

# *Straight from the "Hart"*

March 10, 2024 Laetare Sunday

 HARTLAND

Sharing the journey  
to know, love, and serve

## **Making a Fresh Start (5): Mutiny on His Bounty**

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

**Laetare Sunday** This is Laetare Sunday. It is a Latin word meaning "Rejoice", taken from Isaiah 66:10, "Rejoice, Jerusalem... be joyful all who were in mourning." which are the first words of the traditional service for this day. It also means we are over halfway through our journey to the cross, and it is a day when we relax a bit from our Lenten Disciplines and refresh ourselves by anticipating the joy of Easter that follows the cross of Good Friday. Thus, our altar is tempered from the deep purple of repentance with pink highlights, and our cross candle is also pink.



### **Affirmation** (P – Pastor C – Congregation)

P: Now join me on the on an affirmation that professes our hope beyond the cross.  
We affirm that when Jesus Christ dies it is a time to suspect

**C: that darkness can be crushed by sunrise, that silent mourning can break into song, that love chooses to live.**

P: We affirm that when Jesus Christ dies,

**C: it is time to suspect that this is not the end.**

P: We affirm that when Jesus Christ dies it is a time to believe

**C: that laughter will be heard at dawn, that tombs will be unsealed, that grave clothes will be folded away, that love chooses to live.**

P: We affirm that when Jesus Christ dies,

**C: it is time to believe that this is not the end.**

P: We affirm that when Jesus Christ dies it is a time to trust

**C: that the wisdom of heaven outstrips the conspiracies of the world, that crosses aren't the last word, that the last word is love, and love chooses to live.**

P: We affirm that when Jesus Christ dies,

**C: it is time to trust that this is not the end.**

adapted from "Affirmation of Faith for Good Friday" by Roddy Hamilton, [jonnybaker.blogs.com](http://jonnybaker.blogs.com)

## Opening Prayer

Lord, we have come bringing our treasures— all that we have and all that we are, seeking the spiritual treasures we find in Christ, a treasure that does not fade, decay, or disappoint. May your heavenly resources flow to us, that we may freely share it with others.

adapted from prayer written by Rev. Dr. Barb Hedges-Goettl, [bjhlog.wordpress.com](http://bjhlog.wordpress.com)

## Call to Worship

Come, rejoice, for God so loves the world! Come before your Maker to have your creative energies refreshed. Come to the Light of the world to illuminate your darkest moments. Come, allow the Holy Spirit in to guide us as we worship together.

adapted from a benediction by Rev. Dr. Ginny Brown Daniel, in "So Loved: Service Prayers for the Fourth Sunday of Lent" [ucc.org/worship\\_worship-ways](http://ucc.org/worship_worship-ways)

## Music

We worship because God, in his mercy has promised to lead us to himself, and on the journey his grace finds us, frees us, teaches us, comforts us. and fills us with hope. Sing with us...

### Amazing Grace, My Chains Are Gone

Words (verses) John Newton Additional Lyrics: Chris Tomlin & Louie Giglio  
Music: Trad. American Melody arr. and chorus by Chris Tomlin & Louie Giglio  
arr. by Jeff Anderson © 2002 [worshiptogether.com](http://worshiptogether.com)

Amazing grace how sweet the sound That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost but now I'm found; Was blind, but now I see.  
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear; And grace my fears relieved.  
How precious did that grace appear The hour I first believed.

#### Refrain

My chains are gone, I've been set free. My God, my Savior has ransomed me.  
And like a flood His mercy reigns, unending love, amazing grace.

The Lord has promised good to me; His word my hope secures.  
He will my shield and portion be As long as life endures.

## Refrain (2x)

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow, The sun forbear to shine.  
But God, who called me here below, will be forever mine, will be forever mine,  
You are forever mine.

**Lenten Cross Candles**

- \* We extinguished the “**Ashen Return**” Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to heed God’s call to return to him daily in order to stay on his spiritual course for us. (put out bottom candle).
- \* We extinguished the “**Resist**” Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to resist the temptations of life. (put out the next candle).
- \* We extinguished the “**Resolve**” Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to persist when life offers resistance and discouraging setbacks. (put out next candle).
- \* We extinguished the “**Repent**” Candle, recognizing how challenging it is to turn away from negative patterns that hinder us from positive habits.
- \* This week’s candle is labeled “**Reconcile**”.

Once upon a time, Fran the Frog was the best chef in the whole swamp. All the frogs and toads enjoyed coming to her specialty restaurant to eat fine dining. Meal flies in her special honey of a bee sauce and dragonfly soup, among other things..

One day, Toby the toad came in to eat. Toby was a really big toad, but he hadn’t learned the joy of trying new things, or even appreciating that others might like such things. He began complaining loudly as he looked over each item on the menu. Fran heard the ruckus and came out of the kitchen to see what was the problem. Toby ranted as he pointed at the menu items: “This isn’t even real food! I just want a plain ordinary botfly burger.”

Fran was deeply offended by his lack of appreciation for her spicy creations. She was so offended and furious that she wanted to bop him a botfly burger - but she didn’t have one hand (they were back in the kitchen), so she slapped him with one of her frog legs. They exchanged angry words and gestures for a while. When they ran out of energy, they finally settled down.

Fran knew it wasn’t right to be insulted by Toby the toad, but she also realized she needed to control her temper better too. She apologized for her anger and slapping him with her frog leg.

Toby was still angry. He said he would only forgive her if he could slap her back with his toad horns. The crowd didn't like that, because Toby was a big strong toad and Fran might easily get seriously hurt. So Toby stayed angry.

Fran felt awful and kept trying. She got a salve for where she slapped him, and gave him some really expensive bottled swamp water. Even more than that, she cooked him a beautiful botfly burger.

But Toby was a stubborn toad and would not forgive or make peace, even though he was as rude and guilty as Fran had been.

About then a very old toad emerged from a corner toadstool, limping along with the help of crutches. "Toby, let's make a deal. You can use your horns to smack Fran if I can first break your leg.

Toby recognized the old toad as his teacher, Mr. Ribbit; and he hung his head in silence. When Toby was small, weak toad; his angry and disobedient attitude had aggravated and bunch of wild minnows; and they all attacked him. Mr. Ribbit had jumped into the fray to save him, but he had lost a leg in the process. Toby hadn't thought about it for a long time until he saw him just now. He realized he was being very unfair and ungracious to Fran. He realized that we all make mistakes sometimes. And if we are to return blow for blow, wound for wound, all we are doing is prolonging and making worse the damage. So, even though he was still aching from the leg slap, he realized she was genuinely sorry and trying to make it right. Toby decided to forgive her. With peace made, Mr. Ribbit treated everyone to some special Gran-seasoned botfly burgers and it was the best burger Toby had ever had. Everyone agreed that being at peace with each other was much more fun than trying to get even with slaps.

This week, we extinguish the **Reconcile** candle, recognizing how challenging it is desire, seek, and find wholeness in strained, and even dysfunctional, relationships.

Yet that is what God calls us to do for Jesus. It is what he did for us in Jesus as well. While we were lost, he sought us out to forgive us. While we betrayed him by sin, he created a means to let that division go. While we wandered and scattered away, he came to bring us back. We punished and hung Jesus on a cross, but by those wounds we are healed.



He shows us the diligence, the way, and the cost; for the goal of all relationships simply is not the absence of conflict, it is not simply the appearance peace created

by emotional separation or physical distancing. It is about hoping and working for the restoration of relationships. For Jesus also shows us the pure joy it is when the lost are found, wanderers return, and people accept restoration and the freedom of condemnation -- when true reconciliation occurs -- and that is why he calls us to work for it, and Paul helps us with the proper attitudes and actions of how we do that.

### **Responsive Reading 1**

R: Anyone who is angry with a brother or sister will be subject to judgment... Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there.

**C: We will first go and reconcile with them, and then return and offer our gift.**

R: Love must be genuine. Despise doing wrong. Strive to do good. Delight in honoring each other.

**C: We will love one another with mutual affection.**

R: Work hard. Serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in hope. Be patient in problems. Persevere in prayer. Help God's people in need and welcome strangers as one of your own.

**C: We will practice hospitality.**

R: Pray for God's blessing on those who are troubling you. Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.

**C: We will be attune ourselves to live in harmony with one another.**

R: Do not think you are above anyone, or that you have all the answers. Don't pay back evil with more evil. Don't sink to that level. That'd be like putting out a fire with a flamethrower. Leave repayment to God, who calls you to feed your hungry enemies and satisfy their thirst. By your genuine acts of undeserved grace, perhaps their conscience will burn, and they will turn toward you (and God) seeking peace.

**C: We will live honorably no matter what people do to us.**

R: You cannot force others to live harmoniously with you, but do everything that is within your power to live in peace with all people.

**C: We will not be overcome with evil. We will conquer evil by doing good.**

(Inspired Matthew 5:22-24, Romans 12:9-21)

**Music** It is not easy to live in peace with people who are not peaceful. If we will attempt the challenge of mutual harmony with these people, we must keep before us the effort Jesus made so we could be at peace with God. Sing with us

### **And Can it Be**

Words: Charles Wesley, 1739 Music: Thomas Campbell, 1835  
arr. by Jeremy Johnson arr. © 2008 Van Ness Press, Inc.

And can it be that I should gain an interest in the Savior's blood?  
Died he for me, who caused his pain? For me, who Him to death pursued?  
Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?

He left his Father's throne above, so free, so infinite His grace;  
Emptied Himself of all but love, and bled for Adam's helpless race.  
'Tis mercy all, immense and free; O praise my God, it reaches me.  
Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?

Long my imprisoned spirit lay fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray, I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.  
My chains fell off, my heart was free; I rose, went forth and followed Thee.  
Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?

No condemnation now I dread; Jesus, and all in Him is mine!  
Alive in Him, my living Head, and clothed in righteousness divine;  
Bold I approach the eternal throne and claim the crown, through Christ my own.  
Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?  
Amazing love! How can it be that Thou, my God, should die for me?

**Music** In an old Abbot and Costello routine, (remember them?) Costello accidentally broke Throckmorton P Gildersleeve's window, and insulting words quickly grew into a feud. Lou Costello dares Gildersleeve to step over a chalk line he had drawn on the ground. Gildersleeve replies, "Very well, I stepped over the line – Now what?" and he laughs maliciously as only Gildersleeve can laugh. Costello answers, "Now you are on my side." (From podcast "Vintage Classic Radio Episodes: Abbot and Costello "With the Great Gildersleeve" If it were only that easy. When forgiveness seems impossible, when being civil is mocked as weakness, when acceptance is seen as compromising values, we need to remind ourselves of the power of Jesus' love that flows through us. It is in his power that relationships are built, maintained, and if need be, restored. Sing with us about the effectiveness of Christ's power that is always with us ...

## Jesus

Words and Music: Chris Tomlin, Ed Cash  
© 2016 Worship Together Music

There is a truth older than the ages. There is a promise of things yet to come.  
There is one born for our salvation, Jesus.  
There is a Light that overwhelms the darkness.  
There is a kingdom that forever reigns.  
There is freedom from the chains that bind us.  
Jesus, Jesus.

### Chorus

Who walks on the waters, who speaks to the sea.  
Who stands in the fire beside me.  
He roars like a Lion. He bled as the Lamb  
He carries my healing in His hands, Jesus.

There is a name I call in times of trouble.  
There is a song that comforts in the night.  
There is a voice that calms the storm that rages.  
He is Jesus, Jesus.

### Chorus

Messiah, My Savior, there is power in Your name.  
You're my rock and my Redeemer, there is power in Your name, in Your name.

### Chorus

God, You walk on the waters, You speak to the sea,  
You stand in the fire beside me.  
You roar like a lion, You bled as the Lamb, You carry my healing in Your hands.  
Jesus, there is no one like You. Jesus, there is no one like You.

**Music** Of course, his power is only available if we invite his presence to be with us, and to be aware of him with us as we face our challenges, and in the routine times as well. As we prepare for prayer, let's invite God's Spirit to turn our focus and awareness on him....

## Holy Spirit

Words & Music: Katie Torwalt & Bryan Torwalt © 2011 Jesus Culture

There's nothing worth more that will ever come close,  
no thing can compare, You're our living hope.  
Your presence, Lord.  
I've tasted and seen of the sweetest of loves,

where my heart becomes free and my shame is undone.  
Your presence, Lord.

Chorus

Holy Spirit, You are welcome here.  
Come flood this place and fill the atmosphere.  
Your glory, God, is what our hearts long for,  
to be overcome by Your presence, Lord.

Let us become more aware of Your presence.  
Let us experience the glory of Your goodness.

(Repeat 2 x)

Chorus 2x

**Prayers** Lord, we praise you for your presence in our lives and for all goodness that you shower upon us in the Holy Spirit through Jesus Christ. We especially praise and thank you for promises kept and hope for tomorrow, the enjoyment of friends, the joy of families, the wonders of your creation, our love for faith and the church.

Remind us that as brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ, we are all your children in your family. We pray for those who are too often forgotten, for people who have lost hope, for those who mourn, who suffer because of war or economy or personal tragedy, for those who are lonely.

**Petitions** We offer our prayers for whom you love, specifically we name the family and friends of Jerry Weaver's brother-in-law Mark Stone, who passed away last Tuesday \*, We continue to pray for \* the Melvilles' request for us to pray for a quick recovery for Tom Runyan who has a brain bleed and difficulty breathing \* We continue to pray for \* The LaRoy's daughter requested prayers for those suffering with nerve pain, \* the Gordoniers' request prayers for their friend Al who got his artificial leg last week. \* We continue to pray for \* for Don Wilkinson \* for Stephen Brittain, \* for Lisa \* for Jan Martin, \* and certainly there are other people and situations we have not named out loud, but are on the hearts of people in this room. We pray that your will will be done for your name's sake. Renew our spirits. Help us to look to the future with confidence and the assurance of your comforting peace that only Christ can give and no one can remove from us. It was he who taught us to pray **Lord's Prayer**



## Intro to and Bible Reading 2

Some religious leaders were trying to usurp Paul's apostolic authority in Corinth by proudly pointing to their own allegedly spectacular and superior ministries. Then to create even more clout for themselves, they knock Paul down by accusing him of being out of his mind. (Some suggest that they may have pointed to his dramatic conversion story as evidence). Paul writes to those who were thinking of abandoning his leadership in preference for these self-aggrandizing leaders. He tells them it is not people who will judge him or them, but God. And it is not sensationalism, but a sincere heart that is important, and God knows he is sincere and hopes that they know his heart too. Paul is so confident in his trust of God and his destiny that it is his goal, dead or alive, to please the Lord, and it is for this he works hard to persuade others to believe in Jesus. And if he (and his mission team) is crazy, it is to bring glory to God, and if they are not, it is for the benefit of the Corinthians.



(See 2 Corinthians 5:6-13)

Either way, Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live for themselves.

Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them. So we have stopped evaluating others from a human point of view. At one time we thought of Christ merely from a human point of view. How differently we know him now! This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun! And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So we are Christ's ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, "Come back to God!" For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.      2 Corinthians 5:14-21 (NLT)

**Music** Jesus did everything necessary to reconcile our world with God and with each other. Someday, when God decides the time is right, his plan will come to completion. If comfortable standing, please do so and sing with us Glorious Day...

### **Glorious Day (Living He Loved Me)**

Words: J Wilbur Chapman

Music and Additional Words: Michael Bleeker & Mark Hall

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One day when heaven was filled with his praises,  
One day when sin was as black as could be,  
Jesus came forth to be born of a virgin,  
dwelt among men, my example is he!

The Word became flesh, and the Light shined among us – his glory revealed!

#### Chorus

Living, he loved me; dying, he saved me;  
and buried, he carried my sins far away;  
Rising, he justified freely forever: One day he's coming  
– O glorious day! O glorious day!

One day they led him up Calvary's mountain,  
one day they nailed him to die on a tree;  
Suffering anguish, despised and rejected: bearing our sins, my Redeemer is he!  
The hands that healed nations stretched out on a tree and took the nails for me.

#### Chorus

One day the grave could conceal him no longer,  
one day the stone rolled away from the door;  
then he arose over death he had conquered;  
now is ascended, my Lord evermore!  
Death could not hold him; the grave could not keep him from rising again!

#### Chorus

Glorious day ---- !

One day the trumpet will sound for his coming,  
one day the skies with his glories will shine;  
Wonderful day, my beloved One bringing; My Savior, Jesus is mine!

#### Chorus

Glorious day ---- !  
O glorious day! O glorious day!

## Sermon Mutiny of his Bounty

There was a large estate that contained a large mansion, additional homes, gardens, rolling hills, flowing streams, and fields that always produced bumper crops. Everyone on the estate was family, and they enjoyed their life together very much under the kind-hearted one who owned it all. Everyone followed the way of life the owner had laid out and the community was one.

Think: Good friends, a warm peaceful night, gentle breeze, moon shining, and stars lighting the land, birds softly cooing, brooks bubbling in the background. Add in the background your favorite feel-good music that tugs and your heart's contentment coils. Okay? Taken to its extreme and ultimate end, everything about this community brings fresh new invigorating life to its citizens each day.

The children grew up in all this bounty. But as they grew, they began to compare their different roles. They began to ignore the ideas of the one who created and designed this community. They noticed how their personal tastes didn't always jive with others; and they began to fight for their own way of thinking as the only acceptable way of thinking (like the toad at theme time). Other differences cropped up. People began to disagree and argue. Little things became big things. They began to resent and even go to war with each other.

Think of being surrounded by strangers that give you a queasy feeling, a perpetual cold, dark and stormy night – sporadic lightning strikes followed by rumbling thunder that rattles your gut and makes it feel like the ground is shaking. The rain is near freezing and drenches you and makes you shiver to the bone, freezing the ground and making your footing unsure. The only light is when the lightning strikes -- eerily lighting up those strange faces in the dark. Harmless animals are bedded down, leaving only the menacing growls and roars of predators too hungry and desperate to wait out the storm. Add in the background the typical thriller movie music that tenses every suspense-building fear receptor in your body. Taken to its extreme and ultimate end, everything about this community quickly gets *old* – negatively exhausting -- it brings spiritual and emotional death to its citizens each day.

When things seemed beyond control, the people would appeal back to the owner for help. They wished he would send someone to intervene -- mostly what they desired of this interloper is that he would use his power to enforce their personal preferences over against everyone else's. "Then we'll have peace."

The owner observed the perpetual conflict between all his children that resulted from the lack of love for him and his way. He said to his son – this defiant attitude they have toward me and toward each other is corrupting the community to where they will never experience peace. We cannot have selfishly rebellious people in our community if we want it to remain the bountiful, harmonious, community everyone has come to expect and experience here.

By the children's own discontent and desire to be sinfully selfish; a deathly barrier was built between the heavenly community of the owner and the people who followed him and his son --- and all the other children living in the destructive community of their own creating.

Even though they were downright mutinous, filled with poor decisions and bad attitudes and wicked behaviors; they were still all his children, and he loved them deeply and could never turn his back on them. The owner inspired some people to know what the community could be like if they would only return to the right kind of relationship with him and others. And while some people taught powerfully and some people responded, this outward conformity to create the community of peace in the midst of a storm didn't work very well for very long. Something more drastic was going to have to take place.

The owner and the son launched a plan. The son left the community of peace and entered into the stormy community. While there, he lived a non-corrupting life. He showed people what life would be like if everyone died to their selfish stormy pattern of living and lived how he lived.

Was this son the one they had been hoping would come and intervene for them? Yes, but he was so much more than that. He wasn't just going to give them their way... He could not be seen in those limited standards, standards based on earthly power, riches, popularity, or beauty. Standards that limited him to being a representative of just one group of people along national, racial, political, economic or any other classification of people. He represented not one of the groups of the storm, but the completely different, new type of community that was now available for all the children of creation to return to. That new creation knows no division.

But he was more than just an example of what it could be like. People of the storm could never return to the owner's community unless they first eliminated the stormy patterns of the old destructive community and were renewed to his new, refreshing community. But people who have the old community within them do not have the power within themselves -- even in death -- to overcome the deathly barrier

between the two communities. The barrier had to be overcome by someone uncorrupted by the old community's corruption. And there was the son, in the storm, but not corrupted.

So the owner placed the storminess of all people on his son so as to not count the people's storms against them. He made his son a storm, so that the storminess of people is exchanged for the uncorrupted peace and rightness of the son. By this, the owner seeks to draw the whole stormy world back to his ever-new, fresh and peaceful order.

But as we already hinted at, the caveat is that when people of the storm enter the new community, they are (compelled by love and newness) to look at others from this new community perspective and to leave that storm behind...

I am going to throw a metaphor in within the metaphor for just a second because it crossed my mind. I've been in a lot of places, and especially the places that were touristy types of towns. And often the natives would say something like this: "People come here because they love it so much. And then they come to summer and even live here because they love it so much, and then they want to change everything to be like it is where they were trying to get away from because they love it so much. The stormy people cannot come into the place of peace with their storms and create storms. They cannot live by the principles of both worlds. Storm and calm cannot co-exist in the same place. You cannot bring the storm of the old, corrupted world into the wholeness of the uncorrupted world and expect to feel and experience peace. They must be able to see the world as the owner and his son see the world: always new, and the old completely gone.

All who choose to enter the new world do not enter it immediately. They are first made ambassadors. They are the new creation, living out the new creation, authorized by the new creation to represent that new creation *in the stormy world*, just like the son did – and their calling is to declare that the owner has laid all the storms on the son rather than on the people, dissolving the barrier so that people can enter the new order and be in a new relationship with the owner if they leave their storms behind. End of metaphor/parable. **[Pause]**

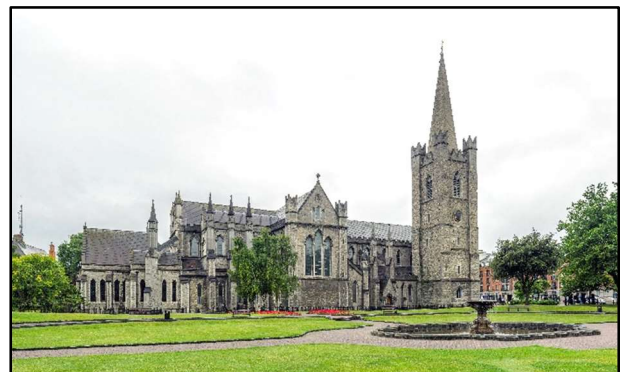
We heard in the introduction to the reading that Paul is having a problem with some Corinthians some of who have already rejected him and his teachings in favor of other leaders who they deemed as more qualified by human standards (spectacular, popular, beauty, brawn, eloquence – whatever it might have been). It is easier to want revenge than to seek or offer forgiveness. It would have been

easier to hold a grudge than to let it go. It would have been easier to nurse a wound than turn it over to God's healing touch. It is easier to shake the dust off the feet, disengage, and move on than it is to hang in there and try to melt hearts that have turned cold on him. But Paul doesn't look at them with human inclinations or expectations, but from a heavenly perspective.

The heavenly perspective is that God is working in Christ, and that despite our terrible treatment of God (sinning against his ways), and of Christ (crucifying him to sustain those sinful ways) – but he did not give up on us. Because Christ chose not to do the human thing and seek hard justice, but instead faithfully lived and loved and died and rose again with forgiveness in his heart --- we happily receive the good news that God has done the work of reconciliation and he no longer has anything against us – he will welcome us and there is no condemnation for those who accept his invitation.

Paul accepted this invitation that came to him (rather forcefully) on the Damascus Road, if you know that story. (See Acts 9:1-23, 22:3ff) Therefore, Christ's love within him compels Paul to not give up on the rejecting Corinthians. Following Christ's example, who prayed forgiveness on those who crucified him. Paul writes that he is convinced that God is working with him and his team, and that despite the Corinthian's terrible treatment of them, there are no hard feelings on Paul's side and he would welcome them back into a peaceful relationship with God and with himself again. There need be no continuing resistance to him, and there shouldn't be if they are living in the new order of grace and hard-earned peace.

In 1492, Sir James Butler, the Earl of Ormand and Gerald Fitzgerald, Earl of Kildare were leaders of two prominent Irish families (clans, if you will). Both wanted someone from their family to hold the important position of Lord Deputy. As the struggle escalated, the Butlers realized the fighting was getting out of control and they took refuge in the Chapter house of St. Patrick's Cathedral. (a Chapter House is large room or building designed for large events) (Kind of like Armstrong (Fellowship) Hall for us, perhaps on a bigger scale). So they took refuge there. Fitzgerald also realized how horribly blown out of proportion this fighting had become between two [Christian] families. He called for them to come out and make peace. But the Butlers



feared it was a ploy to slaughter them and they refused. As a gesture of good faith, Gerald Fitzgerald, as head of the family, ordered a hole be cut in the door. He then thrust his arm through the door and offered his hand in peace. Seeing the risk that he took the Butler reasoned he was serious about making peace. The Butlers emerged and they did in fact make peace, at least for a time – (they had another feud quite a few years later).

Today this door is known as the “Door of Reconciliation” and it is still on display there in that Cathedral. While debated, some say this event inspired the famous Irish expression: “To chance your arm.” A phrase that means “to undertake something although it may be dangerous or unsuccessful.”



(Oxford languages) [stpatrickscathedral.ie/the-door-of-reconciliation](http://stpatrickscathedral.ie/the-door-of-reconciliation), et. al.

Fitzgerald, the Earl of Kildare took a big risk, he chanced his arm, seeking peace. He did everything in his power to bring a peaceful reconciliation. Paul chanced his arm in seeking peace with the Corinthian opposition. But he did everything in his power to bring a peaceful reconciliation. Jesus took a big chance – chancing his arm -- seeking peace with the world by dying on the cross. He did everything in his power to bring a peaceful reconciliation. It is just ours to reach out in faith and receive his offer to us, to leave our inner storms behind and enter into the new reality that he is creating, even as we live among the storms of our world.

Of course, reconciled peace does not always occur like it did at the fictional swamp cafe and the real feuding families at St Patrick’s Cathedral. Despite Paul’s efforts to clarify the faith for the Corinthians, letters written to them in post Bible days reveal that they still had many of the same misunderstandings and problems that they did in Paul’s day. They didn’t learn. The feuding families eventually went back to feuding, at least off and on, in the following years. Despite Jesus’ incredible efforts and sacrifice and prayers *for at least his followers* to live in unity (See John 17) Clearly, not everyone has accepted Christ’s invitation to believe and live for God in heaven, much less strive for unity with others, even among his people.

When the poet Elizabeth Barrett became the wife of Robert Browning, her parents disapproved and disowned her. Elizabeth wrote to them almost every week, telling them that she loved them and longed for a reconciliation. After 10 years, she received a huge box in the mail that contained all the notes she had sent. None of them had been opened. These "love letters" are now a part of classical English

literature for all to read, but it is really sad to think that the ones they were intended for never read them, for they *might* have had a relationship healed.

It doesn't always work how we hope because, well -- despite the Damascus Road being quite dramatic and powerful, it was not a conquest -- Paul wasn't captured as if he had NO choice in the matter. He still could have declined Jesus, he could have kept doing what he was doing. It is always an offer, an invitation -- Jesus forces no one, or it defeats the definition of love. *Love* -- cannot be forced. We cannot control how others respond. But we can control our own loving attitudes and actions, and we can do everything within our power to become unified and harmonious, because that is what God did for us in Jesus. While we were lost, he sought us out to forgive us. While we betrayed him, he created a means to let it go. While we wandered and scattered away, he hung on a cross to bring us back. We punished him, by those wounds we are healed.

He shows us the way and the cost; in the hopes that we can also discover the pure joy that can come when true reconciliation happens. (See, for example, Luke 15, esp vv 6-7, 10, 32) Jesus says the joy is so wonderful that the only natural response is to call for a party to celebrate -- be it a lost sheep, a lost coin, or the return of a wayward child. Paul sums up the reconciliation we have with God this way:

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's condemnation. For since our friendship with God was restored by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be saved through the life of his Son. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God because our Lord Jesus Christ has made us friends of God.          Romans 5:8-11 (NLT)

And by extension, friends with each other.

## **Prayer**

Let's pray. Lord, we so want to live in your new world of peace, but we are learning it does not come easy. We find it difficult to find clarity of what it means to live out the heavenly perspective in this stormy world, where it is too easy to fail, too easy to get selfish, too easy to be overcome by evil, too easy to get caught up in the storminess that surrounds us. Forgive us. Help us seek the good of others as Christ sought our good, not because we deserved it, not just once, but always, lest our inner storms return. It is because of what you did on the cross that we are confident



that you have freed us from the power of the storms and granted us peace, enabling us to overcome evil with good. Therefore, be with us as we journey toward the cross and beyond, that we may carry the world of peace in this stormy world in which we live. In Jesus name we pray. Amen.

**Music** The power that God offers us to live by his principles of peace is wonderful. That he doesn't use that power to overwhelm and coerce us, but rather demonstrates his love by taking our place to meet the demands of justice for our sins, inviting us to join his family – well that is nothing short of amazing –let's sing

### **This is Amazing Grace**

Words and Music: Jeremy Riddle, Josh Farro, Phil Wickham

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Who breaks the power of sin and darkness?  
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger?  
The King of Glory; The King of above all kings.

Who shakes the whole earth with holy thunder?  
Who leaves us breathless in awe and wonder?  
The King of Glory; The King above all kings.

#### Chorus

This is amazing grace, this is unfailing love;  
that you would take my place, that you would bear my cross.  
You would lay down your life that I would be set free --.  
Jesus, I sing for all that you've done for me.

Who brings our chaos back into order?  
Who makes the orphan a son and daughter?  
The King of Glory; The King above all kings.

Who rules the nations with truth and justice;  
Shines like the sun in all of its brilliance?  
The King of Glory; the King above all kings.

#### Chorus

Worthy is the lamb who was slain.  
Worthy is the king who conquered the grave.  
(Three Times)

Worthy is the lamb who was slain; worthy, worthy, worthy!

#### Chorus

## **Blessing**

Just as God's Son was sent into the world to heal and redeem, so God sends you into the world this day to be light and love, healing and hope. Go to be light for the world! And may the grace and peace of God the Creator, the Redeemer, and the Sustainer be upon you remain with you always. Amen.

adapted from "*O Merciful God: God of Wisdom: Prayers for the Fourth Sunday in Lent,*"  
by Rev. Kathryn Matthews Huey and the Rev. Susan A. Blain. [ucc.org](http://ucc.org).