



Week Four:
GRACE THAT FORMS

Worship Helps

SUNDAY MAY 19, 2019

KEY VERSE

My little children, I'm going through labor pains again until Christ is formed in you. — Galatians 4:19 (CEB)

SUGGESTED VERSES FOR WORSHIP

Galatians 4:4-7, 19-20

KEY CONCEPT

Through Jesus Christ, born to redeem those under the law, we receive the gift of adoption and we are formed by the Spirit as children of God.

CALLS TO WORSHIP

Call to Worship #1 (Responsive)

*Leader: Come to Christ, that living stone,
rejected by the world, but in God's sight chosen and precious.*

**People: We have responded to Christ's call,
and seek to be built into a spiritual house,
a living reminder of God's presence on earth.**

*Leader: Once we were no people, but now we are God's people,
called out of the darkness into God's marvelous light.*

Therefore, we sing with the Church in all ages:

**People: Blessed be your name, O God, our Redeemer.
By your mercy we have been born anew to a living hope
through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.**

[UM Book of Worship, #456]

WELCOME/SPOKEN WORD INTRODUCTION

Good morning! Grace and peace to you from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. If you've been with us in worship (or small groups) over the last few weeks, these words may sound familiar to you. If you haven't, that's OK. We're glad you're here today – let me explain.

We find ourselves not only in the middle of May, but also in the middle of our journey through the New Testament letter Galatians, written by the Apostle Paul, and known as the “Gospel of Grace.” (A first clue to the nature of the letter is Paul's greeting “grace and peace to you...”)

Now the middle of May has become the time of year when we anticipate graduations – from college, high school, even middle school and kindergarten. As each school year concludes, teachers assess the formation of their students – do they know the requisite subjects, perform to a given standard. Those that do “graduate” to the next class.

Back in Galatians, Paul has heard that the Christians he has taught and helped form have turned away from his teaching. They are being convinced by others to follow the Jewish Law rather than accepting the free grace of salvation in Christ Jesus; they are taking a step backwards and it pains their teacher. It may only take a moment to come to know Christ and receive the gift of salvation and adoption as a child of God. It takes a lifetime of grace that then forms us, from the inside out, into the image and likeness of Christ. Grace that forms – John Wesley called that sanctifying grace.

Friends, grace transforms, grace embraces each other and our differences, grace clothes us in new life, and grace forms us into the likeness of Christ. Let us worship God and give thanks for God's amazing grace!

PRAYERS, LITANIES, ETC.

Opening Prayer #1

*Almighty and everlasting God,
in whom we live and move and have our being,
you created us for yourself,
so that our hearts are restless until they find rest in you.
Grant to us such piety of heart and strength of purpose
that no selfish passion may hinder us from knowing your will,
and no weakness from doing it.
In your light may we see life clearly
and in your service find perfect freedom;
Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

[UM Book of Worship, #459]

Opening Prayer #2

*God, like a bakerwoman,
you bring the leaven which causes our hopes to rise.
With your strong and gentle hands, shape our lives.
Warm us with your love.
Take our common lives and touch them with your grace,
that we may nourish hope among humanity.
We pray trusting in your name, through Jesus our Christ. Amen.*

[UM Book of Worship, #469]

Prayer of Illumination

Holy God,
author of the Word made flesh,
scribe holding the pen of your Apostle Paul:
open us to your Spirit,
that as scripture is spoken and your Word proclaimed,
your grace may transform, clothe, form, and sustain us
that we may bear the fruit of your perfect love
to the glory of Jesus Christ,
in whose name we pray. Amen.

[UM Worship & Song Worship Resource, #75, adapted for this series]

Statement of Faith

We are children of God.
We have been water-washed and Spirit-filled.
We're dead to sin and alive in Christ.
We're done with law, and live under grace.
Our hearts are set on righteousness.
Our minds are fixed on life and peace.
Suffering is nothing, compared to the glory to come.
For we're heirs to the life Christ is bringing!
We are children of God!

[UM Worship & Song Worship Resource, #75, adapted for this series]

Prayer of Confession #1

Almighty God,
we confess that we are often swept up in the tide of our generation.
We have failed in our calling to be your holy people,
a people set apart for your divine purpose.
We live more in apathy born of fatalism than in passion born of hope.
We are moved more by private ambition than by social justice.
We dream more of privilege and benefits than of service and sacrifice.
We try to speak in your name without relinquishing our glories,
without nourishing our souls, without relying wholly on your grace.
Help us to make room in our hearts and lives for you.
Forgive us, revive us, and reshape us in your image. Amen.

[UM Book of Worship, #479]

Prayer of Confession #2

Gracious God,
our sins are too heavy to carry,
too real to hide,
and too deep to undo.
Forgive what our lips tremble to name,
what our hearts can no longer bear,
and what has become for us
a consuming fire of judgment.
Set us free from a past we cannot change;
open to us a future in which we can be changed;
and grant us grace
to grow more and more in your likeness and image;
through Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

[UM Worship & Song Worship Resource, #86]

Great Thanksgiving

See Week 2 Worship Helps for a Gospel of Grace/Eastertide Great Thanksgiving.

Sending Forth/Benediction #1

May the grace of God redeem you.
May the grace of God form you.
May the grace of God form us as the body of Christ.
May the grace of God convince you, in every situation, to love.
Go now to love others, even as Christ loves you.

[UM Worship & Song Worship Resource, #176, adapted]

Sending Forth/Benediction #2

Sisters and brother, we are not dismissed.
We are not just free to go. Christ sends us!
Go home. Make welcome the stranger in your midst!
Go work. Create spaces of justice and mercy!
Go learn. Sharpen the talents God has given you!
Go play. Rejoice in the wonder of God's creation!
Go in the power of the Spirit
to love and serve the Lord.
Go to help and heal in all you do.
Christ sends us! Thanks be to God!

[UM Worship & Song Worship Resource, #161]

CREATIVE ELEMENTS

Hymns

At the Font We Start Our Journey – TFWS 2114 [Eastertide]
Be Thou My Vision – UMH 451
Change My Heart, O God – TFWS 2152
Cry of My Heart – TFWS 2165
Freedom is Coming – TFWS 2192
God of Love and God of Power – UMH 578
Have Thine Own Way, Lord – UMH 382
How Firm a Foundation – UMH 529
I Want a Principle Within – UMH 410
Lord of All Hopefulness – TFWS 2197
Sanctuary – TFWS 2164
Love Divine, All Loves Excelling – UMH 384
Make Me a Captive, Lord – UMH 421
O Come and Dwell in Me – UMH 388
Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us – UMH 381
The Day of Resurrection – UMH 303 [Eastertide]
To Know You More – TFWS 2161
We Are God's People – TFWS 2220

Contemporary Music Themes

New life, spiritual formation, sanctifying grace, means of grace

Easter Symbol

Lamb – the lamb finds its way to becoming a symbol of Easter from strong Biblical ties – the role of the lamb in the Jewish Passover tradition and the identification of Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. And there are other Biblical stories of the lamb, including the parable of the lost sheep and Jesus identifying himself as the Good Shepherd.

“Grace that forms” is reminiscent of the role of the shepherd in the life of the lamb – caring for, searching for, protecting, moving to fresh pasture, even laying down his life.

- Consider this metaphor for a Children’s Moment, encouraging the children to accept Jesus as their shepherd who not only cares for them but teaches them to become more like him.
- Ask folks to identify the shepherds in their lives, who have led them to open themselves to being formed by grace. Lift these names as part of your corporate prayer time.

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