Legay (Moul Home, York); Peggy Reynolds (Quincy-cottage, Waynesboro);
Gloria Swingler (Country Meadows-apartment, Mechanicsburg)

Members with Limited Mobility:

Butch Carter, Betty Cook, Joyce Dye, Barbara Evans, Pearl Keckler, Raymond Koenig, Chuck Lutz, Ruth Anna Polley, Wilma Schai-ble, Betty Schulteis, June Spencer

Change to Weekly Mailings

Since we have resumed using worship bulletins on Sundays, these devotional mailings will be biweekly (instead of weekly) for July and Aug. We will return to monthly newsletters in Sept. Sunday bulletins will be mailed to homebound persons, and will be posted on our website. Our next mailing will be in two weeks. We will continue to live-stream our Sunday morning worship services every week on Facebook.

HYMN

Amazing Grace

John Newton, Anonymous 19th C. USA melody

1. Amazing grace! How sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost, but now am found;
was blind, but now I see.

2. 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,
and grace my fears relieved;
how precious did that grace appear
the hour I first believed.

3. Through many dangers, toils, and snares,
I have already come;
'tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,
and grace will lead me home.

4. The Lord has promised good to me,
his word my hope secures;
he will my shield and portion be,
as long as life endures.

5. Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
and mortal life shall cease,
I shall possess, within the veil,
a life of joy and peace.

6. When we've been there ten thousand years,
bright shining as the sun,
we've no less days to sing God's praise
than when we'd first begun.

John Newton was born in London in 1725, and died in 1807. Newton went to sea at age 11, and eventually became the master of a slave trading ship. Under the influence of George Whitefield and John and Charles Wesley, he was converted to Christ, gave up the sea, and became an ardent abolitionist. Newton was ordained in 1764, and served churches in Olney and Woolnoth in England. He wrote numerous hymns, and (with William Cowper) produced the 1779 *Olney Hymns*, which was the first Anglican hymnal printed for parish use.

Amazing Grace was first published in the 1779 *Olney Hymns* collection. It describes the power of God's grace that first converted Newton to Christ, and thereafter transformed his life. The final verse in our hymnal was not written by Newton. It can be traced anonymously to the early 1800s, and was first added to *Amazing Grace* in 1910. Earlier versions of the tune may be found in 1820s. It was associated with this text in 1835 in William Walker's *Southern Harmony*. One of the best-loved hymns ever written, *Amazing Grace* resonates with our own experience of God's gracious love and mercy, and our hope that his grace will lead us throughout this life and bring us home to him in heaven. It's number 378 in our hymnal.

Prayer Chain

To put any concerns on the Prayer Chain on June 20 or later, please call Sue at (717) 357-0983.

Altar Flowers

The altar flowers for Sunday, July 11, are presented by Sharon Brown in honor of her mother's eighty-first birthday.

We greatly appreciate your continued faithful donations to GUMC during this time of continuing change. Your faithful giving is greatly appreciated, and we are very grateful for your continued generosity.

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