

Straight from the "Hart"

May 14, 2023 – Mother's Day



Happy Mother's Day. Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are really glad you are here and participating in today's time of worship. This Worship Series, *Embracing God's Friendship*, is loosely inspired by William A Barry, SJ 's "A Friendship Like No Other: Experiencing God's Amazing Embrace"



Creed Music Let's begin by singing This I Believe....

This I Believe (The Creed)

Words and Music: Ben Feilding and Marr Crocker
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Our Father everlasting, the all-creating One, God Almighty.

Through your Holy Spirit, conceiving Christ the Son, Jesus, the Savior.
I believe in God the Father, I believe in Christ the Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit,
our God is three in one. I believe in the resurrection, that we will rise again.
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

Our Judge and our Defender, suffered and crucified, forgiveness is in you.

Descended into darkness, you rose in glorious life, forever seated high.
I believe in God the Father, I believe in Christ the Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit,
our God is three in one. I believe in the resurrection, that we will rise again.
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

I believe in you. I believe you rose again. I believe that Jesus Christ is Lord.

I believe in life eternal, I believe in the virgin birth.
I believe in the saints' communion and in your holy church.
I believe in the resurrection, when Jesus comes again.

For I believe in the name of Jesus.

I believe in God the Father, I believe in Christ the Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit,
our God is three in one. I believe in the resurrection, that we will rise again.
For I believe in the name of Jesus.

I believe in God the Father, I believe in Christ the Son, I believe in the Holy Spirit,
our God is three in one. I believe in the resurrection, that we will rise again.

For I believe in the name of Jesus. For I believe in the name of Jesus.

For I believe in the name of Jesus.

Opening Prayer

Lord, we are here present ourselves and these gifts in the confidence that healing, hope, and wholeness will flourish through them and because of them. In Jesus name, Amen.

(ad. from © 2002 Herb Mather, GBoD in UM Worship in Song, Leader's Edition).

(Series) Responsive Call to Worship

R: Come, all who have experienced and entrusted their lives to the love of God in us. Come, all who desire to live faithfully in love and in God. God is love, and truly lives in us and we in him if we love one another.

C: We have come so that God's love will accomplish its mission in and among us. Inspired by 1 John 4:16,12b (VOICE)

Music And we know God's love will accomplish its mission because we know that everyone who believes in Jesus is born of God and overcomes the world because Jesus has overcome the world – so that we can have peace even in troubling times -- our victory is in our faith. (See 1 John 5:4-5, John 16:33)

What Faith Can Do

Words and Music: Scott Davis and Scott Krippayne © 2008 Word Music

Ev'rybody falls sometimes. Gotta find the strength to rise
from the ashes and make a new beginning.
Anyone can feel the ache. You think it's more than you can take,
but you're stronger, stronger than you know.
Don't you give up now; the sun will soon be shining.
You gotta face the clouds to find the silver lining.

Refrain

I've seen dreams that move the mountains,
hope that doesn't ever end, even when the sky is falling.
I've seen miracles just happen, silent prayers get answered,
broken hearts become brand new. That's what faith can do.

It doesn't matter what you've heard, "impossible" is not a word;
it's just a reason for someone not to try.

Ev'rybody's scared to death when they decide to take that step out on the water,
but it'll be alright. Life is so much more than what your eyes are seeing.

You will find your way if you keep believing.

Refrain

Overcome the odds when you do have a chance.
When the world says you can't, it'll tell you that you can!

Refrain

That's what faith can do!
 Even if you fall sometimes, you will have the strength to rise.

Reading 1

As people move toward a deeper friendship with God, one of the first steps is to deal with our fear of what that might require of us. For those who *overly* focus on verses like those in Hebrews which warn us that if we know the truth of salvation but deliberately continue to sin, then that is like turning our back on the Son of God, profanely trampling on his blood covenant which makes us holy, and insulting the Holy Spirit who brings God's mercy to us. And if we do that, then it will be a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (See Hebrews 10:26-31)



If we concentrate too much on perfect performance and the penalty of failure, it could potentially paralyze us from building a relationship with God.

But it is the same Bible author who says that God invites us to enter his salvation and rest in him. We can do this because Jesus, the Son of God, understands our weaknesses, for he faced all the same temptations we face and was subject to all the same weaknesses, yet did not sin. In obedience to the heavenly Father, he suffered for us, qualifying him to be the source of eternal salvation for those who obey him. Because of all of this, he is able to deal gently with us. Therefore, we are to come boldly to the throne of our gracious God, for there we will receive his mercy and we will find grace to help us when we need it most.

(See Hebrews 4:14-5:9)

Theme (R1 – Son, R2 – Mother, R3 – Those that passed by (Readers 1,2,3))



Reader 2



Reader 1



Reader 3

R1: Today's theme attempts to give us courage to approach God because he so deeply wants to share the compassion of his never-failing love that is there all the time even as we go off looking for it everywhere else. This story by Laura E Richards captures this idea and doubles as a tribute to mothers -- which will be read by myself as boy, Terri and the boy's mother, and Sara as the ones who pass by...

R1: Mother, are there really angels?

R2: The Good Book says so.

R1: Yes, I have seen the picture [they have of one in there]. But did *you* ever see one, mother?

R2: I think I have, but she was not dressed like the picture.

R1: I'm going to find one! I'm going to run along the road, miles, and miles, and miles, until I find an angel.

R2: That will be a good plan! And I will go with you, for you are too little to run far alone.

R1: I am not little anymore! I have trousers; I am big.

R2: So you are! I forgot. But it is a fine day, and I should like the walk.

R1: But you walk so slowly, with your lame foot.

R2: I can walk faster than you think!

R1: So they started, the child leaping and running,

R2: and the mother stepping out so bravely with her lame foot that the child soon forgot about it.

R1: The child danced on ahead,

R3: and presently he saw a chariot coming towards him, drawn by prancing white horses. In the chariot set a splendid lady in velvet and furs, with white plumes waving above her dark hair. As she moved in her seat, she flashed with jewels and gold, but her eyes were brighter than her diamonds.

R1: The boy ran up beside and moved along with the slow-moving chariot. "Are you an angel?"

R3: The lady silently stared coldly at the child. Then she spoke to her coachman. He flicked his whip, and the chariot sped away in a cloud of dust

R1: that filled the child's eyes and mouth, making him choke and sneeze. As he gasped for breath and rubbed his eyes,

R2: his mother came up and wiped away the dust with her blue gingham apron.

R1: That was not an angel!

R2: No, indeed! Nothing like one!

R1: Soon the child danced on again, leaping and running from side to side of the road,

R2: and the mother followed as best she might.

R1: By and by the child met the most beautiful maiden.

R3: She was clad in a white dress. Her eyes were like blue stars, and the blushes came and went in her face like roses looking through snow.

R1: I am sure you must be an angel!

R3: The maiden blushed more sweetly than before.

R3: You dear little child! Someone else said that, only last evening. Do I really look like an angel?

R1: You *are* an angel!

R3: The maiden took him up in her arms and kissed him and held him tenderly. "You are the dearest little thing I ever saw! Tell me what makes you think so!"

R1: But before the boy could answer,

R3: Her face changed as she saw something in the distance. "Oh! There he is, coming to meet me! And you have soiled my white dress with your dusty shoes, and pulled my hair all awry. Run away, child, and go home to your mother!

R1: She set the child down, not unkindly, but so hastily that he stumbled and fell;

R3: but she did not see that, for she was hastening forward to meet her lover, who was coming along the road. (Now if the maiden had only known, he thought her twice as lovely with a child in her arms; but she did not know.)

R1: The child lay in the dusty road and sobbed until

R2: his mother came along and picked him up and wiped away the tears with her blue gingham apron.

R1: I don't believe that was an angel after all.

R2: No! But she may be one someday. She is young yet.

R1: I am tired! Will you carry me home, mother?

R2: Yes. That is what I came for."

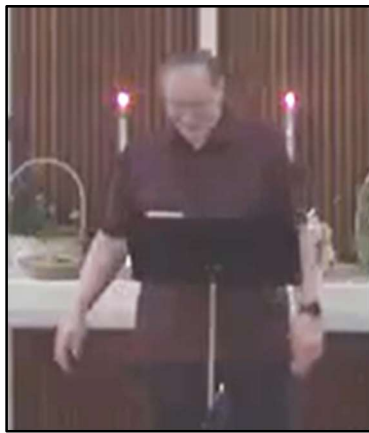
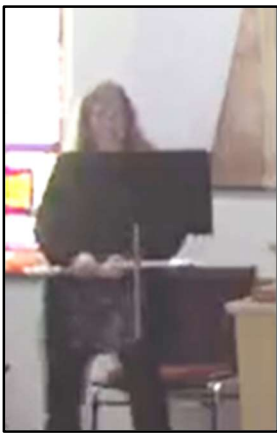
R1: The child put his arms around his mother's neck. She held him tight and trudged along the road, singing the song he liked best. Suddenly he looked

up in her face. “Mother, I don’t suppose *you* could be an angel, could you?”

R2: Oh, silly child! Whoever heard of an angel in a blue gingham apron? She went on singing and stepped out so bravely on her lame foot that no one would have ever known she was lame.

ad, from “About Angels”, by Laura E. Richards, in The Moral Compass: Stories for a Life’s Journey, edited, with commentary, by William J Bennett.

Music We often look everywhere else for what is right with us because we don’t recognize what we have or have taken it for granted. God has been, is, and always will be with us – let’s recognize that by honoring his name as we sing together – What a Beautiful Name It Is....



Praise Band members Left to Right: Kathy Novak, Chuck Williams, MaryJo Bell, Charles Kirpatrick and Jewell Henquist, Right – Randy Bell and Mary Jo Malott.



What a Beautiful Name

Words & Music: Ben Fielding & Brooke Ligertwood, © 2016 Hillsong Music

You were the Word at the beginning, one with God the Lord Most High.
Your hidden glory in creation, now revealed in You, our Christ.

What a beautiful name it is,

What a beautiful name it is,

the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a beautiful name it is, nothing compares to this.

What a beautiful name it is, the name of Jesus.

You didn't want heaven without us, so Jesus, You brought heaven down.
 My sin was great, Your love was greater. What could separate us now?
 What a wonderful name it is, what a wonderful name it is,
 the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a wonderful name it is, nothing compares to this
 What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus.
 What a wonderful name it is, the name of Jesus.

Death could not hold you, the veil tore before you,
 You silence the boast of sin and grave.
 The heavens are roarin', the praise of Your glory,
 for you are raised to life again.
 You have no rival, you have no equal.
 Now and forever, God you reign.
 Yours is the kingdom, yours is the glory,
 yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is, what a powerful name it is,
 the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against.
 What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus
 You have no rival, You have no equal.
 Now and forever, God you reign.
 Yours is the kingdom, yours is the glory,
 yours is the name above all names.

What a powerful name it is, what a powerful name it is,
 the name of Jesus Christ my King.

What a powerful name it is, nothing can stand against.
 What a powerful name it is, the name of Jesus. (3x)

Music There is a contemporary song that is based on (Ephesians 1:18-20) that says that that same power that raised Jesus from the dead resides in us. That is something we should long for as the bread and breathe, the essence, to our life in Christ. Let's prepare our hearts for prayer by singing...

Breathe

Words & Music: Marie Barnett arr. by Jeff Anderson © 1995 Mercy/Vineyard

This is the air I breathe, This is the air I breathe; Your holy presence living in me.

This is my daily bread, This is my daily bread; Your very Word spoken to me.

And I --- I'm desperate for you. And I --- I'm lost without you.

(Repeat all)

And I --- I'm desperate for you. And I --- I'm lost without you.
 I'm lost without you. I'm lost without you.

Prayers

Heavenly Father, you watch over us. Like trees, you plant us solidly in fertile soil, you provide ample water, you give us every opportunity to remain green and flourish, to be productive in our season. Therefore, it is our desire to submit to your cultivating hand -- by keeping in step with you and your people, with those who honor you, who delight in your rule, and who consistently meditate on your will to guide our lives. You will watch over us in love and cause us to prosper.

You especially made this possible by what you have done through your Son, Jesus Christ, and many of us have learned much of him through our first teachers, our mothers. We pause to pray our thanksgiving for those who have given us life, who have loved us, who have blessed us, and who have taught us by their example. Bless the strong women of faith who have nurtured us along our journey with a love both gentle and fierce, strong and humble, kind and true; loving hands that have worked so hard in raising us, cared enough to correct us, blessed us in ways we, as children, could not have fully realized. Where we have been so blessed, we give our grateful praise.

None of us are perfect, and so we ask for your compassionate grace upon all of us who are in need of your grace, and where and when possible, restoration and renewal. **Petitions** We also pray for * Randy Bell who is having tests this Wednesday, for Jes who has a studying abroad trip beginning June 1. * We continue to pray for Jim and MaryJo Mallot, both suffering from upper respiratory issues, * and Beverly Davidson (Charles Kirkpatrick's sister), who is recovering from surgery and facing another surgery. * There are others that we may know about but has not been written or announced, we ask you, God who knows every situation, that you undertake on the behalf of your creation and world. We ask this in the powerful name of Jesus who breathes his Spirit into us, empowering us to live the prayer he taught us to pray. **Lord's Prayer**

Intro to and Bible Reading On a Sabbath, Jesus was invited with religious leaders to the home of a Council member. They carefully watched him to see if he would do the illegal work of a non-emergency healing of a man who was there. Even though the healing *could* have waited a day, Jesus understands that the suffering of a person is always an emergency for that person, and relief should never have to wait... He tried to make that clear to them by their own laws, but they wouldn't answer.

Jesus observed the situation and told them stories to explain that the proud will be humbled, and the humble will be honored; that we should do things for and reach out to include those people who cannot repay you. Heaven will reward you for this.

Later, Jesus travels on. Crowds follow. He talked to them about the priority of following Jesus, and first measuring what that cost might be. Among those gathering to hear Jesus were tax collectors and sinners, which religious leaders noticed and condemned, for their way of faith was to disassociate from people who didn't live by their rules.

This inspired Jesus to tell three stories. A shepherd who watches over 100 sheep. One wanders off. The shepherd leaves the 99 to find the one, and when it is found there is great rejoicing.

A woman has 10 coins and loses one. She searches intensely. When she finds it, she calls all her friends to celebrate with her.

In case they miss the point, Jesus concludes each of these stories by saying that "There will be rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents." It is not recorded as Jesus saying it, but he certainly implies that you can't inspire anyone to turn to God if you are cutting yourself off from them and them from you. Faith is not meant to be exclusionary. Then ---

To illustrate the point further, Jesus told them this story: "A man had two sons. The younger son told his father, 'I want my share of your estate now before you die.' So his father agreed to divide his wealth between his sons. "A few days later this younger son packed all his belongings and moved to a distant land, and there he wasted all his money in wild living. About the time his money ran out, a great famine swept over the land, and he began to starve. He persuaded a local farmer to hire him, and the man sent him into his fields to feed the pigs. The young man became so hungry that even the pods he was feeding the pigs looked good to him. But no one gave him anything. "When he finally came to his senses, he said to himself, 'At home even the hired servants have food enough to spare, and here I am dying of hunger! I will go home to my father and say, "Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son. Please take me on as a hired servant.'"



“So he returned home to his father. And while he was still a long way off, his father saw him coming. Filled with love and compassion, he ran to his son, embraced him, and kissed him. His son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against both heaven and you, and I am no longer worthy of being called your son.’ “But his father said to the servants, ‘Quick! Bring the finest robe in the house and put it on him. Get a ring for his finger and sandals for his feet. And kill the calf we have been fattening. We must celebrate with a feast, for this son of mine was dead and has now returned to life. He was lost, but now he is found.’ So the party began.

Luke 15:11-24 (NLT)

Comment This celebration for the lost come home was certainly not because of who the younger is or what he did, but because of who God the father is and because of what his Son did. Our lives are not all that long in this world, choose to be on God’s side and boldly go and do what he would have us do because we are his.

Sermon Overcoming Friendship Fear – Forgiveness

We need not fear because God designed his creation to help us experience him. When we pay attention to these experiences. God uses them to help build, to grow, a deepening relationship with us. But when we look at our world and what we have done to ourselves, each other, and his creation, we also realize that we have fallen short how God wants us to be, and how he wants to be with us.

Like the younger son, sometimes we demand our blessings and run away with them. We exhaust his gifts. We become desperate. We seek all other avenues. Eventually we realize we have no choice, yet still we feel shame and are afraid to return. We fear the repercussions of our lostness... We don’t feel worthy of God’s friendship. We hope against hope that he will accept us and that we will be received into heaven by the skin of our teeth.

This story Jesus tells is often inappropriately labeled the prodigal son, for while his part of the story is the longest section, he is not the main character, nor is he the main point, which we’ll get to later. But for now, let’s look at this important subpoint: When we fail and come to our senses, will God still love us?

We already know the answer, but I am going to tell you anyway. It should tell us something when it seems that this is the only place in the Bible that God (the father) seems to be in a hurry -- to rush out and greet a child who had thoroughly failed him. We should love what that says about God. Though sometimes there are

lingering consequences for our errant ways – there is no sense that this lavishly wasted inheritance is going to come back to this child. In fact, at the end of the story, the father says, “Everything I have is yours”, to the older son -- so this younger one still has the consequences of his actions. Albeit that point is so briefly alluded to that Jesus may not have wanted to distract or enable potential distorting of this subpoint so let’s just forget about that for now. What is primarily clear is that the Father forgives and restores us to friendship and family. We need to see us as God sees us -- through friendly, loving eyes. He doesn’t give up on us. He is eager to welcome us back, even though we have the likely potential of rejecting and offending and failing and hurting him all over again. That is kind of like what a mother does with her children.

Even with the assurance of God’s slowness to anger, patient refusal to give up, and his rush to forgive and embrace us, we may still fear coming home. Common sense tells me that this is less about our doubt of God’s reception, and more about what is going on inside of ourselves. The younger son had lived with his father for years, surely, he knew that he wasn’t fickle, abusive, or fearmongering. This isn’t what we think of God, it is what we think about us. Be it shame, guilt, regret, low self-esteem, pride, unworthiness, or whatever it is when our pride is broken – humility -- or a whole list of other things – our stubbornness to return is more about what is going on in us than it is about God. God is a lot more compassionate for us than we are of ourselves.

If we find ourselves in that place, William Barry suggests four steps for moving into a deeper friendship with God, especially if we are fearful or reluctant to do so, but I think these steps are good for all of us even if we aren’t feeling that way.

First, confess how you feel. If you have fears of hesitations, put them on your prayer table... Make it a habit of prayer to say you seek to be open and transparent, because that is required for an intimate relationship, and you want that. Reveal your deepest secrets. True friends know all and still love, and we know God wants to be a true friend, and will be for us.

Second, at least at times -- as you pray or meditate, do it in conjunction with something you really enjoy. Walking in the woods, listening to non-distracting music, out on a boat, praying and talking with good, Christian friends. The list goes on and on and on and on. Do you remember a time in the past when you felt really

1) Admit how you feel

2) Connect prayer with pure pleasures

close to God. What were you doing then that made you feel close? Can you recapture those activities? When I was in college, I used to take late night walks in a fairly new subdivision under the stars, and that was a really special time for me, then.

It is always a good and natural thing to think of and turn to God when something bad happens. But if that is about the *only* time we think about and turn to him, we will tend to develop an association between God and the stress-filled struggles, and that will reinforce negative feelings every time we are with him, and that will encourage us to shy away from him. Begin to be intentional about associating God with life's pure pleasures, the good, the positive parts of life (not just the bad) -- and know that he is enjoying these times with us too. In the story, the father was right in the middle of the celebration for and with the returned son.

Third, as you read the Bible, put yourself in the shoes of God's people and relive those passages, **3) Read God's love for us** especially where the Lord is declaring his love and friendship for us. Hear the father's joy in welcoming back the son, the shepherd finding the lost sheep, the woman who found the lost coin... understand and feel the celebration and celebrate, for it is our story too.

Lastly, of these 4 steps. Build on these bible images to reflect on and feel how **4) Imagine how God feels about you** God feels about us – how eager he is to be with us, love us, and share our interests.

Now let's turn to the main point of the story. We know this is the main point because of the context. Religious leaders were griping because he associated with, was friendly with, tax collectors and sinners. It is in response to this attitude that Jesus tells three stories. The punch line of each story:

The shepherd calls his friends and neighbors and says, "Rejoice with me because I found my lost sheep." In the same way, there is more joy in heaven over one lost sinner who repents and returns to God than over 99 others who haven't strayed."

The woman finds the coin and calls her friends, "Rejoice with me, I have found my lost coin" In the same way, there is joy in the presence of God's angels when even one sinner repents."

Then, in the third story, the father calls his staff to throw a party because the one who was lost has come home. Okay we all think we get it – when someone is lost, there is a desperate seeking and a discovery so joyful that we have to have a

communal celebration. I can't just celebrate myself, I have to call everybody to join so we can all celebrate together.

But wait – There is more. In this final story, a new punch line is added to hammer home this whole set of events and stories going all the way back to the Council member's home that the reading introduction started with ... Remember the stories – compassionate healing doesn't wait – Don't be proud – you may be humiliated. Be humble so that you might be honored. Be generous, searching for and invitingly inclusive of those who cannot possibly repay you. Before you follow Jesus, measure the cost of what that might mean. And then the three stories. We had read up to where the prodigal's party had begun. Now Jesus throws in the tag by reintroducing the older son.

“Meanwhile, the older son was in the fields working. When he returned home, he heard music and dancing in the house, and he asked one of the servants what was going on. ‘Your brother is back,’ he was told, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf. We are celebrating because of his safe return.’ “The older brother was angry and wouldn't go in. His father came out and begged him, but he replied, ‘All these years I've slaved for you and never once refused to do a single thing you told me to. And in all that time you never gave me even one young goat for a feast with my friends. Yet when this son of yours comes back after squandering your money on prostitutes, you celebrate by killing the fattened calf!’ “His father said to him, ‘Look, dear son, you have always stayed by me, and everything I have is yours. We had to celebrate this happy day. For your brother was dead and has come back to life! He was lost, but now he is found!’”

Luke 15:25-33 (NLT)

Jesus didn't tell us how the 99 sheep felt at the return of the wayward lamb. Or anthropomorphize (make human qualities of) the coins and say how the 9 coins felt about it when the 1 who disappeared and then was returned to the purse... But in this climatic story, Jesus, through the father's dialog with the older brother, tells us how God feels and what he does about those who are not faithful, and if we are going to follow Jesus' way, we must have that same action and attitude. We cannot be as the religious leaders, who reveal their self-righteous spiritual pride, are isolationists (lest they be contaminated), who promote disassociation and hate for those they perceive don't follow their established rules that they impose on others (even though elsewhere Jesus makes it clear they did not follow those same rules

themselves), and they refuse to celebrate someone who has returned. Through the father of the story, Jesus tells these people God has blessed them with everything (that is a pretty gracious statement after that description, isn't it?) and everything he has is theirs. I'm not sure if Jesus was just graciously naming how they felt about themselves (thinking they were the only ones who were faithful to God and all that) or if there is something else going on... I won't get into that today.

But what Jesus is saying here is that my life isn't only about God and me, and God and you. It is about all of God's world and all the people in it. He radically loves us, seeks us out, and rejoices when we turn to him – and God is persistently moving us to grow to a place where we would feel and act the same way toward others.

Case in point – People are lost in Egyptian slavery. God's never ending, seeking, reaching love and compassionate care wants to move them to freedom. But he needs a person who will convey his actions and attitudes both to Egypt and his own people. Moses was a Jew who was raised in the Egyptian palace is the perfect fit. But he has been long out of the palace and is shepherding when God calls him to lead his people out of their misery. Moses begins with a whole litany of excuses. Who am I? Who are you? What if they don't believe me, Who should I tell them who you are? I don't speak well... Like a good friend, God peeled away the layers of every excuse and got the heart of it. Moses had different motivations than Jonah of last week or the religious leaders of the Jesus' day (the older brother of Jesus' story, but the result was all the same – none of them desired to convey the attitudes and actions of God's grace and love. Jesus was frustrated with the religious leaders, and God with Moses.

In the end, Jesus did not convince many of the religious leaders, but God

God doesn't give up, gets to the heart

and Moses worked through their frustrations with each other. They had open, honest conversations, survived the rough spots, and the many rough spots that were to follow in this big, long journey they were going to take together. Moses, with Aaron's help, became God's servant and leader of the people. (Exodus 3:1-4:17) In fact, God and Moses became so close that the people could see God's radiant presence on Moses' face. (Exodus 34:33-35) And Moses, like God, came to care for those "stiff-necked, rebellious people" as they were so often called. At one point Moses even told God if he didn't go with them, he wouldn't go either, and his whole mission would be a bust. That's pretty strong language to God, isn't it?

God was so angry at the people, that he told Moses to go ahead but he wasn't going to go with them, and Moses said, No, I'm not going if you aren't going. He came to love those people so much that he interceded for them. So God and Moses could express their disappointments, even their anger with each other, and still be driven by the desire to love and forgive... and **we** need to hang on to that no matter what happens in our life, and compassionately live and intercede for others no matter how much we may think that we may see some as "stiff-necked and rebellious" people.

In a classic sitcom from the 80s, there is a character named Coach. He is asked to give a eulogy for a longtime friend who has passed away. In the process, he accidentally discovers that that friend had deeply betrayed him years earlier, and it wasn't a light betrayal, it was very deep, very personal, very hurtful. And because he has just heard it, it is new and fresh pain, and he is outraged about it, and he resolves to give an angry eulogy.

The day comes and he stands in front of the people behind the podium. He glares at the man's life size cut out picture nearby. But he can't even finish his first angry sentence. Coach's true character flows from his heart and he says, "That man was ... was a human being. Human beings make mistakes. We're ... not perfect. But I'll tell you what is not a mistake. To love someone and forgive them no matter what their shortcomings. This is not a mistake. I loved that man. And I forgive him. And I know that for the rest of my life, every day there is going to be a moment where I'm going to miss him. That's all I got to say."

The next speaker came up and said, "That was beautiful. No, I mean it, Coach, that stuff you said could make me almost forgive him for what he did to me. He started saying what he had done to him, and another overheard that and he began to say what that man had done to him, and very quickly the crowd's conversation changed from forgiveness to "this is what he did to me!" They became an angry mob. They grabbed the large cut out image, and as a whole group they were going to take it outside and hang it as an effigy to express their anger about what that man had done to all of them. As they start to go out the door, another main character from the series moves to and stands behind the podium and begins to sing Amazing Grace (acappella), Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. / once was lost but now am found, was blind, but now I see. The mob stops in their tracks. They slowly begin to return and join in singing that verse all over again. And the show ends. (Cheers: *Coach Buries a Grudge* 2:19, 1984).

Prayer Lord, it is not always easy to receive your grace as a prodigal, as one who has wandered away and wanting to come back. It is not always easy to accept your grace and desire to move into a deeper friendship, We ask for your grace for us, that if we have failed you in some way, or failed others in some way; that we may come and lay it before you and let you deal with it, so that in time we may find your healing. Help us to discover your friendship.

And Lord we confess that sometimes it is even harder to turn and do the same thing for others. Help us to realize that just as Jesus paved the way for us, our attitudes and actions may be the very thing that allows you to pave the way for others. Jesus has done this for us. Therefore, we ask that as we move out into our week and into deeper friendship with you, that you would remember us as we celebrate the abundance of your forgiveness and grace. In Jesus name, Amen.

Music I came across a card as I was trying to find something for a friend and it talks about friendship. It said something like this: The sweet things that you do that makes you such a special friend, listening and sharing, loving and caring, and just being there. These and many more ways make you a wonderful mother too. Mothers are able to show grace in ways that men should, but often don't. So this final song is a tribute to God's grace as it is often shown through mothers, it is surely enough for all our needs...

Your Grace is Enough

Words and Music: Matt Maher, add. lyrics by Chris Tomlin
arr. by Lura Foster © 2003 Matt Maher, pub. by spiritandsong.com

Great is your faithfulness, oh, God. You wrestle with the sinner's heart.

You lead us by still waters into mercy, and nothing can keep us apart.

So, remember Your people, remember, Your children,
remember, Your promise, oh, God.

Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough for me.

Great is your love and justice, God. You use the weak to lead the strong.

You lead us in the song of Your salvation, and all Your people sing along.

So, remember Your people, remember, Your children,
remember, Your promise, oh, God.

Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough for me.

Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough for me.

So, remember Your people, remember, Your children,
remember, Your promise, oh, God.

Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough, Your grace is enough for me.

Your grace is enough, Heaven reaching down to us.

Your grace is enough for me. [solo: O God, I see]

Your grace is enough, I'm covered in Your love.

Your grace is enough for me, for me.

It's enough for me. ... It's enough for me.

Blessing Now as a child of the Father, as Christ's friend, go out to the world in the power of the Spirit -- with your heart set on Christ who draws all people to himself and binds us together in love. Amen.

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