

## ***PROCLAMATION IN SCRIPTURE and SONG***

**Scripture Lesson:** Acts 16:19b-34

*Pew Bible N.T. pg. 128*

<sup>19b</sup> ...So they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the magistrates, <sup>20</sup> saying, “These men, these Jews, are disturbing our city <sup>21</sup> and are advocating customs that are not lawful for us, being Romans, to adopt or observe.” <sup>22</sup> The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates had them stripped of their clothing and ordered them to be beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup> After they had given them a severe flogging, they threw them into prison and ordered the jailer to keep them securely. <sup>24</sup> Following these instructions, he put them in the innermost cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. <sup>25</sup> About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was an earthquake so violent that the foundations of the prison were shaken, and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone’s chains were unfastened. <sup>27</sup> When the jailer woke up and saw the prison doors wide open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, since he supposed that the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup> But Paul shouted in a loud voice, “Do not harm yourself, for we are all here.” <sup>29</sup> The jailer called for lights, and rushing in, he fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup> Then he brought them outside and said, “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?” <sup>31</sup> They answered, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.” <sup>32</sup> They spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. <sup>33</sup> At the same hour of the night he took them and washed their wounds; then he and his entire family were baptized without delay. <sup>34</sup> He brought them up into the house and set food before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced that he had become a believer in God.

**Hymn W&S #3104:** *“Amazing Grace / My Chains Are Gone”* (see attached – vs 1, 2, 4)

1) Amazing grace, how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me;  
I once was lost, but now I'm found;  
Was blind, but now I see.

Chorus: My chains are gone, I've been set free!  
My God, my Savior has ransomed me.  
And like a flood, his mercy reigns;  
Unending love, amazing grace!

2) 'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

4) The earth shall soon dissolve like snow;  
The sun forbear to shine.  
But God, who called me here below,  
Will be forever mine. {Chorus}

**A Reading on John and Charles Wesley** by Rev. Amy Terhune

If you’ve been United Methodist for any length of time at all, you’ve likely heard me or someone else read John Wesley’s journal account of his conversion experience at a Moravian Society meeting held on Aldersgate Street in London on May 24, 1738:

*In the evening I went very unwillingly to a society in Aldersgate Street, where one was reading Luther's preface to the Epistle to the Romans. About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for salvation; and an assurance was given me that He had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death.*

It's a beautiful account. What many don't know is that John's brother Charles Wesley had a very similar experience just three days earlier – May 21, 1738. It was Pentecost Sunday, and Charles wrote in his journal about praying that God would speak to him and pour out his Holy Spirit as he'd done in the second chapter of Acts. As he was settling into bed for the night, he heard a voice, which he thought at first was his housekeeper, saying: "In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, arise, and believe, and thou shalt be healed of all thy infirmities." He writes, "I wondered how it should enter into her head to speak in that manner. The words struck me to the heart. I sighed, and said within myself, "O that Christ would but speak thus to me." Again, the voice ordered him to arise, so he did, and he went to scripture. His eyes fell on Psalm 40: "He hath put a new song in my mouth, even a thanksgiving unto our God. Many shall see it, and fear, and shall put their trust in the Lord." Hours later, he went to bed, writing, "I went to bed still sensible of my own weakness, yet confident of Christ's protection."

Over the course of his lifetime, Charles Wesley wrote at least 6,000 hymns – six thousand. Maybe more. But that very first night that he felt God speak to him and felt an assurance of faith within, he wrote two hymns. We're not sure which one came first. One is found in your hymnal on page 342 entitled "Where Shall My Wandering Soul Begin?" The other is found in your hymnal on page 363 entitled "And Can It Be?" We're going to sing vs. 1, 4, and 5.

**Hymn UMH #363:** *"And Can It Be" (vs. 1, 4, 5)*

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|--|---|
| 1) And can it be that I should gain<br>An interest in the Savior's blood!<br>Died he for me? who caused his pain!<br>For me? who him to death pursued?<br>Amazing love! How can it be<br>That thou, my God, should die for me?<br>Amazing love! How can it be<br>That thou, my God, should die for me? | My chains fell off, my heart was free,<br>I rose, went forth, and followed thee.<br>My chains fell off, my heart was free,<br>I rose, went forth, and followed thee.  |
| 4) Long my imprisoned spirit lay,<br>Fast bound in sin and nature's night;<br>Thine eye diffused a quickening ray;<br>I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;   | 5) No condemnation now I dread;<br>Jesus, and all in him, is mine;<br>Alive in him, my living Head,<br>And clothed in righteousness divine,<br>Bold I approach th' eternal throne,<br>And claim the crown, thru Christ my own.<br>Bold I approach th' eternal throne,<br>And claim the crown, thru Christ my own. |

## A Reading: “Of History and Hope” by Miller Williams

*NOTE: Miller Williams was born in Hoxie, Arkansas in 1930, the son of a Methodist clergyman and civil rights activist. Miller’s work is known for its gritty realism as much as for its musicality. He was trained in the sciences and taught biology for many years at Wesleyan College before changing disciplines to teach poetry and creative writing at Loyola University, and then at the University of Arkansas. He served as the U.S. Poet Laureate in the late 1990s, during which time, he composed “Of History and Hope”:*

We have memorized America,  
how it was born and who we have been and where.  
In ceremonies and silence, we say the words,  
telling the stories, singing the old songs.  
We like the places they take us. Mostly we do.  
The great and all the anonymous dead are there.  
We know the sound of all the sounds we brought.  
The rich taste of it is on our tongues.

But where are we going to be, and why, and who?  
The disenfranchised dead want to know.  
We mean to be the people we meant to be,  
to keep on going where we meant to go.

But how do we fashion the future? Who can say how  
except in the minds of those who will call it Now?  
The children. The children. And how does our garden grow?  
With waving hands—oh, rarely in a row—  
and flowering faces. And brambles, that we can no longer allow.

Who were many people coming together  
cannot become one people falling apart.  
Who dreamed for every child an even chance  
cannot let luck alone turn doorknobs or not.  
Whose law was never so much of the hand as the head  
cannot let chaos make its way to the heart.  
Who have seen learning struggle from teacher to child  
cannot let ignorance spread itself like rot.  
We know what we have done and what we have said,  
and how we have grown, degree by slow degree,  
believing ourselves toward all we have tried to become—  
just and compassionate, equal, able, and free.

All this in the hands of children, eyes already set  
on a land we never can visit—it isn’t there yet—  
but looking through their eyes, we can see  
what our long gift to them may come to be.  
And if we can *truly* remember, they will not forget.

### Hymn UMH #696: “America, the Beautiful”

- 1) O beautiful for spacious skies,  
For amber waves of grain;  
For purple mountain majesties  
Above the fruited plain!  
America! America!  
God shed his grace on thee, and  
Crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea.
- 2) O beautiful for heroes proved  
In liberating strife,  
Who more than self their country  
Loved, and mercy more than life!

- America! America!  
May God thy gold refine,  
Till all success be nobleness,  
And every gain divine.
- 3) O beautiful for patriot dream  
That sees beyond the years  
Thine alabaster cities gleam,  
Undimmed by human tears!  
America! America!  
God mend thine every flaw,  
Confirm thy soul in self-control,  
Thy liberty in law.

### A Reading: “Keep Singing” by Steven Garnaas-Holmes (*adapted here slightly*)

Deep in the dark, tangled bone  
is an original wound unhealed,  
terror at a missing god,  
despair bent to rage and loathing.  
For eons we’ve borne the shadow,  
generation to generation.  
No one invents or refines it,  
but merely passes it on, stick in hand.

Except...

Except even deeper is a root of light,  
and within that, open space,  
and within that a song  
and someone singing.

No wound can erase this space,  
no darkness can still this song,  
no rage can frighten this one singing.  
There is no difference that matters,

Except...

Except loyalty to either the wound  
or to the song.  
There is no religion but the healing.  
It is never impossible to choose  
as the Gentle One did  
the afternoon the light failed.  
Be balm. Let the wound go.  
Breathe deeply.  
And sing that undying song.

**WE GO AS WITNESSES FOR CHRIST IN THE WORLD**

**\*Closing Hymn UMH #421: “Make Me A Captive, Lord”**

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|--|--|
| <p>1) Make me a captive, Lord,<br/>And then I shall be free.<br/>Force me to render up my sword,<br/>And I shall conqueror be.<br/>I sink in life's alarms<br/>When by myself I stand;<br/>Imprison me within thine arms,<br/>And strong shall be my hand.</p>             | <p>3) My power is faint and low<br/>Till I have learned to serve;<br/>It lacks the needed fire to glow,<br/>It lacks the breeze to nerve.<br/>It cannot drive the world<br/>Until itself be driven;<br/>Its flag can only be unfurled<br/>When thou shalt breathe from heaven.</p> |
| <p>2) My heart is weak and poor<br/>Until its master find;<br/>It has no spring of action sure,<br/>It varies with the wind.<br/>It cannot freely move<br/>Till thou hast wrought its chain;<br/>Enslave it with thy matchless love,<br/>And deathless it shall reign.</p> | <p>4) My will is not my own<br/>Till thou hast made it thine;<br/>If it would reach a monarch's throne,<br/>It must its crown resign.<br/>It only stands unbent<br/>Amid the clashing strife,<br/>When on thy bosom it has leant,<br/>And found in thee its life.</p>              |

**\*Benediction:**

**One:** Beloved, May the songs of the angels sustain you; may the praises of the saints inspire you; may the silent music of the Holy Trinity resonate in your heart and bless you with harmony and peace as you share the song within.

**All: We go in peace to love and serve the Lord and all God’s creation. Thanks be to God. Amen.**

**\*Postlude: “When In Our Music God Is Glorified”**

*by Charles V. Stanford; arr. Matt Limbaugh*

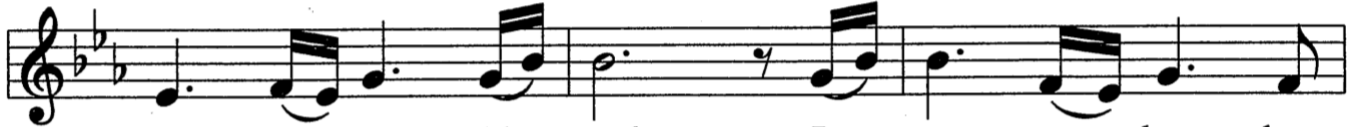
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# Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)



1. A - maz - ing grace! how sweet the sound that  
 (2. 'Twas) grace that taught my heart to fear; and  
 (4. The) earth shall soon dis - solve like snow, the



saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but  
 grace my fears re - lieved. How pre - cious did that  
 sun for - bear to shine. But God who called me



now am found; was blind, but now I see. 2. 'Twas  
 grace ap - pear the hour I first be -  
 here be - low, will be for - ev - er



lieved. My chains are gone, I've been set free. My God, my  
 mine.



Sav - ior, has ran - somed me. And like a flood his mer - cy



reigns, un - end - ing love, a - maz - ing grace. (4. The)