

Traditional Home service Sunday 2nd Jan

OPENING PRAYER

Almighty God, who wonderfully created us in your own image and yet more wonderfully restored us through your Son Jesus Christ: grant that, as he came to share in our humanity, so we may share the life of his divinity; who is alive and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever.
Amen

PRAYER OF PENITENCE

Christ the light of the world has come to dispel the darkness of our hearts.

In his light let us examine ourselves and confess our sins

God of mercy, we acknowledge that we are all sinners. We turn from the wrong that we have thought and said and done, and are mindful of all that we have failed to do. For the sake of Jesus, who died for us, forgive us for all that is past, and help us to live each day in the light of Christ our Lord.
Amen.

PRAISE

Let everything be said and done in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God through Jesus Christ. Sing psalms, hymns and sacred songs:

Let us sing to God with thankful hearts.
Open our lips, Lord:
and we shall praise your name.

HYMN 1 (*Amazing Grace! How Sweet the Sound*)

READINGS - Ephesians 1.3-14
John 1.10-18

TALK

CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, his 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

Spend some time praying for our nation, our community and our families.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

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. Lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours, now and for ever. Amen.

HYMN 2 (*At the Name of Jesus Every Knee Shall Bow*)

CONCLUSION

May God the Son give you grace to live in the light of his coming as redeemer and judge. And the blessing of God almighty, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

HYMNS TO USE

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 has 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 Yes, 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 The earth shall soon dissolve like
snow,
the sun forbear to shine;
but God, who called me here
below,
will be forever mine.

1 At the name of Jesus
ev'ry knee shall bow,
ev'ry tongue confess him
King of glory now;
'tis the Father's pleasure
we should call him Lord,
who from the beginning
was the mighty Word.

2 Humbled for a season
to receive a name
from the lips of sinners
unto whom he came,
faithfully he bore it
spotless to the last,
brought it back victorious
when from death he passed;

3 Bore it up triumphant
with its human light,
thro' all ranks of creatures
to the central height,
to the throne of Godhead,
to the Father's breast,
filled it with the glory
of that perfect rest.

4 In your hearts enthrone him;
there let him subdue
all that is not holy,
all that is not true;
crown him as your captain
in temptation's hour;
let his will enfold you
in its light and pow'r.

5 Christians, this Lord Jesus
shall return again
in his Father's glory,
with his angel train;
for all wreaths of empire
meet upon his brow,
and our hearts confess him
King of glory now.

Sermon - Adrian Morton

Ephesians 1:3-14 Starting the year with a firm foundation

As we start this New Year, I want to speak about Grace again.

It is so foundational for us.

And so I thought its a good message as we head into 2022.

I thought I'd start by giving you some real examples of bad poetry:

Real examples of Bad Poetry from a secondary aged children

2. His thoughts tumbled in his head, making and breaking alliance like underpants in a tumble dryer.

3. The little boat gently drifted across the pond exactly the way a bowling ball wouldn't.

4. McMurphy fell 12 stories, hitting the pavement like a paper bag filled with vegetable soup.

5. Her hair glistened in the rain like nose hair after a sneeze.

6. Her eyes were like two brown circles with big black dots in the centre.

7. Her vocabulary was as bad as, like, whatever.

9. The hailstones leaped from the pavement, just like maggots when you fry them in hot grease.

10. Long separated by cruel fate, the star-crossed lovers raced across the grassy field toward each other like two freight trains, one having left York at 6:36 p.m. travelling at 55 mph, the other from Peterborough at 4:19p.m. at a speed of 35 mph.

11. The politician was gone but unnoticed, like the full stop after the Dr. on a Dr Pepper can.

12. John and Mary had never met. They were like two hummingbirds who had also never met.

13. The thunder was ominous sounding, much like the sound of a thin sheet of metal being shaken backstage during the storm scene in a play.

15. Even in his last years, granddad had a mind like a steel trap, only one that had been left out so long it had rusted shut.

If you received a pass mark for that kind of poetry you would be on the receiving end of Grace.

You would have received underserved favour.

And Grace is that... received underserved favour

God has already done something in history, and we can live in the benefits, or in another word, the blessings of that.

Thinking about my school days. I didn't enjoy history at all. I gave it up in my 3rd year... so I didn't do it for O level. Throughout my marriage, Louise has constantly been aware of how little I know of history. I've got the world wars but beyond that my knowledge is sketchy at best. I remember Louise being surprised that I didn't know who the suffragettes were for example?

Nowadays, I've actually come to like and appreciate history, and understand how important it is.

Its only by understanding our history do we understand our present.

And that is true for our family situation. How our families work... the relationships within them.

Its true of our nation...

And also of course, its true of our faith. Our faith is based on history.

In this Ephesians reading, Paul lays out what God has done for us and the benefits, or blessings we receive.

And he uses history...

v4 - he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in love.

So the Father planned this work of Christ event before history.

Salvation in Christ, the cross and resurrection is an event in history of course.

v3 of our reading - ... the Father.. has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing.

The word spiritual here isn't a helpful translation.

It actually means blessings that pertain to the Spirit.

The work of the Spirit appropriates this event for the believer.

In other words, The Holy Spirit takes the historical salvation event and makes it a reality for the believer in the present day.

AND The Holy Spirit guarantees our inheritance beyond history....

So Grace is rooted in history.
Its already happened...

The blessings that come with grace we already have.

I want to list a few of them...

v4 - again, *he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless in love.*

How would you react if someone came up to you and said, "Hi, I'm Adrian, I'm holy and blameless...."

It would be an arrogant claim if we thought being holy and blameless depended on our own performance.

But of course it doesn't... it depends solely on what God has done.
Its grace, it's undeserved favour.

v5 - *He destined us for adoption as his children through Jesus Christ, according to the good pleasure of his will.*

My primary identity in life is now a child of God.
And He's happy about that.
It brings Him pleasure that we are His people!
God doesn't just put up with us.
He wasn't reluctant to save us.

He's not begrudgingly offering us a glorious inheritance.
He delights in us!

<Facebook story of child being adopted...>

Sometime we miss the transformative power of knowing we are adopted into God's family.

V7 - In him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace.

Redemption is acting to save someone from error or evil.

Or the action of buying ones freedom in the case of slaves etc

[Juan Carlos Ortiz, an Argentinian pastor described grace like this:](#)

Watching a trapeze show is breathtaking. We wonder at the dexterity and timing. We gasp at near-misses. In most cases, there is a net underneath. When they fall, they jump up and bounce back to the trapeze. In Christ, we live on the trapeze. The whole world should be able to watch and say, "Look how they live, how they love one another. Look how well the husbands treat their wives. And aren't they the best workers in the factories and offices, the best neighbors, the best students?" That is to live on the trapeze, being a show to the world. What happens when we slip? The net is surely there. The blood of our Lord, Jesus Christ, has provided forgiveness for ALL our trespasses. Both the net and the ability to stay on the trapeze are works of God's grace. Of course, we cannot be continually sleeping on the net., If that is the case, I doubt whether that person is a trapezist.

All these blessings, that we are holy and blameless, we are adopted, redeemed, forgiven...

Are works of His Grace.
And they are rooted in history.

Already happened.

And much of the Christian life is understanding that truth, and learning to live from that place of Grace.

And so it has nothing to do with how clever we are.

How righteously we behave.

How many good character traits we have.

We haven't got to try and be good enough for God.

We haven't got to meticulously follow religious rules and regulations.

God has already made us right with himself.
We are already holy and blameless before Him.

This living under grace should be a place of freedom, joy and peace.

It's a place of knowing the living God accepts us.

That he cannot love us more and he cannot love us less.
So there is really no point in trying to impress him with our awful attempts at good deeds.

One of the objections to grace is that it can lead to the thinking.

Well, if God accepts me just as I am.
If he cannot love me any less, I'll just keep on sinning.
It doesn't matter what I do.

In the end I'll just walk in and accept my free gift of God's forgiveness.

Whilst many Christians are worried by that, it's interesting that Jesus didn't seem to be.

And He told stories about His Father who also didn't seem to be worried about that.

So, in the parable of the prodigal son, the Father wasn't afraid of giving the prodigal son a kiss instead of a lecture.

He chose to give him a party instead of probation.

<Talk about preacher speaking on John 8 – woman caught in Adultery
you know the story – pharisee brings a woman caught in adultery.
OT law said she needed to be stoned.
What would Jesus say?

He bent down and wrote in the sand.
And eventually said, "If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her."
And they all left.

"Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" Jesus said.
"No one, sir," she said. "Then neither do I condemn you," Jesus declared.

The preacher then said nothing more....

Everything inside me was screaming, but it then says "Go now and leave your life of sin."...

Yes of course, sin is serious.
But it comes after Grace.

In that account of the woman caught in adultery, we have to let Jesus' statement "Then neither do I condemn you," really sink in.

We have to understand the implications of that statement first.
That Jesus first accepted her.
Didn't condemn her.

Before moving on to "Go now and leave your life of sin."...

Deep down, if I was honest, I had a bent, a leaning towards wanting to live under law.

Wanting to live by my performance, wanting to justify myself, rather than relying on God's grace.

In reality, Grace doesn't work like what some Christians fear.

When we have experienced God's grace and are living in His grace we are less likely to sin.
We don't want to.

<Marriage illustration... You want to please the one who loves you and who you love...>

It's the same with Grace.

When we truly understand and are living in God's grace.

We want to avoid Sin.
Because we know it spoils our relationship with Him.

Not from His point of view, but from our point of view.

CONCLUSION

As we start this New Year, my prayer is that whatever happens over this coming year.

I'm sure there will be challenges as well as joys.

My prayer is that in everything you will know His Grace.

That your foundation in life will be to rest in His grace.

And I pray that the Holy Spirit will remind you often that you have an inheritance waiting for you.

Amen.