



Sunday 11th July 2021

Dear friends,

If you have the Internet, you will find a video to accompany this sheet on YouTube from Sunday morning – search for Isle of Man Methodist Church and you will find it on our YouTube channel.

Opening Prayer

I come this day to worship You,
 Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
 Open my heart, to receive Your love,
 my soul to receive Your Spirit
 and my mind to know to Your truth.
 For Your glory.
 Amen.

Hymn: StF 565 - Only by Grace

Read or sing the words below:

Only by grace can we enter,
 only by grace can we stand;
 not by our human endeavour,
 but by the blood of the Lamb.
 Into your presence you call us,
 you call us to come.
 Into your presence you draw us,
 and now by your grace we come,
 now by your grace we come.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions,
 who would stand?
 Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
 by the blood of the Lamb.
 Lord, if you mark our transgressions,
 who would stand?
 Thanks to your grace we are cleansed
 by the blood of the Lamb.

Only by grace can we enter ...

Gerrit Gustafson

Words and Music: (c) 1990 Integrity Music.
 CCLI 2421471

Let us pray together

Mighty God, in you is our hope and our strength, you are a very present help in times of trouble. Thank you for your protection and provision. Forgive us for the times we have forgotten your presence and remind us today of the constancy of your care. Give us ears open to hear your voice and hearts open to receive your love. Through Christ Jesus our Lord we pray. Amen.

Today's Readings:

Romans 3:21-25
 John 3:16-17
 Ephesians 5:1

A time of reflection

When we meet as churches, we often use as a prayer of blessing the “words of the grace” taken from 2 Corinthians 13:14 ; "Now may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, evermore, amen."

What do we actually mean by these words?

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

This is a rough old world. So often on our news screens we glimpse again something of the uncontrolled, darkness of the human heart. And we long for something better. We long for graceful lives, and graceful communities, and ways that make for peace.

But there is more to the GRACE of the lord Jesus Christ than just being gracious – as the dictionary puts it: “courteous, kind, and pleasant, especially towards someone of lower social status”

Biblical grace is far deeper, far more important than that. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is the unmerited unparalleled love being shown to the undeserving – even to me.

Because we are all in the same boat - Scripture does not say, "They have sinned, or he or she has sinned", but rather, "All Have Sinned!" That includes you, that includes me. Sin is a term from archery – meaning to miss the mark, to fall short. For us as Christians, the mark missed is likeness to Jesus – I wonder if we entered a “Jesus Christ look-a-like competition” would we be good entries...?

The story is told of Enoch Powell once attending a country fete and he was very amused to see an ‘Enoch Powell lookalike competition’. On the spur of the moment he entered, incognito. He came third!

None of us consistently hit the mark of being true ‘imitators of God’ - we are ALL reliant on this extravagant, outrageous GRACE of the Lord Jesus Christ

Secondly we pray for *the love of God*. That simple phrase, trips off the tongue so easily we sometimes forget how radical, unconditional and extravagant that love is I get a glimpse of it occasionally at both the macro and the micro level.

The Isle of Man is one of the best spots in the British Isles for stargazing. When I contemplate deep space and think of the staggering immensity of our galaxy of

at least 100 billion stars, and that galaxy being just one of more than 170 billion galaxies in the observable universe, I remember that in John 3:16 the Greek word used is God so loved the cosmos...the immense love of God is not just shown towards humanity – Christ came into the world in order that all of creation might be redeemed...

And at the micro level I catch a glimpse of that divine love when I see, acts of giving, sharing, love between individuals. Love expressed in lifts given, gifts donated, food banks supported, night-shelters staffed, credit unions volunteered for, it goes on and on - that often unglamorous work, reaching out practically with the love of God, and tapping into the massive energy that creates and sustains the world.

Because the love of God isn't a fuzzy, candy-floss niceness, it's a love that is so strong and so active that God himself came into this messy broken world -a love which leads to blood running down a rough cross of wood. A Love that ricochets around society and brings it to life and gives it hope, a love that convicts us and compels us, that challenges us and comforts us. A love that drives us to work for justice and peace, an end to pollution, a fair sharing of this world's resources, it's that love which leads to radical action that we pray for each other, and commit to share with one another.

Finally, *the fellowship of the Holy Spirit*. This often embodied, given shape, in the Church. The fellowship that we call the Church may get some things wrong but it gets much more right.

I know we're not perfect, but church communities of whatever denomination or none, in this island as elsewhere, should stand out as beacons of hope in society, steadily, faithfully, living and sharing the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God – and they are only able to do this because they are fellowships in the Holy Spirit and working in HIS power and strength.

As embassies of the Kingdom of God we dare to say to any who'll listen: 'This is the law at work within this community: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind and with all your strength. And your neighbour as yourself. And while you're about it, love your enemies too. That's the deal.' – and the power to do these things comes from being a living vibrant fellowship in the Holy Spirit.

So all these things –and we've only scratched the surface - we pray for each other time and again, and it is right to do so – the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ, the LOVE of God, and the FELLOWSHIP of the HOLY SPIRIT – may these three things be with you all, forevermore. Amen.

Let us pray together

Lord our God, our Father in heaven, we thank you for letting us receive so much that is good in all circumstances on earth.

We thank you that we can have joy in life in spite of our shortcomings, mistakes, and worries.

You bless us with heavenly gifts, so that rejoicing, we can walk on earth as if in heaven.

Keep the gifts of your Spirit alive in us.

Keep alive in us everything that Jesus Christ was, everything he is, and everything he will be on earth for all people.

Help us to daily know your grace, feel your love, enjoy true fellowship, and generously share the same with others. Amen.

Hymn: StF 440 - Amazing grace

- 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 God's grace has taught my heart to fear,
his 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;
God's 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 And, when this heart and flesh 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 first begun.

John Newton (1725-1807) (alt.)
CCLI 2421471

A prayer of blessing

May the GRACE of our Lord Jesus Christ, the LOVE of God, and the FELLOWSHIP of the HOLY SPIRIT be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.

