

15th January, 2023

The paper-version Service



To Begin: Find a Bible and a comfortable place. If

safe, light a candle and read prayerfully through the service. If you have access to worship music, choose a song and listen to it as you begin or read, or even sing, the song from this Sunday's Service.

Opening Prayer: Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open, all desires known, and from whom no secrets are hidden: cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit, that we may perfectly love you, and worthily magnify your holy name; through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Song:

In the darkness we were waiting
Without hope without light
Till from heaven You came running
There was mercy in Your eyes
To fulfil the law and prophets
To a virgin came the Word
From a throne of endless glory
To a cradle in the dirt

Refrain

Praise the Father, Praise the Son
Praise the Spirit three in one,
God of glory, Majesty,
Praise forever to the King of Kings

To reveal the kingdom coming
And to reconcile the lost
To redeem the whole creation
You did not despise the cross
For even in Your suffering
You saw to the other side
Knowing this was our salvation
Jesus for our sake You died



Refrain ...

And the morning that You rose
All of heaven held its breath
Till that stone was moved for good
For the Lamb had conquered death
And the dead rose from their tombs
And the angels stood in awe
For the souls of all who'd come
To the Father are restored

Refrain ...

And the Church of Christ was born
Then the Spirit lit the flame
Now this gospel truth of old
Shall not kneel shall not faint

By His blood and in His Name
In His freedom I am free
For the love of Jesus Christ
Who has resurrected me.

Refrain ...

Sermon by Rev Howard Wright.

Read **Ephesians 2:1-10. Matthew 5:38 – 6:4: Responding Gracefully**

Last week we started our series on Vision and Values, considering why we exist as a church and why do we do what we do, the answer is, we are, Responding to God's love. This week we look at our value of being a people of grace – in other words we respond to God's love gracefully.

God has demonstrated 'amazing grace.' Grace is defined as loving-kindness, as unmerited favour, or as in the mnemonic:

God's Riches At Christ's Expense.

We spoke last week about the grace of God as we shared together the extent of love that God lavishes upon us that he would come in Jesus and die for us to restore us to relationship with him. And the bible speaks extensively about God's grace. See among many others: Romans 5:15; John 1:16 and Hebrews 4:16.

We must receive this grace, which is a free gift, in order to receive the love and life God offers both now and eternally. And human gifts of value make a difference to us, how much more a gift of this magnitude!

We are to live gracefully. In our Matthew 5 reading we are challenged to love our enemies, 'that we may be children of your Father in heaven' and to even 'Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.' Earlier in the same chapter we can read how 'Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God' (5:9). In response to God's love we are to be like God! We are to live graciously toward others, and in doing so, we take on the family likeness and join in the family business.

We are to love neighbour, friend and even enemy. Bearing unforgiveness and remaining bitter towards others is toxic to us. It is not in any way graceful. It is ugly and damaging to all our relationships, especially with God! Read 1 John 4:7-8 and Leviticus 19:18.

Receiving God's grace toward us must make a difference. In the parable of the unforgiving servant (Matthew 18:21-35) a servant is forgiven a huge and unpayable debt. Yet this servant fails to recognise the grace received, he doesn't celebrate his freedom and invite others to share his joy, instead

he demands that a colleague who owes him a few pennies pays up, and when the colleague can't he sends him to jail. The unforgiving servant is judged severely for his failure to receive and share forgiveness. We must receive the grace of God to enter freedom and life, and we must share that same grace with others.

Unforgiveness and bitterness is ugly, love is graceful. Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

We are to live generously. God is generous to us and in our Matthew reading we are encouraged to be generous to all. Do we live with a willingness to share or do we cling on to what we have? Possessions possess us if we are unable to share. Winston Churchill said, *'We make a living by what we get. We make a life by what we give.'* Paul reminds us that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Corinthians 9:7).

We are challenged to share our 'stuff', our money, our time, and skills, even with our enemy, with a willingness to go the extra mile.

We are to live humbly. Our Matthew passage reminds us seek God's favour, i.e. grace and not do good deeds for show to live humbly (See Matthew 6:1 and read Philippians 2:3-4).

Live graciously and demonstrate the Kingdom. In our Ephesians reading we can see that we are visual aids, demonstrating the grace of God to the world and coming ages (v.7). And, we are created for 'good works' (v.10) including, of course, to love generously!

We live in response to God's love, his amazing grace. And so we are to live gracefully, living lovingly, generously, humbly as children of God. 2 Timothy 2:1 *'Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus.'*

Prayers: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.* (Philippians 4:4-6)

- Pray for this day, and the coming week.
- Pray for justice, mercy, peace, and hope.
- Pray for individuals, neighbours, and for family & friends.
- Pray for the Church.



Collect: Second Sunday after Epiphany. Eternal Father, who at the baptism of Jesus revealed him to be your Son, anointing him with the Holy Spirit: grant to us, who are born again by water and the Spirit, that we may be faithful to our calling as your adopted children; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. **Amen.**

The Lord's Prayer: *Almighty God, in Christ you make all things new: transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace, and in the renewal of our lives make known your heavenly glory; through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.* **Amen.**

Blessing to be declared over yourselves, The Good Shepherd, the communities around us and our whole nation. 'The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace.' (Numbers 6:24-26 NIV).

The Notices: We are now holding services in the building on Sundays at 8am and 9.30am, and are live streaming the 9.30 service. This Paper Service will continue for the moment and is generally available the week after the service.

- Tea and Chat & Bowls: Wed. 18th Jan. at 2pm, Church Hall and Church.
- Coffee and Questions: 25th Jan at 11am in Church Hall.
- Tea and Praise: TBA
- COGS Tots: 2nd Mondays. COGS Tinytots: Monday mornings.
- Messy Church: Second Sundays of the month.