



December 2, 2018

Advent: Coming

Free Grace Presbyterian Church

SOME THOUGHTS FOR REFLECTION:

All we could ever imagine, could ever hope for, He is...He is the Prince of Peace whose first coming has already transformed society but whose second coming will forever establish justice and righteousness. All this, and infinitely more, alive in an impoverished baby in a barn...That is what Christmas means—to find in a place where you would least expect to find anything you want, everything you could ever want.

Michael Card
singer-songwriter

Advent is about God—a God who came into human history in Jesus Christ and a God who promises to continue coming into your history and mine, the history still ahead of us.

John Buchanan
pastor

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely. And this is the name by which he will be called: 'The LORD is our righteousness.'"
Jeremiah 23:5-6

He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!
Revelation 22:20

"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming, and who can stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will bring offerings in righteousness to the LORD. Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to the LORD as in the days of old and as in former years."
Malachi 3:1-4

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me."
John 8:42

From heaven to earth, rather than from earth to heaven, is the flow of movement and energy, the direction of travel that we see in Scripture. The biblical hope is not one of man going to God. It is not the story of the ascent of man. Rather, it is the story of God coming to man, in man's createdness, redeeming both man and the creation.

Michael Williams
Presbyterian theologian,

This really is a simple message, but the implications are revolutionary. All other religions work from earth to heaven. They are all attempts at "the ascent of man." In glorious contrast, the Christian gospel teaches the descent of God with saving grace. From heaven to earth! This is the simple story of Christmas.

Richard Phillips
pastor, Second Presbyterian Church of Greenville, SC

GOD SUMMONS US BY HIS GRACE

Leader: Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

People: Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!

Psalms 24

Leader: Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in.

People: Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory!

Leader: The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he shall reign forever and ever.

Revelation 11

We sing praises to our King

“Rejoice, the Lord is King”

1. Re - joi - ce, the Lord is King; your Lord and King a - dore! Re -
2. Je - sus the Sa - vior reigns, the God of truth and love; when
3. His king - dom can - not fail, he rules o'er earth and heav'n; the
4. He sits at God's right hand till all his foes sub - mit, and
5. Re - joi - ce in glor - ious hope! Our Lord, the Judge, shall come, and

6
joice, give thanks, and sing, and tri - umph ev - er more.
he had purged our stains, he took his seat a - bove.
keys of death and hell are to our Je - sus giv'n.
bow to his com - mand, and fall be - neath his feet.
take his ser - vants up to their e - ter - nal home.

10
Lift up your heart, lift up your voice! Re - joi - ce, a - gain I say, re - joi - ce!

Our coming to worship God is a response to his gracious coming to us in Jesus Christ. Only by his coming are we able or willing to come and worship. So every worship service starts with God calling us to come to him through Jesus Christ.

“Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”

When the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, “Let us go over to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.”
Luke 2

“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 SANCTIFIES US BY HIS GRACE

God points out our problem, the reason he has to come to us

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."

Genesis 3
Romans 5

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 acknowledge that sin is our problem personally and corporately

O God, in the beginning you spoke,
and creation was born,
the object of your loving care.
In the fullness of time you spoke,
and the Word became flesh, Jesus,
your love veiled in flesh.
We wonder at the miracle of creation;
we stand in awe before the mystery of the incarnation.
Lord, forgive us earthbound creatures,
feeble in faith, empty of hope, and lacking in love.
Forgive us wandering sheep,
turning to our own ways from you.
Forgive us for we have not kept watch for your coming.
We have occupied ourselves with our own concerns.
We have not waited to find your will for us.
We have not noticed the needs of the people around us.
We have not acknowledged the love that has been shown to us.
Forgive us, God, as we get distracted by the busyness of the season.
Grant us the simple wonder of the shepherds,
the intelligent courage of the wise men,
and the patient faith of Mary and Joseph,
that we may journey with them to Bethlehem
and find the good news of a child born for us,
who is Christ the Lord. Amen

As we confess our sins to him God shows the depth of his love for us by reminding us of his answer for our sin—Jesus Christ. His coming to us—his birth, his life, his death, and his resurrection—are the ultimate display of love.

Matthew 1
Romans 5 & 6

God declares that the offspring promised has come in his Son

“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... but 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.

We come to Bethlehem to see the God who comes to us “O Little Town of Bethlehem”

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.

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.

GOD SPEAKS WITH US BY HIS GRACE

²But you, O Bethlehem 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 5:2-5

³Therefore he shall give them up until the time
when she who is in labor has given birth;
then the rest of his brothers shall return
to the people of Israel.

⁴And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD,
in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God.
And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great
to the ends of the earth.

⁵And he shall be their peace.

Sermon

Rev. Per Almquist

Advent: Coming

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 and
grace of God.

We sing out of the wonder of the coming of God in Jesus Christ and cry out in longing for him to come again in glory as he is promised

“Come, Thou Long-Expected Jesus”

Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.
Isaiah 7

1. Come thou long - ex - pec - ted Je - sus, Born to set thy peo - ple free
 2. Joy to those who long to see thee, Day - spring from on high, ap - pear;
 3. Come to earth to taste our sad - ness, he whose glo - ries knew no end;
 4. Born thy peo - ple to de - liv - er, born a child and yet a king;

5 From our fears and sins re - lease us, Let us find our rest in thee
 Come, thou prom - ised he brings us glad - ness, of thy birth we long to hear,
 By his life he brings us glad - ness, of our Re - deem - er, Shep - herd, friend,
 Born to reign in us for - ev - er, now thy gra - cious king - dom bring.

9 Is - rael's Strength and Con - so - la - tion, Hope of all the earth Thou art,
 O'er the hills the an - gels sing - ing news, glad ti - dings of cat - tle stall;
 Leav - ing rich - es with - out num - ber, born with - in a our hearts a - lone;
 By thine own e - ter - nal Spi - rit rule in all our hearts a - lone;

13 Dear De - sire of ev - ery na - tion, Joy of ev - ery long - ing heart,
 "Go to him, your prais - es bring - ing, Christ the Lord has come to earth,"
 This the ev - er - last - ing won - der, der, Christas Lord born the Lord of all,
 By thine all suf - fi - cient mer - it, raise us to thy glor - ious throne.

GOD STRENGTHENS US BY HIS GRACE

We celebrate the Lord's Supper, proclaiming the reason for Christ's coming at Christmas—his death and resurrection for our sin—until he comes again in glory

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 you are acknowledging 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.

"Let All Mortal Flesh Keep Silence"

1. Let all mor - tal flesh keep sil - ence, 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!"

Jesus' birth that we celebrate at Christmas was for one purpose: to redeem people for God through his death on the cross. In the Lord's Supper we partake of the benefits of his death, the great redemptive act of history. It assures the believer that he was personally the object of that incomparable love.

Bringing our financial offerings to God is an essential part of our worship. It is essential not because God needs our money, but rather because we need to glorify God and proclaim our faith in him alone by giving it to him.

We live in the glorious reality of Christ's coming, giving ourselves to him heart, soul, mind, and strength until he comes again as we give our tithes and offerings to God

As followers of Jesus Christ, living in this world, we declare:
Our world, fallen into sin,
has lost its first goodness,
but God has not abandoned the work of his hands:
our Maker preserves this world,
sending seasons, sun, and rain,
upholding all creatures,
renewing the earth,
promising a Savior,
guiding all things to their purpose.

Remembering the promise
to reconcile the world to himself,
God joined our humanity in Jesus Christ—
the eternal Word made flesh.
He is the long-awaited Messiah,
one with us
and one with God,
fully human and fully divine,
conceived by the Holy Spirit
and born of the virgin Mary.

We long for that day
when our bodies are raised,
the Lord wipes away our tears,
and we dwell forever in the presence of God.
We will take our place in the new creation,
where there will be no more death
or mourning or crying or pain,
and the Lord will be our light.
Come, Lord Jesus, come.

We live the glorious reality of Christ's coming until he comes again as we come to our heavenly Father in prayer in his name

*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 join with the rivers and hills and all creation in making a joyful noise for the coming of the Lord

"Joy to the World"

1. Joy to the world! The Lord is come: let earth re - ceive her
 2. Joy to the earth! The Sav - ior reigns: let men their songs em -
 3. No more let sins and sor - rows grow, nor thorns in - fest the
 4. He rules the world with truth and grace, and makes the na - tions

King; let ev - ery heart pre - pare him room,
 ploy; while fields and floods, rocks, hills, and plains
 ground; he comes to make his bless - ings flow
 prove the glo - ries of his righ - teous - ness

and heav'n and na - ture sing, and heav'n and na - ture
 re - peat the sound - ing joy, re - peat the sound - ing
 far as the curse is found, far as the curse is
 and won - ders of his love, and won - ders of his
 and heav'n and na - ture sing,

sing, and heav'n, and heav'n and na - ture sing.
 joy, re - peat, re - peat the sound - ing joy.
 found, far as, far as the curse is found.
 love, and won - ders, won - ders of his love.

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

Revelation 22

We live in the reality that Christ has come

Leader: He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.

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.

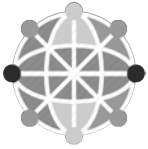
Just as we begin
with God's
gracious invitation,
so we end with
God's gracious
blessing to his
people.



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)
Kevin Kidd
Ken Morris



Credits

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<http://globalworship.tumblr.com/post/104677255820/madonna-in-advent-anticipation>

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Yet if His Majesty, our sovereign Lord,
Should of his own accord
Friendly himself invite,
And say "I'll be your guest to-morrow night,"
How should we stir ourselves, call and command
All hands to work! "Let no man idle stand!
"Set me fine Spanish tables in the hall;
See they be fitted all;
Let there be room to eat
And order taken that there want no meat.
See every sconce and candlestick made bright,
That without tapers they may give a light.
"Look to the presence*: are the carpets spread,
The dazie o'er the head, **the place where the king would sit*
The cushions in the chairs,
And all the candles lighted on the stairs?
Perfume the chambers, and in any case
Let each man give attendance in his place!"
Thus, if a king were coming, would we do;
And 'twere good reason too;
For 'tis a duteous thing
To show all honour to an earthly king,
And after all our travail and our cost,
So he be pleased, to think no labour lost.
But at the coming of the King of Heaven
All's set at six and seven*; **everything is in disorder*
We wallow in our sin,
Christ cannot find a chamber in the inn.
We entertain Him always like a stranger,
And, as at first, still lodge Him in the manger.

Anonymous
16th century

broken people
bound together in Christ
for God's glory