



Week Six:
GRACE THAT SUSTAINS
Worship Helps

SUNDAY JUNE 2, 2019

KEY VERSE

Let's not get tired of doing good, because in time we'll have a harvest if we don't give up. — Galatians 6:9 (CEB)

SUGGESTED VERSES FOR WORSHIP

Galatians 6:1-10

KEY CONCEPT

Grace frees us and sustains us to work for the good of all, bearing one another's burdens, and doing what is right.

CALLS TO WORSHIP

Call to Worship #1 (Responsive)

Leader: Make a joyful noise to God!

People: We give honor and praise and glory to God!

Leader: Lift up your prayers and praises to God!

People: We trust in God's knowledge, wisdom and insight.

Leader: Open your hearts to God!

People: In this time of worship, with shouts of joy and moments of quiet reflection, we know God is present with us, right now.

Amen!

Call to Worship #2 (Responsive)

Leader: Praise be to God who has freed us from oppression!

People: Praise be to God who has healed our wounded souls!

Leader: Let our hearts rejoice at God's redeeming love.

People: Let our voices raise in songs of thanksgiving for all that God is doing for us.

Leader: Come, let us worship the Lord with our whole hearts!

People: May our praise and voices resound with joy! AMEN.

[<https://www.ministrymatters.com/all/entry/3986/worship-connection-july-3-2016>]

Welcome/Spoken Word Introduction

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ! I realize these may sound like formal words to start our worship together, but this is our final week in with the Gospel of Grace. So, it seemed fitting to greet you as the Apostle Paul greeted the Galatians.

For the last six weeks, we've immersed ourselves in the 6-chapter letter written to an early church in turmoil. We took up the invitation of our bishop, Bishop Palmer, to join with other churches in our annual conference to study this "Gospel of Grace." Whether this is your first time here with us or you've been here each week of this series, I'm glad that you are here today; and I trust that you will be too.

Life is just down right hard. Can I get an "amen"? Life is hard. You try to do the right thing. You take one step forward only to find yourself ... two steps back. Temptations are all around. And, watch out if you happen to be caught doing something wrong! Amen? Amen.

I'm glad you are here today to hear this good news of grace. God's grace not only transforms our lives and cleanses and clothes us anew; God's grace not only forms us bit by bit in Christlikeness and bears the fruit of the Spirit in us; God's grace sustains us for the life-long journey of following Christ. God's grace sustains us as we seek to live as a new creation. God's grace sustains us as we work for the good of all and bear one another's burdens.

So let us not grow weary! God meets us in Word and Table, in prayer and service, in solitude and in community with God's sustaining grace!

PRAYERS, LITANIES, ETC.

Opening Prayer #1

God of fresh beginnings, you make all things new in the wisdom of Jesus Christ. Make us agents of your transforming power and heralds of your reign of justice and peace, that all may share in the healing Christ brings. Amen.

Opening Prayer #2

*O God, in mystery and silence you are present in our lives,
bringing new life out of destruction,
hope out of despair, growth out of difficulty.
We thank you that you do not leave us alone but labor to make us whole.
Help us to perceive your unseen hand in the unfolding of our lives,
and to attend to the gentle guidance of your Spirit,
that we may know the joy you give your people. Amen.*

[UM Book of Worship, #464]

Opening Prayer #3

*We praise you with joy, loving God,
for your grace is better than life itself.
You have sustained us through the darkness,
and you bless us with life in this new day.
In the shadow of your wings we sing for joy
and bless your holy name. Amen.*

[UM Worship & Song Worship Resource, #70]

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]

Prayer of Confession #2

You asked for my hands,
that you might use them for your purpose.
I gave them for a moment, then withdrew them,
for the work was hard.
You asked for my mouth to speak out against injustice.
I gave you a whisper that I might not be accused.
You asked for my eyes
to see the pain of poverty.
I closed them, for I did not want to see.
You asked for my life,
that you might work through me.
I gave a small part, that I might not get too involved.
Lord, forgive my calculated efforts to serve you -
only when it is convenient for me to do so,
only in those places where it is safe to do so,
and only with those who make it easy to do so.
Father, forgive me, renew me,
strengthen and sustain me,
send me out as a usable instrument,
That I might take seriously
the meaning of your cross. Amen.

[UM Worship & Song Worship Resource, #90, adapted]

Great Thanksgiving (Responsive)

This Great Thanksgiving is an adaptation of THE GREAT THANKSGIVING FOR EASTER DAY OR SEASON, United Methodist Book of Worship pp. 66-67, may be used in conjunction with A SERVICE OF WORD AND TABLE II in the United Methodist Hymnal, pp 13-14.

Leader: The Lord be with you.

People: And also with you

Leader: Lift up your hearts.

People: We lift them up to the Lord.

Leader: Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

People: It is right to give our thanks and praise.

*Leader: It is right, and a good and joyful thing,
always and everywhere, to give thanks to you,
Almighty God, creator of heaven and earth.
You formed us in your image and breathed into us the breath of life.
When we turned away, and our love failed,
your love and grace remained steadfast.
You delivered us from captivity,
made covenant to be our sovereign God,
and set before us the way of life.
And so, with your people on earth,
and all the company of heaven,
we praise your name and join their unending hymn.*

People: Holy, holy, holy Lord, ...

*Leader: Holy are you, and blessed is your Son Jesus Christ.
By the baptism of his suffering, death, and resurrection
you gave birth to your Church,
delivered us from slavery to sin and death,
and made with us a new covenant by water and the Spirit.
By your grace and mercy we have been born anew to a living hope,
cleansed by the same water and Spirit,
clothed in Christ Jesus,
and given an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading.
Once we were no people, but now we are your people,
bearing the fruit of your Spirit,
declaring your wonderful deeds in Christ,
who called us out of darkness into his marvelous light.*

*On the night in which he gave himself up for us, he took bread,
gave thanks to you, broke the bread, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Take, eat, this is the bread of life, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me."
When the supper was over he took the cup,
gave thanks to you, gave it to his disciples, and said:
"Drink from this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant,
poured out for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."*

*Leader: On the day you raised him from the dead,
he was recognized by his disciples in the breaking of the bread,
and, in the power of your Holy Spirit, your Church has continued
in the breaking of the bread and the sharing of the cup.
And so, in remembrance of these your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
we offer ourselves in praise and thanksgiving
as a holy and living sacrifice, in union with Christ's offering for us,
as we proclaim the mystery of faith.*

People: Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will come again.

*Leader: Pour out your Holy Spirit on us gathered here,
and on these gifts of bread and cup.
Make them be for us the body and blood of Christ,
that we may be for the world the body of Christ,
redeemed by his blood.
By your Spirit, make us one with Christ,
one with each other, and one in ministry to the world,
until Christ comes in final victory,
and we feast at the heavenly banquet.
Through Jesus Christ, with the Holy Spirit in your holy Church,
all honor and glory is yours, almighty God, now and forever more.*

People: Amen.

Sending Forth/Benediction #1

*May the grace of God surround you.
May the grace of God uplift you.
May the grace of God stand with you through the challenges ahead.
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

Bear one another's burdens. Correct one another with gentleness. Bless one another with signs of peace. Do not grow weary in doing what is right and you will reap a rich harvest of joy, hope, and love. Go in the peace of the Lord to share the Gospel of Grace. Amen.

CREATIVE ELEMENTS

Hymns

And Are We Yet Alive – UMH 553
Blessed Be the Tie That Binds – UMH 557
Forth in Thy Name, O Lord – UMH 438
God of Grace, God of Glory - UMH 577
Grace Alone – TFWS 2162
Hail the Day that Sees Him Rise – UMH 312 [Eastertide, Ascension Sunday]
I Want Jesus To Walk with Me – UMH 521
I'm Gonna Live So God Can Use Me – TFWS 2153
In the Midst of New Dimensions – TFWS 2238
Jesus, United By Thy Grace – UMH 561
Lift Every Voice and Sing – UMH 519
Living For Jesus – TFWS 2149
My Faith Looks Up to Thee – UMH 452
O Jesus, I Have Promised – UMH 396
Servant Song – TFWS 2222
Stand by Me – UMH 512
We Are Called – TFWS 2172
We Shall Overcome – UMH 533

Contemporary Music Themes

Sanctifying grace, personal holiness, Holy Spirit, social holiness, united in Christ, strength in tribulation, called to God's mission

Eastertide Symbol

Phoenix – the phoenix is an early Christian symbol of Resurrection, Eternity, and New Life. Legend tells that the phoenix will never die because it did not eat of the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. This legendary Arabian bird periodically burns itself to death and then emerges from the ashes as a new phoenix. It is easy to see, then, how this is a metaphor not only for the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus, but also for someone who has suffered hardship or trouble and begins to rebuild their life to be better than before.

This also makes the phoenix, a symbol of strength and renewal, an apt Eastertide symbol of “grace that sustains.”

We all have areas of our lives where we desire God's strength and renewal, where we want to know God's sustaining grace. Perhaps this Sunday, a first Sunday, in preparation for coming to the Lord's Table, you invite folks to name for themselves the specific area(s) of their life where they desire God's sustaining grace (the burdens they have to bear, the temptations that they face, the work that they have to do). Then bring these (silently or symbolically) to the Table, as they receive the sustenance of bread and cup and give thanks for God's sustaining grace.

[If it can be done safely, these could get written down on a paper that is then thrown into a fire, to carry forward the metaphor of the Phoenix.]

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