

In the beginning was the Word...

An Advent & Christmas Course from the Diocese of Aberdeen & Orkney



Grace

Thursday 7th December 2023



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Scripture: Psalm 118: 19-24 (*Contemporary English Version*)

Open the gates of justice!
I will enter and tell the Lord
how thankful I am.
Here is the gate of the Lord!
Everyone who does right
may enter this gate.
I praise the Lord
for answering my prayers
and saving me.
The stone that the builders
tossed aside
has now become
the most important stone.
The Lord has done this,
and it is amazing to us.
This day belongs to the Lord!

Let's celebrate
and be glad today.

To reflect:

What do you say to people when you enter a space? How do you greet people or the day? In one of the readings for today from Psalm 118 we hear from the Psalmist of how they will begin when they enter into the gates of justice open to them. They start with gratitude, giving thanks to God, and wanting to celebrate the amazing day The Psalmist appreciates of God's love for them and how God has answered their prayers and saved them.

Our word for today 'Grace' draws from last Sunday's reading from 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 and Paul's greeting at the beginning of this letter to the Church in Corinth: "*Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*" (NRVSA). A greeting, a beginning (that Paul used with other churches) that reminds the recipients of the letter and us of important things in the Christian faith: grace, peace and God (Father and Son mentioned here).

Grace is God's love freely given to humanity for salvation, the Apostle Paul emphasised the God forgiving sin and healing of humanity aspects of Grace. In the Gospel of John grace is seen as bringing human participation in the divine life for salvation, bringing about how humans can become more like the divine— patterning our lives on Jesus'. In the Catechism of the Scottish Prayer Book (1929) it states that sacraments are the outward visible signs and inward spiritual grace. In the American Episcopal Prayer Book (1979) their Catechism notes that grace is "God's favour towards us, unearned and undeserved." By grace God "forgives our sins, enlightens our minds, stirs our hearts, and strengthens our wills

How do describe God's grace in your life and how it shapes your faith? One reflection on grace, in finding and noticing it in creation is below in the poem *The Peace of Wild Things* by Wendell Berry. Other reflections are found in the *to listen* suggestions. Today you're invited to write what God's grace means to you, how do you describe and what might you compare it to, you may wish to write a poem, a song or just reflect on the words you have written.

The Peace of Wild Things by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

(from The Peace of Wild Things And Other Poems, Penguin, 2018)

To Listen:

In the Valley by Bob Kauflin based on the prayer "The Valley of Vision" by Arthur Bennett from *Valley of Vision* A book of Puritan Prayers

<https://open.spotify.com/track/6gXJstDnBznlCJyGknjphc?si=2eb1042265124df8>

Come Thou Fount of Every Blessing one version is by JJ Heller

<https://open.spotify.com/track/7DSeaP4O6ZD32JTBdnI6ws?si=b9af2cac732a4bbb>

The word for each day (3-25 December is taken from Advent Word 2023 #adventword).

...and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.