

**December 22, 2019**

**Why We Need Caesar**  
*Free Grace Presbyterian Church*

## SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

When Christ first came among us  
we pushed him into an outhouse;  
and we have done our best to  
keep him there ever since.

J. R. H. Moorman  
20<sup>th</sup> century Anglican bishop

The true  
light, which gives  
light to everyone, was  
coming into the world. He  
was in the world, and the  
world was made through him,  
yet the world did not know  
him. He came to his own,  
and his own people did  
not receive him.

**John 1:9-11**

Those who believe in God can never in a way be  
sure of Him again. Once they have seen Him in a  
stable, they can never be sure where He will  
appear or to what lengths He will go or  
to what ludicrous depths of self-  
humiliation He will descend in His  
wild pursuit of man... there is no  
place or time so lowly and  
earthbound but that holiness can  
be present there too.

Frederick Buechner  
Author and teacher

As they were  
going along the road,  
someone said to him, "I will  
follow you wherever you go."  
And Jesus said to him, "Foxes  
have holes, and birds of the air  
have nests, but the Son of  
Man has nowhere to lay  
his head."

**Luke 9:57-58**

The entire human race had a  
place, and the Lord about to be  
born on earth had none. He found no  
room among men. He found no room in  
Plato, none in Aristotle, but in a manger,  
among beasts of burden and brute  
animals, and among the  
simple, too, and the  
innocent.

Jerome

4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century theologian, historian,  
and translator of the Vulgate

But you, O  
B e t h l e h e m  
Ephrathah, who are too  
little to be among the clans  
of Judah, from you shall come  
forth for me one who is to be  
ruler in Israel, whose coming  
forth is from of old, from  
ancient days.

**Micah 5:2**

F o r  
to us a child is born,  
to us a son is given; and the  
government shall be upon his  
shoulder, and his name shall be  
called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty  
God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Of the increase of his government and of  
peace there will be no end, on the throne  
of David and over his kingdom, to  
establish it and to uphold it with justice  
and with righteousness from this  
time forth and forevermore. The  
zeal of the LORD of hosts  
will do this.

**Isaiah 9:6-7**

# GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Leader: The true light, which enlightens everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

John 1  
Isaiah 9

**People:** **And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth...And from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.**

Leader: For to us a child is born, to us a son is given

## We come and worship

"O Come, All Ye Faithful"

1. O come, all ye faith - ful, joy - ful and tri - um - phant, O come ye, O  
2. God of God, Light of Light; lo, he ab -  
3. Sing, choirs of an - gels, sing in ex - ul - ta - tion, sing, all ye  
4. Yea, Lord, we greet thee, born this hap - py morn - ing: Je - sus, to

come ye to Beth - le - hem; come and be - hold him  
hors not the Vir - gin's womb: ver - y God, be -  
cit - i - zens of heav'n a - bove; glo - ry to God  
thee be all glo - ry giv'n; Word of the Fa - ther,

REFRAIN  
born the King of an - gels;  
got - ten, not cre - a - ted;  
in the high - est; O come, let us a - dore him, O come, let us a -  
late in flesh ap - pear - ing;

dore him, O come, let us a - dore him, Christ the Lord.

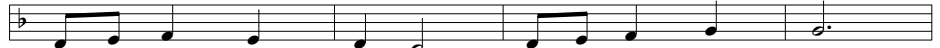
God doesn't give us a watertight argument for himself. He gives us a person: Jesus Christ. No one has seen God, but in Jesus Christ, God reveals himself to the world. Thus Jesus Christ calls us to come to God, to receive his grace and truth, and to respond in worship.

"At the Name of Jesus"

Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.  
Philippians 2



1. At the name of Je - sus ev - 'ry knee shall bow;  
 2. At his voice cre - a - tion sprang at once to sight;  
 3. Hum - bled for a sea - son to re - ceive a name  
 4. In your hearts en - throne him; there let him sub - due  
 5. Bro - thers, this Lord Je - sus shall re - turn a - gain,



ev - 'ry tongue con - fess him King of glo - ry now.  
 all the an - gel fa - ces, all the hosts of light,  
 from the lips of sin - ners un - to whom he came.  
 all that is not ho - ly, all that is not true.  
 with his Fa - ther's glo - ry o'er the earth to reign.



Tis the Fa - ther's plea - sure we should call him Lord,  
 thrones and do - mi - na - tions, stars u - pon their way,  
 Faith - ful - ly he bore it, spot - less to the last,  
 Crown him as your cap - tain in temp - ta - tion's hour;  
 For all earth - ly po - wers meet u - pon his brow,



who from the be - gin - ning was the migh - ty Word.  
 all the heav'n - ly or - ders in their great ar - ray,  
 brought it back vic - to - rious, when from death he passed.  
 let his will en - fold you in its light and pow'r.  
 and our hearts con - fess him King of Glo - ry now.



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# GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

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## **He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him**

The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him..."None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one."

John 1  
Romans 3

## **We confess that we turned aside from him and did not seek him**

*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.*

The wonder of Christmas is that though we rejected God turning to our own way instead, he came to us in the person of Jesus Christ to bring us back to himself. Our confession is an admission of both our rejection of him and his pursuing of us.

## **But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.**

To all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth... For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace... For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

John 1  
Colossians 1

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.  
Isaiah 9

**We see Christ's glory, full of grace and truth**

"What Child is This"

1. What child is this, who, laid to rest, on Mar - y's lap is sleep - ing?  
2. Why lies he in such mean es - tate, where ox and ass are feed - ing?  
3. So bring him in - cense, gold, and myrrh; come, peas - ant, king, to own him;

Whom an - gels greet with an - thems sweet, while shep - herds watch are keep - ing?  
Good Chris - tian, fear; for sin - ners here the si - lent Word is plead - ing.  
the King of kings sal - va - tion brings, let lov - ing hearts en - throne him.

This, this is Christ the King, whom shep - herds guard and an - gels sing:  
Nails, spear, shall pierce him through; the cross be borne for me, for you:  
Raise, raise the song on high, the vir - gin sings her lul - la - by:

haste, haste to bring him laud, the babe, the son of Mar - y.  
hail, hail the Word made flesh, the babe, the son of Mar - y.  
joy, joy for Christ is born, the babe, the son of Mar - y.

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# GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

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<sup>1</sup>In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be registered. <sup>2</sup>This was the first registration when Quirinius was governor of Syria. <sup>3</sup>And all went to be registered, each to his own town. <sup>4</sup>And Joseph also went up from Galilee, from the town of Nazareth, to Judea, to the city of David, which is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and lineage of David, <sup>5</sup>to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. <sup>6</sup>And while they were there, the time came for her to give birth. <sup>7</sup>And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in swaddling cloths and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.

Luke 2:1-7

**Sermon**

Rev. Per Almquist

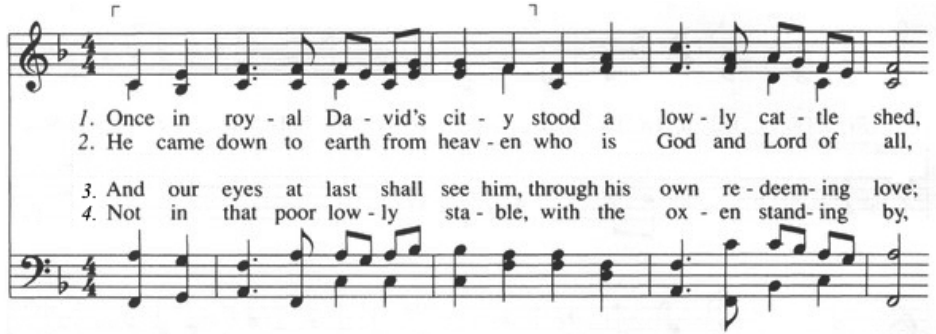
## **Why We Need Caesar**

The Little People of Christmas

In Scripture Jesus cries out to us, "Come to me." We come to him, the Word made flesh (John 1), as we come to the Word of God, the Bible. It is here that he confronts us with all the glory of God.

## We marvel at the King of kings

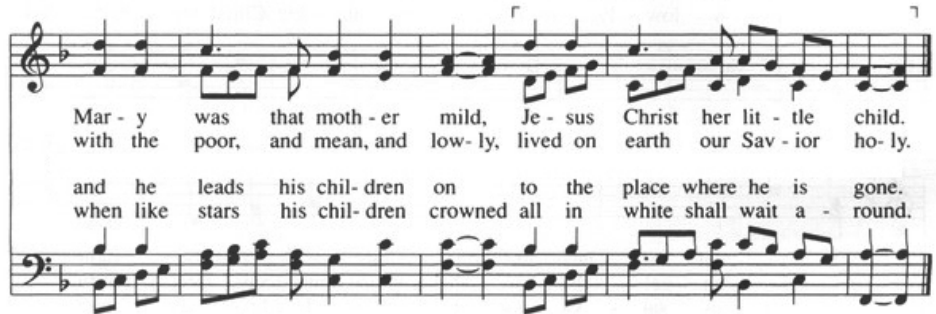
"Once in Royal David's City"



1. Once in roy - al Da - vid's cit - y stood a low - ly cat - tle shed,  
2. He came down to earth from heav - en who is God and Lord of all,  
3. And our eyes at last shall see him, through his own re - deem - ing love;  
4. Not in that poor low - ly sta - ble, with the ox - en stand - ing by,



where a moth - er laid her ba - by in a man - ger for his bed:  
and his shel - ter was a sta - ble, and his cra - dle was a stall:  
for that child so dear and gen - tle is our Lord in heav'n a - bove,  
we shall see him, but in heav - en, set at God's right hand on high;



Mar - y was that moth - er mild, Je - sus Christ her lit - tle child.  
with the poor, and mean, and low - ly, lived on earth our Sav - ior ho - ly.  
and he leads his chil - dren on to the place where he is gone.  
when like stars his chil - dren crowned all in white shall wait a - round.

And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger."

Luke 2



# GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

## We come to the manger and are fed the Bread of Life 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.

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

1. Let all mor - tal flesh keep   silence, and with fear and trem-bling stand;  
2. King of kings, yet born of   Mar-y, as of old on earth he stood;  
3. Rank on rank the host of   heav-en spreads its vanguard on the way,  
4. At his feet the six - winged ser-aph; cher - u - bim, with sleep-less eye,

pon - der noth-ing earth-ly - mind-ed, for with bless-ing in his hand,  
Lord of lords, in hu - man ves-ture, in the bod - y and the blood,  
as the Light of light de - scend-eth from the realms of end - less day,  
veil their fac - es to the pres-ence, as with cease-less voice they cry,

Christ our God to earth de - scend - eth, our full hom-age to de - mand.  
he will give to all the faith - ful his own self for heav'nly food.  
that the pow'rs of hell may van - ish as the darkness clears a - way.  
"Al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, al - le - lu - ia, Lord Most High!"

Our invitation to the feast of God comes at a price: the precious blood of Jesus his Son. We are outsiders, enemies, excluded. But Jesus takes the judgment we deserve. He becomes the ultimate outsider—pushed out of the world onto the cross; forsaken by his Father. As a result we become insiders, friends, included.  
Tim Chester

“Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace, according to your word; for my eyes have seen your salvation that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel.”  
 Luke 2

“Savior of the Nations, Come”

1. Sa - vior of the na - tions, come; show your - self the  
 2. Not by hu - man pow'r or seed did the wom - an's  
 3. Ma - ry then was found with child. still a vir - gin,  
 4. Christ laid down his ma - jes - ty; passed through dark Geth -  
 5. Christ in glo - ry in - ter - cede for your crea - ture's  
 6. Praise to you, O Lord we sing; praise to Christ, our

4 vir - gin's son. Mar - vel hea - ven, won - der earth,  
 womb con - ceive; On - ly by the Spir - it's breath  
 chaste and mild. God had fa - vored her with grace  
 se - ma - ne. Though he left his Fa - ther's home,  
 suf - fring need. Let your re - sur - rec - ting pow'r  
 new - born King! With the Fa - ther, Spi - rit one,

7 that our God chose such a birth.  
 was the Word of God made flesh.  
 to re - ceive the Prince of Peace.  
 Christ now sits on God's own throne.  
 soon com - plete the vic - t'ry hour.  
 let your last - ing king - dom come.

## **We bring our tithes and offerings and lay them before our king**

*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.*

## **We come to God through Jesus Christ asking that we may know his presence now and rejoice for all eternity in him**

O Immanuel,  
child of promise and sign of hope,  
you come from far beyond our ability to grasp  
to be one with us:  
in our days of expectation, may we know your presence  
that we may rejoice for all eternity in you.

O Lord of might,  
master of the universe and ruler of the house of Israel,  
your mighty acts have rescued your people  
from the midst of slavery, exile, war, and even death:  
raise your scepter over us, that your saving rule  
may be extended to all people in all places.

O Rod of Jesse,  
you reach deep down into the darkness of the earth  
and stir the world's longing for deliverance and hope:  
raise up within our own lives  
a spirit of courage and strength, of wisdom and insight,  
that we may do your work for the coming of your kingdom.

O Dayspring from on high,  
you shine with warm brightness and clean freshness,  
chasing the fearsome shadows of the night away:  
enlighten the lives of your people with visions of peace  
until you bring all things into the harmony of your kingdom.

We ask these things through the name of Jesus Christ,  
the light of the world, our Lord Immanuel,  
who with the Father and the Holy Spirit  
abides with us, one God now and forever. Amen

Though we parse prayer in all its parts, it will always carry mystery because it taps into the mind of God, serves His eternal decree, and waits on the Lord in dynamic exchange. Prayer holds for us an adventure of communion with the eternal God and completion of His unfolding purpose.  
Stanley D. Gale

# GOD SENDS US WITH HIS GRACE

## We worship the king who was laid in a manger for us

"Thou Who Wast Rich beyond All Splendor"

1. Thou who wast rich be - yond all splen - dor,  
 2. Thou who art God be - yond all prais - ing,  
 3. Thou who art love be - yond all tell - ing,

all for love's sake be - cam - est poor;  
 all for love's sake be - cam - est man;  
 Sav - ior and King, we wor - ship thee.

thrones for a man - ger did sur - ren - der,  
 stoop - ing so low, but sin - ners rais - ing,  
 E - man - u - el, with - in us dwell - ing,

sap - phire - paved courts for sta - ble floor.  
 heav'n - ward by thine e - ter - nal plan.  
 make us what thou would have us be.

Thou who wast rich be - yond all splen - dor,  
 Thou who art God be - yond all prais - ing,  
 Thou who art love be - yond all tell - ing,

all for love's sake be - cam - est poor.  
 all for love's sake be - cam - est man.  
 Sav - ior and King, we wor - ship thee.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.

2 Corinthians 8

**We hear the blessing that God makes flesh at Christmas**

Leader: Fear not, O Zion; let not your hands grow weak. The LORD your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.

Zephaniah 3

**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.*



## 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



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Joanne Crosby, *flute*; Millie Kate Barnard, *voice*; Wagner Sgobbi, *piano*; Beth Almquist, *violin, voice*

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Ralph and Imogene were there all right, only for once they didn't come through the door pushing each other out of the way. They just stood there for a minute as if they weren't sure they were in the right place – because of the candles, I guess, and the church being full of people. They looked like the people you see on the six o'clock news – refugees, sent to wait in some strange ugly place, with all their boxes and sacks around them.

It suddenly occurred to me that this was just the way it must have been for the real holy family, stuck away in a barn by people who didn't much care what happened to them. They couldn't have been very neat and tidy either, but more like this Mary and Joseph (Imogene's veil was cockeyed as usual, and Ralph's hair stuck out all around his ears). Imogene had the baby doll but she wasn't carrying it the way she was supposed to, cradled in her arms. She had it slung up over her shoulder, and before she put it in



the manger she thumped it twice on the back.

I heard Alice gasp and she poked me. "I don't think it's very nice to burp the baby Jesus," she whispered," as if he had colic." Then she poked me again. "Do you suppose he could have had colic?"

I said, "I don't know why not," and I didn't. He could have had colic, or been fussy, or hungry like any other baby. After all, that was the whole point of Jesus – that he didn't come down on a cloud like something out of "A m a z i n g Comics," but that he was born and lived... a real person...

When we came out of the church that night it was cold and clear, with crunchy snow underfoot and bright, bright stars overhead. And I thought about the angel of the Lord – Gladys, with her skinny legs and her dirty sneakers sticking out from under her robe, yelling at all of us, everywhere: "Hey! Unto you a child is born!"

— Barbara Robinson  
*The Best Christmas Pageant Ever*



broken people  
bound together in Christ  
for God's glory