

December 15, 2019

Why We Need Zechariah & Elizabeth

Free Grace Presbyterian Church

SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

It's not simply that God didn't forget. It's that in God's remembering, He acts... Today as you read this, perhaps all you hear is the silence of God. Like Zechariah & Elizabeth, you are faithful and you earnestly believe God. But all you hear in your suffering is His silence. No cure for your illness. No positive pregnancy test. No new job offers... Sometimes God has to quiet us so we can hear Him. Sometimes we have to be still so we can see Him move. Sometimes our words and our busyness get in the way of our faith.

Daniel Darling

Vice-president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission and Baptist pastor

"My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior... He has helped his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy, as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his offspring forever."
Luke 1:46-47, 54-55

Our hope is not hung upon such an untwisted thread as, 'I imagine so,' or 'It is likely'; but the cable, the strong rope of our fastened anchor, is the oath and promise of Him who is eternal verity.

Samuel Rutherford

17th century Scottish Presbyterian pastor

He is the LORD our God; his judgments are in all the earth. He remembers his covenant forever, the word that he commanded, for a thousand generations, the covenant that he made with Abraham, his sworn promise to Isaac, which he confirmed to Jacob as a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant.

Psalms 105:7-10

The manger scene captures something that is true of life in a fallen world. Joy mingles with hardship. Promise mingles with messiness. But in Bethlehem, Jesus entered right in. He fulfilled the promise, and he provided the joy, in the middle of a scene that would otherwise have been sad and unremarkable.

Daniel Clifford

Presbyterian pastor

But Zion said,
"The LORD has
forsaken me; my Lord has
forgotten me."

"Can a woman forget her nursing child, that she should have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you. Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me."

Isaiah 49:14-16

A lack of anticipation that anything will ever change can lead to spiritual languor, which, in turn, leads to a voice that is mute about the hope that God's promises awaken... We as Christians can become so wrapped up in our own little world that we fail to lift up our eyes to see the unimaginable things God has planned and promised... We as Christians should measure our hopes for today and tomorrow in a despairing world by the promises that God has unfolded in Scripture that extend far beyond the materiality of this orb.

David Garland

NT scholar and president of Baylor University

GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Leader: Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son,

Hebrews 1

People: whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

Leader: Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,

Luke 1

People: that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;

Leader: to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath that he swore to our father Abraham,

People: to grant us that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.

We serve God, coming and worshipping his Son

"Angels, from the Realms of Glory"



1. An - gels, from the realms of glo - ry, wing your flight o'er all the earth;
2. Shep-herds in the fields a - bid - ing, watch - ing o'er your flocks by night,
3. Sa - ges, leave your con - tem - plations, bright - er vi - sions beam a - far;
4. Saints be - fore the al - tar bend - ing, watch - ing long in hope and fear,
5. All cre - a - tion, join in prais - ing God the Fa - ther, Spir - it, Son;



ye who sang cre - a - tion's sto - ry, now pro - claim Mes - si - ah's birth:
God with man is now re - sid - ing, yon - der shines the in - fant Light:
seek the great De - sire of na - tions; ye have seen his na - tal star:
sud - den - ly the Lord, de - scend - ing, in his tem - ple shall ap - pear:
ev - er - more your voic - es rais - ing to th'e - ter - nal Three in One:



REFRAIN



Come and wor - ship, come and wor - ship, wor - ship Christ, the new - born King.



Jesus Christ is the perfect display of God's grace and glory and therefore he is the ultimate call to worship.

GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

Genesis 3
Romans 5

Sin and death and our attempts to shift the blame enter the world

And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the LORD God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

The LORD God said to the serpent,
"Because you have done this,
cursed are you above all livestock
and above all beasts of the field;
on your belly you shall go,
and dust you shall eat
all the days of your life.
I will put enmity between you and the woman,
and between your offspring and her offspring;
he shall bruise your head,
and you shall bruise his heel."

Sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.

We confess that this is not a story of the past or a fable to teach us a moral but our story, our problem, the reality of our sin

We use this time in God's presence to confess our sins and our need for God's grace, silently, personally before him alone. We invite you to join us in sorrow over your sin and joy in his grace and mercy in Jesus Christ.

God reveals the offspring that was promised, the one that bruises the serpent's head and saves us from our sin

"She will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins..." Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous... where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord... For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

A full prayer of confession acknowledges that our sin is more than an isolated example of bad judgment; it is a way of life. Sin is our response to God—fleeing from him and running to other things. We confess that we are sinful people, and we live in need of a Savior.

Matthew 1
Romans 5 and 6

We rejoice in the free gift of God

"Good Christian Men, Rejoice"

1. Good Chris-tian men, re - joi-ce, with heart and soul and voice;
2. Good Chris-tian men, re - joi-ce, with heart and soul and voice;
3. Good Chris-tian men, re - joi-ce, with heart and soul and voice;

give ye heed to what we say: Je - sus Christ is born to - day;
now ye hear of end - less bliss: Je - sus Christ was born for this!
now ye need not fear the grave: Je - sus Christ was born to save!

earth and heav'n be - fore him bow, and he is in the man-ger now.
He hath o - pened heav-en's door, and man is bless-ed ev - er-more.
Calls you one and calls you all to gain his ev - er - last-ing hall.

Christ is born to - day! Christ is born to - day!
Christ was born for this! Christ was born for this!
Christ was born to save! Christ was born to save!

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."
John 3

Written for the first Sunday of Advent in the early 17th century, this hymn cries out of the coming of the King of glory while calling us to be ready for when he comes again.

"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!"

1. Lift up your heads, ye might - y gates! Be -
 2. O blest the land, the ci - ty blest, where
 3. Fling wide the por - tals of your heart; make
 4. So come, my Sov - ereign, en - ter in! Let

5

hold, the King of glo - ry waits; the
 Christ the Ru - ler is con - fessed! O
 it a tem - ple, set a - part from
 new and nob - ler life be - gin! The

9

King of kings is draw - ing near, the
 hap - py hearts and hap - py homes to
 earth - ly use for heav'n's em - ploy, a
 Ho - ly Spi - rit, guide us on, un -

13

Sav - ior of the world is here.
 whom this King in tri - umph comes!
 dorned with prayer and love and joy,
 til the glo - rious crown be won.

GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

⁶⁷And his father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and prophesied, saying,

Luke 1:67-75

⁶⁸“Blessed be the Lord God of Israel,
for he has visited and redeemed his people
⁶⁹and has raised up a horn of salvation for us
in the house of his servant David,
⁷⁰as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,
⁷¹that we should be saved from our enemies
and from the hand of all who hate us;
⁷²to show the mercy promised to our fathers
and to remember his holy covenant,
⁷³the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us
⁷⁴that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies,
might serve him without fear,
⁷⁵in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.”

Sermon

Rev. Per Almquist

Why We Need Zechariah & Elizabeth

The Little People of Christmas

It is not enough to come to Scripture with a mind, however clear, powerful or intellectual. In the understanding and elucidation of Scripture, the spirit is very much more important even than the mind.
D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones

GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

God remembers his people, visiting and acting in our lives as we celebrate the Lord's Supper

We celebrate God's free grace to us in Jesus Christ by observing the Lord's Supper each Sunday. We invite to the Lord's Table all those who are baptized followers of Jesus Christ, under the authority of Christ and his body, the Church. By eating the bread and drinking the cup with us as a visitor, you are acknowledging to our church that you are in covenant with God. You also acknowledge that you are a sinner, without hope except in the sovereign mercy of God, and that you are trusting in Jesus Christ alone for your salvation. If you have any doubts about your participation, please speak to one of the elders after the service. Wine and bread are the elements of the supper as instituted by Jesus Christ and so we follow his example.

We enjoy Christ
only as we
embrace Christ
clad in his own
promises.
John Calvin

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel"

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el, and ran - som cap - tive
2. O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes, on
3. O come, thou Rod of Jes - se, free thine own from Sa - tan's
4. O come, thou Day-spring from on high, and cheer us by thy
5. O come, thou Key of Da - vid, come and o - pen wide our

Is - ra - el, that mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here,
Si - nai's height, in an - cient times didst give the law
tyr - an - ny; from depths of hell thy peo - ple save,
draw - ing nigh; dis - perse the gloom - y clouds of night,
heav'n - ly home; make safe the way that leads on high,

un - til the Son of God ap - pear.
in cloud and maj - es - ty and awe.
and give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave. Re - joice! Re - joice!
and death's dark shad - ows put to flight.
and close the path to mis - er - y.



"Mary Consoles Eve"

Eve, my sister
 The one who took the fall
 Eve, my sister
 The mother of us all
 Lift up your head
 Don't hide your blushing face
 The promised One
 Is finally on His way

Almost, not yet, already
Almost, not yet, already

Eve, it's Mary
 Now I'm a mother too
 The child I carry
 A promise coming true
 This baby comes to save us from our sin
 A servant King, His kingdom without end

Almost, not yet, already
Almost, not yet, already

He comes to make his blessings flow
 As far and wide as the curse is found
 He comes to make His blessings flow

Almost, not yet, already
Almost, not yet, already...soon

Eve, my sister
 The one who took the fall
 Eve, my sister
 The mother of us all
 The promised One
 Is finally on His way

Oh loving wisdom
 of our God, when
 all was sin and
 shame, a second
 Adam to the fight
 and to the rescue
 came. Oh wisest
 love that flesh and
 blood that did in
 Adam fail, should
 strive afresh
 against the foe,
 shouldst strive and
 shouldst prevail.
 John Henry Newman

The offering is not a duty; it is the response of gratitude to the grace that has been given, the joyful reaction of a person to their lover who pursues them passionately.

We serve God in holiness and righteousness as we give our tithes and offerings to him

We give our offerings to God as a public demonstration of our faith, putting our money where our mouths are. In this action we show what we claim, that our lives are organized around God and lived for him instead of ourselves.

"I Wonder as I Wander"

I wonder as I wander out under the sky,
How Jesus the Savior did come for to die.
For poor on'ry people like you and like I...
I wonder as I wander out under the sky.

When Mary birthed Jesus 'twas in a cow's stall,
With wise men and farmers and shepherds and all.
But high from God's heaven a star's light did fall,
And the promise of ages it then did recall.

If Jesus had wanted for any wee thing,
A star in the sky, or a bird on the wing,
Or all of God's angels in heav'n for to sing,
He surely could have it, 'cause he was the King.

We praise God that he remembers even as we cry out to him in prayer to see his promise fulfilled as he remembers us in every aspect of our lives

During this time we live in faith, trusting in the power of his grace, placing our lives and our church in his hands.

We ask that he would work in us and through us for his glory.

GOD SENDS US WITH HIS GRACE

We journey to Bethlehem, to the guarantee that God remembers his promises for all eternity

"O Little Town of Bethlehem"

1. O lit - tle town of Beth - le - hem, how still we see thee lie;
2. For Christ is born of Mar - y; and gath - ered all a - bove,
3. How si - lent - ly, how si - lent - ly, the won - drous gift is giv'n!
4. O ho - ly child of Beth - le - hem, de - scend to us, we pray;

a - bove thy deep and dream - less sleep the si - lent stars go by:
while mor - tals sleep, the an - gels keep their watch of won - d'ring love.
So God im - parts to hu - man hearts the bless - ings of his heav'n.
cast out our sin and en - ter in; be born in us to - day.

yet in thy dark streets shin - eth the ev - er - last - ing Light;
O morn - ing stars, to - geth - er pro - claim the ho - ly birth!
No ear may hear his com - ing, but in this world of sin,
We hear the Christ - mas an - gels the great glad tid - ings tell;

the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee to - night.
And prais - es sing to God the King, and peace to men on earth.
where meek souls will re - ceive him still, the dear Christ en - ters in.
O come to us, a - bid with us, our Lord Em - man - u - el.

Deeply moved by the scene as he rode through the Field of the Shepherds outside Bethlehem on Christmas Eve, Phillips Brooks returned home and penned this hymn. By focusing on the relative silence of his birth—the earth-shaking event that took place in a little town where few noticed—the hymn calls us to respond to Christ.

Psalms 125, 139, and 134

We go with the blessing of God's remembering his promise

Leader: As the mountains surround Jerusalem, so the Lord surrounds his people from this time forth and forevermore... He hems you in, behind and before, and lays his hand upon you... May the Lord bless you from Zion, he who made heaven and earth!

People: Amen

Please stay and join us for a time of refreshment and enjoying each other's company.

*This is a time to share in life together as the gospel calls us
as we reconnect with those we know and as we meet someone new.*

The benediction
sends us on our
way with a parting
word of God's
grace and
blessing,
reminding us that
we go in the power
of his promise to
be our God.



Welcome to Free Grace

We are a broken church full of broken people. We know we need God's free grace. Some of us have accepted this grace, some are exploring what it's all about. All of us are still trying to understand it. We are a church that seeks to proclaim this free grace of God with both our words and our lives. Not satisfied with simply talking about it, we want to live it out. We invite you to come, explore, and live God's free grace with us.

Our Connections



Free Grace is a congregation of the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA), a family of churches that seeks to be faithful to the Scriptures, true to the Reformed faith, and obedient to the Great Commission of Jesus Christ.

Our Leadership

Free Grace is lead by her elders, men called by God and set apart by the church to care and lead her as individual members, families, and as a whole. Our elders are:



Rev. Per Almquist (pastor)
Brian Cosgrove
Paul Martin
Ken Morris
Ben Van Dyke

Credits

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Meredith Stevens, *voice*; Connor Crawford, *voice*; Shane Stevens, *percussion*; Scott Almquist, *piano*; Beth Almquist, *piano, violin, voice*

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"Good Christian Men, Rejoice" Pubic Domain. Words: Medieval Latin Carol, tr. by John Mason Neale, 1853, alt. Music: German Melody, 14th century.

"O Come, O Come, Emmanuel" Public Domain. Words: Latin antiphons, 12th century; tr. by John Mason Neale, 1851, alt. 1961. Music: Plainsong, 13th century; arr. by Thomas Helmore, 1856.

"Lift Up Your Heads, Ye Mighty Gates!" Public Domain. Words: Based on Psalm 24, Georg Weissel, 1642, translated Catherine Winkworth, 1855, alt. Music: Psalmodia Evangelica, 1789.

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Everyone was looking for the King in all his glory and they missed the King in all his lowliness. For Christmas is not the celebration of my glory that caused Jesus' birth, but the good news in the midst of my poverty, failure, and brokenness that God remembers his promise.

broken people
bound together in Christ
for God's glory