

January 26, 2020

Christ's Pastoral Presence with His Dying People

Free Grace Presbyterian Church

SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

The true and victorious Christmas spirit does not look away from death, but directly at it. Otherwise, the message is cheap and false.

Fleming Rutledge
Episcopal priest

We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him.

Romans 6:9

The moment you enter the Valley of the Shadow of Death, things change. You discover that Christianity is not something doughy, passive, pious, and soft. Faith may be the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. But it also draws you into a world shorn of fearful caution. The life of belief teems with thrills, boldness, danger, shocks, reversals, triumphs, and epiphanies.

Tony Snow
journalist, political commentator,
and former White House Press Secretary

When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

"Death is swallowed up in victory."

"O death, where is your victory?"

O death, where is your sting?"

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:54-57

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4

Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery.

Hebrews 2:14-15

Dear God, I cannot love Thee the way I want to. You are the slim crescent of a moon that I see and my self is the earth's shadow that keeps me from seeing all the moon... what I am afraid of, dear God, is that my self shadow will grow so large that it blocks the whole moon, and that I will judge myself by the shadow that is nothing. I do not know You God because I am in the way.

Flannery O'Connor
20th century American writer

GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Leader: Remember to extol his work, of which men have sung. All mankind has looked on it; man beholds it from afar.

People: Behold, God is great, and we know him not; the number of his years is unsearchable.

Job 36
Psalm 145

Leader: For he draws up the drops of water; they distill his mist in rain, which the skies pour down and drop on mankind abundantly. Can anyone understand the spreading of the clouds, the thunderings of his pavilion?

People: Behold, he scatters his lightning about him and covers the roots of the sea.

Leader: Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, and his greatness is unsearchable. One generation shall commend your works to another, and shall declare your mighty acts.

People: I will extol you, my God and King, and bless your name forever and ever. Every day I will bless you and praise your name forever and ever.

We bless and praise the name of our Great God and King

"Immortal, Invisible"

1. Im - mor - tal, in - vis - i - ble, God on - ly wise; in
2. Un - rest - ing, un - hast - ing, and si - lent as light; nor
3. Great Fa - ther of glo - ry, pure Fa - ther of light, thine

5
light in - ac - ces - si - ble, hid from our eyes; most
want - ing, nor wast - ing, thou rul - est in might; thy
an - gels a - dore thee, all veil - ing their sight; all

9
bles - sed, most glo - rious, the An - cient of Days, Al -
jus - tice like moun - tains, high soar - ing a - bove; thy
praise we would ren - der; O help us to see 'tis

13
migh - ty, vic - tor - ious, thy great name we praise!
clouds which are the foun - tains of good - ness and love.
on - ly the splen - dor of light hid - eth thee.

The gospel draws us into communal life with other people. Worship is a first-person-plural activity. It is extremely significant that in worship otherwise remarkably different people offer praise together, listen together, and profess one faith together.

GOD SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

Isaiah 59

God calls out to us of our rejection of him and his steadfast love for us

Behold, the LORD's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear... But the Redeemer will come to Zion, to those in Jacob who repent of their sins, declares the Lord.

The Bible says we are all dead in our sins. Our sin has earned us death and there is nothing we can do to change that. There simply is no life in us. But the gospel is that it does not end there. In Jesus Christ we have the free gift of God: eternal life with him in the immeasurable riches of his grace.

In repentance we come to the one who loves us and bridges the separation between us and God

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.

1 John 3 & 4

God shows his wondrous love for us

By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us...In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.

We cling to Christ, the wondrous love of God

"O Wondrous Love"

1.O won-drous love that will not let me go, I cling to you with all my strength and love that's come to dwell in me, Lord, who am I, that I should come to

4 soul, yet if my hold should ev - er fail, this won-drous love will nev-er let me know your ten-der voice as - sur - ing me your won-drous love will nev-er let me

1. 2.

8 go. 2.O won - drous go? I'm rest - ing in the _ ev - er - last - ing arms,

12 in the ev - er - faith - ful heart, the Shep - herd of my life. You'll car - ry

15 me on your might - y wings _ of grace, keep - ing me un - til the day I look in - to your

18 eyes. 3.O won - drous love that sings of Cal - va - ry, the sweet - est sound this sinner's ev - er 4.O won - drous love that rush - es o - ver me, I can't es - cape this riv - er's glo - rious

23 known: the song of your re - deem - ing Son, whose won - drous love will nev - er let me flow; you o - ver - whelm my days with good: your won - drous love will nev - er let me

1. 2.

27 go. I'm rest - ing go, your won - drous love will nev - er let me go.

But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
Romans 5

"My Jesus, I Love Thee"

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.
John 3

1. My Je - sus I love thee, I know thou art mine; for
 2. I love thee be - cause thou hast first lov - ed me and
 3. I'll love thee in life, and I'll love thee in death; I'll
 4. In man - sions of glo - ry and end - less de - light, I'll

6 thee all the fol - lies, of sin I re - sign. My
 pur - chased my par - don on Cal - va - ry's tree. I
 praise thee as long as thou lend - est me breath; and
 6 ev - er a - dore thee in hea - ven so bright; and

10 gra - cious Re - deem - er, my Sav - ior art thou; if
 love thee for wear - ing the thorns on thy brow; if
 say when the death - dew, lies cold on my brow: if
 10 sing with the glit - ter - ing crown on my brow: if

14 ev - er I loved thee, my Je - sus, 'tis now.
 ev - er I loved thee, my Je - sus, 'tis now.
 ev - er I loved thee, my Je - sus, 'tis now.
 14 ev - er I loved thee, my Je - sus, 'tis now.

19 Je - sus, 'tis now, my Je - sus, 'tis now.

GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

⁴Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4

Sermon

John Girardeau

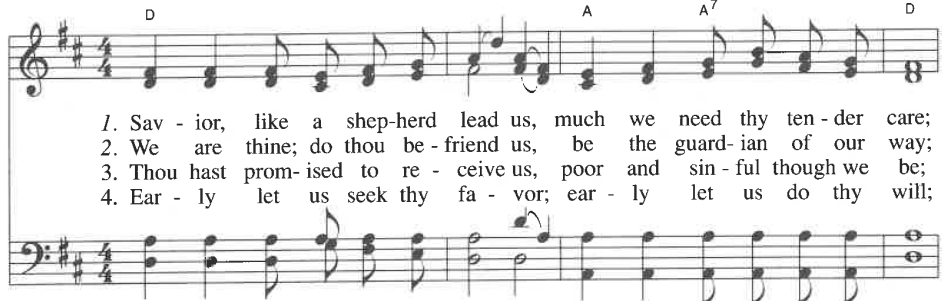
Christ's Pastoral Presence with His Dying People

preached by Mr. Kevin Kidd

Considered one of the four greatest preachers of the southern Presbyterian church, John Girardeau (1825-1898) was unique in that most of his preaching was to black slaves and then freedmen along the South Carolina coast and in Charleston, SC.

We rest in our Shepherd, who is with us in all of life even in the shadow of death

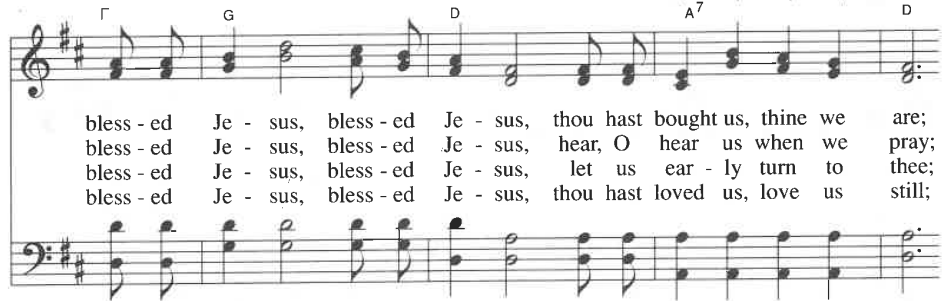
"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us"



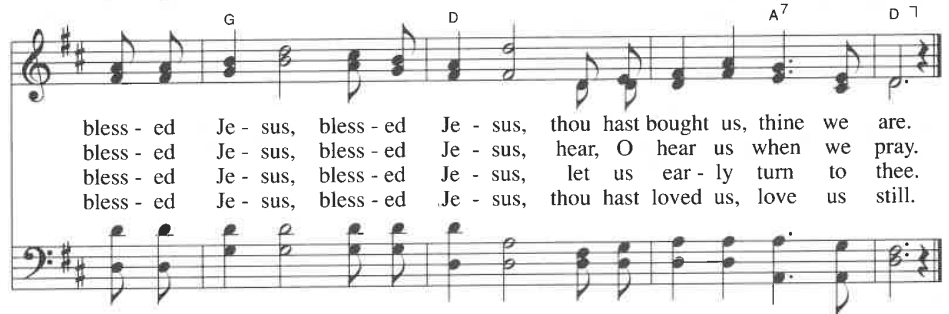
1. Sav - ior, like a shep-herd lead us, much we need thy ten - der care;
 2. We are thine; do thou be - friend us, be the guard - ian of our way;
 3. Thou hast prom - ised to re - ceive us, poor and sin - ful though we be;
 4. Ear - ly let us seek thy fa - vor; ear - ly let us do thy will;



in thy pleas - ant pas - tures feed us, for our use thy folds pre - pare:
 keep thy flock, from sin de - fend us, seek us when we go a - stray:
 thou hast mer - cy to re - lieve us, grace to cleanse, and pow'r to free:
 bless - ed Lord and on - ly Sav - ior, with thy love our bo - soms fill:



bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast bought us, thine we are;
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, hear, O hear us when we pray;
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, let us ear - ly turn to thee;
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast loved us, love us still;



bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast bought us, thine we are.
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, hear, O hear us when we pray.
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, let us ear - ly turn to thee.
 bless - ed Je - sus, bless - ed Je - sus, thou hast loved us, love us still.

But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice ... I am the good shepherd.

GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

We profess our faith, resting in the comfort of Christ's pastoral presence with us in life and in death

Heidelberg Catechism 1-2

Elder: What is your only comfort in life and in death?

People: That I am not my own, but belong—body and soul, in life and in death—to my faithful Savior Jesus Christ.

He has fully paid for all my sins with his precious blood, and has set me free from the tyranny of the devil. He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head without the will of my Father in heaven: in fact, all things must work together for my salvation.

Because I belong to him, Christ, by his Holy Spirit, assures me of eternal life and makes me wholeheartedly willing and ready from now on to live for him.

Elder: What must you know to live and die in the joy of this comfort?

People: Three things: first, how great my sin and misery are;
second, how I am set free from all my sins and misery;
third, how I am to thank God for such deliverance.

We bring our tithes and offerings to our great Shepherd, proclaiming that our trust is in him alone in life and death

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.

The Heidelberg Catechism was written in Germany in 1563. It was written to instruct young people and guide pastors and teachers as an "echo of the Bible." It is intensely personal and devotional in its approach, leading to its description as "the book of comfort" for Christians.

Prayer is our way
of entering into
the happiness of
God himself.

Tim Keller

We come to our great Shepherd in prayer, resting in his presence

O God, most high, most glorious,
the thought of your infinite serenity cheers us,
for we are toiling and moiling, troubled and distressed,
but you are for ever at perfect peace.
Your designs cause you no fear or care of unfulfillment,
they stand fast as the eternal hills.
Your power knows no bond,
your goodness no stint.
You bring order out of confusion,
and our defeats are your victories:
[For you reign as the the Lord God omnipotent.]

We come to you as sinners with cares and sorrows,
to leave every concern entirely to you,
every sin calling for Christ's precious blood;
Revive deep spirituality in our hearts;
Let us live near to the great Shepherd,
hear his voice, know its tones, follow its calls.
Keep us from deception by causing us to abide in the truth,
from harm by helping us to walk in the power of the Spirit

Give us intenser faith in the eternal [truths],
burning into us by experience the things we know;
Let us never be ashamed of the truth of the gospel,
that we may bear its reproach,
vindicate it,
see Jesus as its essence,
know in it the power of the Spirit.

Lord, help us, for we are often lukewarm and chill;
unbelief mars our confidence,
sin makes us forget you.
Let the weeds that grow in our souls be cut at their roots;
grant us to know that we truly live only when we live to you,
that all else is trifling.
Your presence alone can make us holy, devout, strong and happy.
Abide in us, gracious God, and make us a community that is marked by the gospel
that the community around us would see not us,
but you in all your glory and grace through us.
Amen.

GOD SENDS US WITH HIS GRACE

We look not at the valley of the shadow of death, but to the land where our great

Shepherd reigns

“The Sands of Time are Sinking”



1. The sands of time are sink - ing, the dawn of heav - en breaks,
2. The King there in his beaut - y with - out a veil is seen;
3. O Christ, he is the foun - tain, the deep sweet well of love!
4. The bride eyes not her gar - ment, but her dear bride - groom's face;
5. O I am my be - lov - ed's, and my be - lov - ed is mine!



the sum - mer morn I've sighed for, the fair sweet morn a - wakes;
it were a well - spent jour - ney though sev'n deaths lay be - tween:
The streams on earth I've tast - ed more deep I'll drink a - bove:
I will not gaze at glo - ry, but on my King of grace;
He brings a poor vile sin - ner in - to his house of wine.



dark, dark had been the mid - night, but day - spring is at hand,
the Lamb with his fair ar - my doth on Mount Zi - on stand,
there to an o - cean ful - ness his mer - cy doth ex - pand,
not at the crown he giv - eth, but on his pierc - ed hand:
I stand up - on his mer - it; I know no oth - er stand,



and glo - ry, glo - ry dwell - eth in Em - man - uel's land.
and glo - ry, glo - ry dwell - eth in Em - man - uel's land.
and glo - ry, glo - ry dwell - eth in Em - man - uel's land.
the Lamb is all the glo - ry of Em - man - uel's land.
not e'en where glo - ry dwell - eth in Em - man - uel's land! (repeat twice)

He brought me to
the banqueting
house,* and his
banner over me
was love.
Song of Solomon 2

*Hebrew: house of
wine

And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Revelation 21

"On Jordan's Stormy Banks"

On Jor - dan's stor - my banks I stand, and
 All o'er those wide ex - ten - ded plains shines
 No chill - ing winds nor pois - onous breath can
 When shall I reach that hap - py place, and

3
 cast a wish - ful eye to
 one e - ter - nal day; there
 reach that health - ful shore;
 be for - ev - er blessed; when

5
 Ca - naan's fair and hap - py land, where
 God the Son for - ev - er reigns, and
 sick - ness, sor - row, pain, and death are
 shall I see my Fa - ther's face, and

7
 1
 2, 3, 4 **Chorus:**
 my pos - ses - sions lie. I am
 scat - ters night a - way.
 felt and feared no more.
 in his bos - om rest.

10
 bound, I am bound, I am bound for the prom - ised Land. I am

14
 bound, I am bound, I am bound for the prom - ised Land.

God promises his peace and comfort through our great Shepherd

Hebrews 13

Leader: Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in us that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

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



Credits

Scripture quotations are from *The Holy Bible, English Standard Version*, copyright ©2001 by

Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved. All songs are used by permission. All rights are reserved by the copyright holders. All are used according to CCLI license #11100390.

Meredith Stevens, *voice*; Shane Stevens, *percussion*; Beth Almquist, *piano*; Jake Paris, *guitar*

"Immortal, Invisible, God Only Wise" Public Domain. Words: Walter Chalmers Smith, 1867. Music: Traditional Welsh melody.

"O Wondrous Love" ©2001 Sovereign Grace Worship (ASCAP). Words and Music: Steve and Vikki Cook, 2001.

"My Jesus, I Love Thee" Public Domain. Words: William Featherstone, 1864. Music: Adoniram Gordon, 1876.

"Savior, Like a Shepherd Lead Us" Pubic Domain. Words: attributed to Dorothy Ann Thrupp, 1836, alt. Music: William B. Bradbury, 1859.

"The Sands of Time are Sinking" ©2001 Philip Palmertree Music. Words: Anne Cousin, 1857 (based on Samuel Rutherford's letters, 17th century). Music: traditional folk tune arr. Phillip Palmertree, 2001.

"On Jordan's Stormy Banks I Stand" ©1997 Christopher Miner Music. Words: Samuel Stennett, 1787. Music: Christopher Miner, 1997.

We long for peace and suffer peace-pangs
because we get sucker punched by the tantalizing
illusion that peace can be found somewhere,
anywhere else besides God.

broken people
bound together in Christ
for God's glory