

^p *Straight from the "Hart"*

November 12, 2023 Veterans' Sunday

Finding Your Place Before God



Welcome to Hartland UMC's "Straight from the "Hart"". We are glad you are here and participating in worship through this service script.

Statement of Faith (P – Pastor, C – Congregation)

P Do you believe in God the Father?

C: We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

P: Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

C: We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father,

P: God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through him all things were made. For us and for our salvation

C: he came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate; he suffered death and was buried. On the third day he rose again in accordance with the Scriptures; he ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and his kingdom will have no end.

P: Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

C: We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

P: Do you believe in the Church?

C: We believe in one holy universal and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. Amen.

The Nicene Creed From the UM Hymnal 880 (ad. with questions and to be responsive).

Opening Prayer

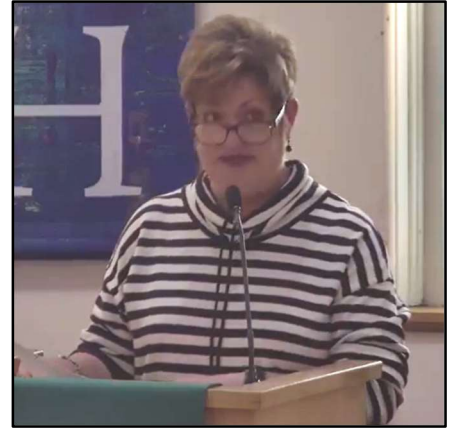
Lord, we joyfully celebrate our trust in your faithful promises. We gladly give these gifts upon your altar – as a tangible symbol of offering ourselves in every way we

can to enable ministries that will support your cause in our community and beyond. We pray this with praise and thanksgiving in our hearts. In Jesus name we pray, Amen.

Call to Worship

From the parched and weary land, we come thirsting for our Mighty God – who is the perfection of beauty -- who shines in glorious radiance. We have come – here in this place of worship – with eyes wide open, to meditate on the Lord’s perfections – to drink in his strength and glory. We come to experience his presence and praise him for his unfailing love which is better than life itself, and so that we can fully live as his children on this earth.

(Inspired by Psalms 27:4b; 50:1a,2; 63:1-3 (63:2 – MSG))



Here I Am to Worship

Words and Music: Tim Hughes, arr by Jeff Anderson

© 2001 Thank You Music

Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness, opened my eyes, let me see
Beauty that made this heart adore you, hope of a life spent with you.

Chorus

Here I am to worship, here I am to bow down,
here I am to say that you're my God.

You're altogether lovely, altogether worthy, altogether wonderful to me.

King of all days, oh, so highly exalted, glorious in heaven above.
Humbly you came to the earth you created, all for love's sake became poor.

Chorus (2 x)

I'll never know how much it costs to see my sin upon that cross.

Repeat

Chorus (2x)

Theme And when we see that in God’s great love for the world, the light of Jesus stepped in to save us from the darkness of our sin. So now when we look around and see the destruction that sin causes, it should make us uncomfortable. John turns from God’s love of the world to write later that we are not to love the world (when John uses the word “world”, he uses it to mean those attitudes and values that set us to fighting against God – those selfish values that God sent Jesus to

save us from because he loved us so much, he loved the world so much. These values are diametrically opposed to each other. (See John 3:16, 1 John 2:15-17) We are no longer at home in this world. In an article by Jeremy Linneman, he says that our [world] has been described as a “swipe-right culture”— which is a reference to approving a potential date on a popular dating app. When we like something at first glance, swipe right. The moment something—whether a person, relationship, job, or community—loses its appeal, we swipe left [and wipe it right out of our life]. Swipe-right culture promises freedom and autonomy: The moment you’re not satisfied, you find something new.

But this threat of instant tie-cutting is that if we aren’t on the exact same page (or as I’ve read) people complaining about a potential close friend won’t go through the hoops of playing the game of being hard to get that they have set up to play with that person. We can never feel secure and belong in a culture like this, and yet beyond food and shelter, nothing promotes human flourishing like having a people and a place of belonging. People who know us and love us. He quotes someone who says people are in 1 of 4 categories with others on this particular topic. If we are not known and not loved, we are both ignored and rejected, and that is not a good place to be. If we are known and not loved, then we are just plain rejected, and that is not a good place to be either. If we are not known but are loved, we fit it. But it is only when we are both known and loved that we truly belong. And Linneman suggests that it is only in Christ that we can find true belonging because it is in him that we are both fully known and fully loved. Paul writes that we are call to belong to Jesus (See Romans 1:6) and that we are no longer foreigners and strangers (ignored and rejected) but a citizen of God’s people and members of his family (See Ephesians 2:19) So we make it our goal to please him, thus feeling at home in him even while we live in this world (See 2 Corinthians 5:5-9) in which we are no longer comfortable.

Music This next song speaks about John’s black and white choice between feeling at home in this world with its God-opposing values, or feeling at home in Jesus.



Where I Belong

Words and Music: Jason Ingram and Jason Roy

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Sometimes it feels like I'm watchin' from the outside.
Sometimes it feels like I'm breathin', but am I alive?
I won't keep searchin' for answers that aren't here to find.

Chorus

All I know is I'm not home yet. This is not where I belong.
Take this world and give me Jesus. This is not where I belong.

So when the walls come fallin' down on me,
and I'm lost in the current of a ragin' sea,
I have this blessed assurance holding me.

Chorus

When the earth shakes, I wanna be found -- in you.
When the lights fade, I wanna be found -- in you.

Chorus (2x)

Where I belong. (4x)

Intro to and Bible Reading 1

Pastor: If we are only at home and belong with Jesus, but still live in this world of sin, then what are we to do about it?

Reader: The author to Hebrews says the religious leaders perform the same rituals again and again – but they can never take away sin's guilt. Therefore, we can't be completely at home here because Jesus says we live in a troubled world, and that trouble is caused by sin and are vulnerable to its fallen nature.

But at the same time that Jesus says we will have trouble, he also offers his peace because he has overcome the world. Our best sense of truly belonging is our belonging to God through Christ (and his church). The author of Hebrews goes on to tell us how Jesus overcomes the disconnect of sins that hounds our world every day, and how we need each other to help maintain our connection with God until we are finally at home with him.

...this Priest [Jesus] had offered the one supreme sacrifice [himself] for sin for all time... and by his one perfect sacrifice he made us perfectly holy and complete... I will give them this [new] covenant: I will embed my laws into their hearts and fasten my Word to their thoughts... I will not ever again remember their sins and lawless deeds!"

So if our sins have been forgiven and forgotten, why would we ever need to offer another sacrifice for sin? And now we are brothers and sisters in God's family because of the blood of Jesus, and he welcomes us to come right into the most holy sanctuary in the heavenly realm—boldly and with no hesitation. For he has dedicated a new, life-giving way for us to approach God... Jesus' body was torn open to give us free and fresh access to him!

And since we now have a magnificent King-Priest to welcome us into God's house, we come closer to God and approach him with an open heart, fully convinced by faith that nothing will keep us at a distance from him... [we are] presentable to God inside and out! So now we must cling tightly to the hope that lives within us, knowing that God always keeps his promises!

[Therefore,] Discover creative ways to encourage others and to motivate them toward acts of compassion, doing beautiful works as expressions of love. This is not the time to pull away and neglect meeting together, as some have formed the habit of doing, because we need each other! In fact, we should come together even more frequently, eager to encourage and urge each other onward as we anticipate that day dawning.

Key verses from Hebrews 10:12-25 (TPT)

Music As Christ makes it possible -- through himself -- to connect with God, then we live in that connection throughout our lives here and as more and more people are encouraged to do so, his glory will fill this land.

The Way

Words and Music: Jeremy Camp, Grant Dryden, Brad Peens, Rob Williams
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 Bluke Music Pub, Grant Dryden Designee

All creation cries out with longing, with groans only you can comprehend.
 And with wisdom you always answer, and give the words of life, so unfailing.

And your glory shines all around us; Your faithfulness shown for all to see.

When we think of all of your wonders,
 the beauty of your plan that's been revealed;
 when we walk in your light, when we walk in it.

Chorus

Shine bright, let your glory fill this land.
 Lift high the King of kings and Great I AM.
 Jesus, you are the Way, you are the Way.

We can see the works of your loving hands,
with the hope and peace not made by man.
When you poured out your grace and your mercy,
and you held out your arms so we could see;
you bled for all mankind, and set the captives free, yeah!

Chorus

Na na na na na nah, Jesus. Na na na na na nah, you are the Way.
Na na na na na nah, Jesus. Na na na na na nah, you are the Way.

Shine bright, let your glory fill this land.
Lift high the King of kings and Great I AM.

Chorus

Jesus, you are the Way, you are the Way, you are the Way.

Special Tribute to Veterans

We want to pause and acknowledge those who have helped defend our ability to fill this land with God's glory as well as the other freedoms we are privileged to experience in this country. If you served in any capacity as a veteran, would you please stand, or at least raise your hand?

Here is to those who [were drafted or]
choose to be warriors
And their helpers good and true;
they're fighting for American values;
they're fighting for me and you.
[Thank you.]

And hear this poem written from a veteran's point of view, by Lynne Carey

I was a proud veteran that served my country well.
To those that would listen I had many stories to tell.
We fought for America's freedom in far away places on foreign land
Wherever the battle for democracy raged,
America's finest took a stand.

We fought for your future and the right to remain free.
For we saw what freedom meant
to those not blessed with Liberty.

For you and yours we would gladly have given our life.
We faced the fears and perils of battle,
we braved endless turmoil and strife.

Please remember us veterans

and the sacrifices we made for you.
Please share the blessings of freedom -
proudly wave the red, white, and blue.

Prayers

Pastor: our prayer today begins with a responsive litany in honor of Veteran's Day, join me on the yellow font while Terri leads on the white

(R – Reader, **C – Pastor with Congregation**)

R: Let us give thanks to God for the land of our birth with all its chartered liberties. For all the wonder of our country's story:

C: We give you thanks, O God.

R: For leaders in nation and state, and for those who in days past and in these present times have labored for the commonwealth:

C: We give you thanks, O God.

R: For those who in all times and places have been true and brave, and in the world's common ways have lived upright lives and ministered to their fellows:

C: We give you thanks, O God.

R: For those who served their country in its hour of need, and especially for those who were willing to give even their lives in that service:

C: We give you thanks, O God.

R: Almighty God and most merciful Father, we remember these your servants, remembering with gratitude their courage and strength...

C: We give you thanks, O God.

one-time permission granted by The Armed Forces Chaplains' Board,
(slightly adapted for Veteran's Day)

And now we continue in prayer... Lord, we do thank and honor all those who have defended their nation and its people by their service in those branches that we call upon to enforce justice, peace, human rights, and freedom throughout history and to this present day. We appreciate their sacrifices and willingness to sacrifice on behalf of their fellow men, women, and children of the nation; and the cost that they offer to pay until your true peace can settle on the world.

Lord, we recognize that if we don't build our lives on you, our work is in vain. If you aren't watching over our communities, our prosperity will mean nothing. We can work, day and night, and accomplish nothing but stress. But those you love, you grant the peace of a deep sleep and provide for us. You grant us the reward

of a family that cares for each other and protects each other as a sanctuary from the hurts of our world. (portions inspired by Psalm 127)

Lord, we will praise you all our lives... for as important as leaders in the nation and the church -- and all people in all the fields are, it is only you we can trust to save us, and as we put our hope in you, we are blessed by you help -- for you are the Creator of all that is, and you are faithful forever.

Praises and Petitions We are grateful for our church family that cares and lifts each other up in prayer and in acts of kindness. Specifically today, we pray for * For Jan Martin – who has leukemia and whose first treatment is tomorrow, and she’s been told the first is the worst, and Nile Remsing requests us to pray for a friend to become free from addiction, We continue to pray for * the Gordoniers’ friend Al Davis as he adjusts to a different life after his leg amputation * For Ava Lewis who is adjusting to her mother, 96, being in hospice. * for Joyce Vahala, * for Sally’s friend Wes, whose treatments are working extremely well, but keep praying * for peace in the world and in our lives, * and finally for those we have not named out loud but are still on our hearts and minds, we pause just briefly to lift them up to you as well. [Pause].

We call on you with these because you provide, you free, you enlighten, you strengthen, and you watch over us. We praise you for we feel your sustaining love through all the generations, even as you have taught each generation to sincerely pray **LORD’S PRAYER** Now we ask that as we look to you, -- let us feel your arm wrapped around our shoulder, let us hear you whispering your love in our ear, making our souls dance with the joy of your presence – that we may know whether we experience peace or are facing the storms of life or the storms of sin, you have made provision for the health of our soul. Amen.

Music In confidence that God hears and acts on our prayers, let’s sing together

It is Well with My Soul

Words: Horatio G. Spafford Music: Philip P Bliss
arr. by David Shipps © 2008 Van Ness Press, Inc (adm by Lifeway Worship)

1. When peace, like a river, attendeth my way,
when sorrows like sea billows roll;
whatever my lot, thou hast taught me to say,
“It is well, it is well with my soul.”

It is well (It is well) with my soul, (with my soul,)
it is well, it is well with my soul.

2. Though Satan should buffet, though trials should come,
 let this blest assurance control,
 that Christ has regarded my helpless estate,
 and hath shed his own blood for my soul.
 It is well (It is well) with my soul, (with my soul,)
 it is well, it is well with my soul.



4. And, Lord, haste the day when the faith shall be sight,
 the clouds be rolled back as a scroll;
 the trump shall resound, and the Lord shall descend,
 “Even so,” it is well with my soul.
 It is well (It is well) with my soul, (with my soul,)
 it is well, it is well with my soul.

Music And we know that it is well because everything we have heard so far today tells us that no matter how imprisoned we may feel, no matter where we may run, his love pursues us and holds us and tells us that he loves us and that he is *for* us.

Jesus (He) Loves Me

Words and Music: Reuben Morgan, Chris Tomlin, Ben Glover
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 sixsteps songs SDG Publishing One Songs Ariose Music. adm by CapitolCMGPublishing

I was lost, I was in chains, the world had a hold of me.
 My heart was a stone, I was covered in shame when he came for me.

Chorus

I couldn't run, couldn't run from his presence.
 I couldn't run, couldn't run from his arms.
 Jesus, he loves me, he loves me, he is for me!
 Jesus, how can it be? He loves me, he is for me!

It was a fire deep in my soul. I'll never be the same.
 I stepped out of the dark and into the light when he called my name.

Chorus

He holds the stars, and he holds my heart
 with healing hands that bear the scars.
 The rugged cross where he died for me,
 my only hope, my everything!
 Jesus, he loves me, he loves me, he is for me!
 Jesus, how can it be? He loves me, he is for me!
 He is for me. Jesus loves me.

Intro to and Bible Reading 2

Paul tells us just how much God loves us and is for us. He reminds us that we were spiritually dead. We were disconnected from God because we sinned and fought against God and followed the ways of this sin-troubled world. We were ruled by the power of evil and our own selfish desires. We deserved to be punished. (See Ephesians 2:1-3) He then writes:



But God was merciful! We were dead because of our sins, but God loved us so much that he made us alive with Christ, and God's wonderful kindness is what saves you. God raised us from death to life with Christ Jesus, and he has given us a place beside Christ in heaven. God did this so that in the future world he could show how truly good and kind he is to us because of what Christ Jesus has done. You were saved by faith in God, who treats us much better than we deserve. This is God's gift to you, and not anything you have done on your own. It isn't something you have earned, so there is nothing you can brag about. God planned for us to do good things and to live as he has always wanted us to live. That's why he sent Christ to make us what we are.

Ephesians 2:4-10 (CEV)

Sermon Finding Our Place Before God

Last week, we found our place among the faithful, Today, we are finding our place before God. We just hear Paul tell us that that place is being raised alive with Christ and given a place beside Christ in heaven. describes a spiritual transformation that raises us from the ultimate misery of sin which our world pushes on us, into a heavenly citizenship and a new quality of true life that Christ creates in us here and now. The text also answers the question how we get to that place, as did the earlier reading from Hebrews. Like the Nicene Creed, these passages attempt to correct errant thoughts on how we get to the right place before God. We will look at three of those correctives today.

First corrective ix to this idea: "We can earn God's favor by doing more good than bad." An overly simplistic view of this thinking was presented in an old sitcom, in which the main character wins a sizable fortune in the lottery but loses the ticket when he gets hit by a car. In the hospital he decides to make a list and

make amends to all the people he hurt in his life. This crisis-time decision was not made as a result of reflection and remorse leading to his attempts at restitution and restoration, nor was it motivated by inner transformation, or by love, but rather because he felt his accident was the Universe deciding he was not good enough to be rewarded with that lottery ticket, so it stepped in to take his reward away. His attempt to make things right was an attempt to tip the scales of his life to the “good side” so that the Universe would let him keep any good fortunes that came his way in the future.

Many people substitute God for the Universe and believe in the same principle – we live on a scale. Certainly, God is pleased when we do good, and the laws of the Universe tend to make us reap what we sow, but neither God nor the Universe works on a scale system, carefully measuring the weight of every right and wrong decision in our life in order to decide which way the scale goes and what we deserve to get. Even if they did, which they don’t, we cannot, by our own power, undo our bad by being more good than we were bad, or going through certain rituals that lighten the badness... and yet it is so common that Paul wrote to the church in Galatia, *Did you receive the Spirit by doing works... or by believing? If you started with the Spirit, why are you finishing with your own human effort?* (See Galatians 3:2b,3b (CEB))

Our place is not granted by something we earn, or by something we did, as if we could brag about how good we are to get to our place before God, and the daily rituals were powerless to undo the guilt of our sins that hold us back from that place. We don’t have to do other things, or more things to “tip the cosmic scale” or turn the corner of God’s scowl up into a smile (and all of a sudden, he’s happy).

We come to that place before God’s presence and we belong in God’s family by participating in the transforming, purifying process of the sacrificial *new covenant* work which is done completely by Jesus Christ, which refuses to hold past failures



against us and welcomes us. This is not about us, but about God and his nature. Therefore, we approach him, not with the confidence of good deeds or empty rituals but relies on God's forgiving grace that flows out of his compassionate love.

This leads to **a second misconception** we may still hear from time to time. **"Once we are in, we are done."** You could *almost* argue on the basis of what was just said, that once we are in a restored relationship with God -- forgiven by believing in grace and not good works, *then* -- we can go ahead and live however we want. In fact, some people thought, the more you sin, the more grace you get, so we should sin more so that we'll get more grace. Understand that it IS a relationship. There are few things worse in a relationship than when one person leverages the relationship commitment of the other and takes manipulative advantage of the other person because they feel the other person can do nothing about it. "God, you love me and can't do anything about it, so I'm going to just do whatever I want because your grace has got it all covered." The relationship becomes one sided rather than mutual, and it becomes unhealthy at best and abusively destructive at worst.

As forgiven people, as people who realize we are loved and cared for so deeply and powerfully by a God who has promised his unconditional, unfailing love to his people -- it would be easy to think we can now take advantage of God's gracious acceptance of us and commitment to us.

Waiting tables in my first pastoral assignment, one customer said (along the lines of the Bible texts quoted so far) that Jesus did it all, once and for all. Since God does everything, we don't have to do anything -- there is no discipleship -- no need of following Christ's pattern, the new life was not a different life, it is our next life. Just as Paul had to correct some Galatian Christians for trying to save themselves by law, he also had to correct some Roman Christians who erred at the other end of the pendulum's swing:

Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? (Romans 6:1-2 (NIV))

And our writer in Hebrews says Christ has "a new life-giving way for us to approach God" -- with an open heart and impurities removed -- clean and presentable to God ... clinging to a *hope* that lives within us - knowing that God keeps his promises. Grace is not only about letting things go, it is also about gracing us with the ability to do something new.

If Someone is doing all this for us, within us -- how can we possibly go on living the same lives we've lived before we encountered that? It doesn't usually happen instantaneously, old bad habits must be unlearned, new good habits formed. Old priorities are replaced by new ones. It is no wonder we need to cling to God's promises to keep us moving forward. We are in the process of becoming, and growing, and changing, and transforming. God is not done with us after he saves us, that is just the starting point. Neither should we ever be done with ourselves. Trust that "the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion..." (Philippians 1:6). God graces us with his patience and partnership as we persevere in cooperating with his process that he is working within us.

During the Spanish American War (1898), supply ships carrying, among other things, army horses and mules, couldn't secure a place to land along the coast of Cuba. They finally decided to push the animals into the water hoping they would swim to the shore. Some did, but others were confused and swam toward open sea or in circles. Disaster seemed unavoidable. Then the clear call of an Army bugle rang out from shore. The tiring beasts heard the call, and they turned toward land. The bugler played until his lips were blue, but he continued until every animal had made it safely to shore. The bugler sounding his horn -- that's the call of grace. The animals dogpaddling like crazy for shore. That's responding with perseverance. Keep listening for and responding to the call of God as he leads you into this new way of living.

Finally, **the third misconception is that "Christianity should be a private matter."** Our American culture is particularly susceptible to this idea because, as one person, well plenty of people say it – our society admires and promotes rugged individualism and self-sufficiency. That is, it wants us to believe that if I are well-adapted and healthy, then I don't need anyone else, and that I am inadequate if I admit I need anything or anyone else. Yet as we heard last week, we are social beings, designed to live in community.

Our approach to and transformation with God is not only an individual thing, but a corporate thing we do with each other under God. That is why the end of our Hebrew passage ended by suddenly switching from all this forgiving grace we have to the idea that we all need to keep encouraging and don't neglect each another. And Paul wrote to the Corinthians that

God has put the body together ... so that there won't be division in the body and so the parts might have mutual concern for each other. If one part

suffers, all the parts suffer with it; if one part gets the glory, all the parts celebrate with it. You are the body of Christ and parts of each other.

(1 Corinthians 12:24a,25-27)

We are called to need and support each other. We may live "for" reward, but we live "by" encouragement, especially from those to whom we feel we belong. We need it when things go well, and especially when things don't go well. Despite what our self-help culture says, it is much more difficult to encourage ourselves than to be encouraged by others. It is a part of our spiritual journey to connect so we can encourage one another. Covid pulled many of us away from our normal ways of living socially. Technology stepped in in our desperation to find a way to reach out safely to connect with each other and that is still going on today, because as our text concluded, this is not the time to neglect being together because we do need each other, and we should meet even more often than before.

There is also sometimes a pluralization of "individualized self-sufficiency", so instead of saying "I" we say "we" and it is a group of "we" that we may include that doesn't include anyone else -- and whoever is not included in the "we" may well become deterrents, obstacles, even enemies to us finding "our" place. I've told you how the negative is granted too much power in our culture. How many encouragements does it take to make up for one cutting criticism? Take a guess, I don't know. If I get one, it seems like it takes an awful lot of the other to even begin to balance it. It just seems like the negative is a much heavier weight when you put it on the scales, doesn't it? This appeal to the negative is nothing new. Senator and Historian during the Roman Empire, Tacitus said, "Men are more ready to repay an injury than a benefit, because gratitude is a burden and revenge a pleasure." Maybe that explains why we think we have to set up "us-them" scenarios. But it shouldn't have to be this way.

Christ didn't think so either. (See Matthew 7:12 and Matthew 5:43-48) He said the common thought was to hate "the them", (our enemies) and to love "the "us-es"" (our neighbors), but then he said -- in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you... Imagine what it must mean to be a "them" instead of an "us", to be set up as the outsider, the opposition -- the unvalued, the ignored, the mistreated just because we think or look or act differently than another. There will never be any true peace within or without until there are no more "thems" in the world and it is all "us." This is why Christ applied the golden rule to say to his followers were to love their enemies and pray for those who mistreat them. Martin Luther King Jr.

wrote that “Man must evolve for all human conflict a method which rejects revenge, aggression, and retaliation. The foundation of such a method is love.”

Jesus came to free us from the chains of division and to discover our treasured value -- together -- as God’s created people.

A singer says, (paraphrased for brevity) What you put out comes back to you [kind of going back to that first idea]: an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, or in physical laws every action is met by an equal or an opposite one, you reap what you sow... It is a mind-blowing concept that the God who created the universe [with all these laws] might be looking for ... a real loving relationship with people, so much so that he defies and upends all reason and logic with this idea called --- grace. ...It doesn't excuse my mistakes, but I'm holding out for grace. I'm holding out that Jesus took my sins onto the cross, because I know who I am, and I hope I don't have to depend on my own religiosity. [my own goodness]" Love interrupts [what we deserve] and that is good news, he says, because I've done a lot of stupid things. How about us?

Prayer Let’s pray... Lord, in order to come into your presence and find our proper place before you, we realize again how much we have not earned that right, but how much we must rely on your love and forgiving grace. Forgive us when we take you for granted, or worse, attempt to take an unhealthy, manipulating advantage of your deep, self-sacrificing commitment to us. Grace us to respond to your love with genuine and sincere love for you, for your people, and for the world for whom you sent Jesus to die, demonstrating the depth of your grace -- and our need -- and hopefully our desire – to enter your purifying, transforming process that leads to peace with you, peace within ourselves, and peace with others – both the “us’ es” and the “thems”; that together, we can be a positive force of encouragement. In the name of Jesus Christ we pray, Amen.

Music As we spend time knowing and loving each other, we approach God – clinging to him and relying on him to remember us lovingly and faithfully as he moves us through the transforming, purifying, process of growth to Christian maturity – and at the same time, through it all, we realize that his grace is more than enough to accomplish his work in us and bring it to completion. Stand if you are comfortable and let’s sing our concluding song...

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.

Chorus

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.

Chorus

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

Chorus

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 we go, may the blessing of our adventurous Creator God be upon us that we may strengthen and encourage one another. May the blessing of the Son, who showed us how to live re-shape us. And may the blessing of the Spirit joyfully enable us in our renewed living. Amen.

ad. from *Hope in God's Future...*, Methodist Publishing 2009.
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