

HYMN SING SCRIPT – JUNE 29, 2025 – A Journey Through Grace

SCRIPTURE LESSON: John 1:14-18

*Pew Bible N.T. pg. 86 – **Jude Mertz***

¹⁴And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth. ¹⁵John testified to him and cried out, 'This was he of whom I said, "He who comes after me ranks ahead of me because he was before me".' ¹⁶From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. ¹⁷The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

*HYMN UMH #365: "Grace Greater Than Our Sin"

- 1) Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Refrain: Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
Grace, grace, God's grace, Grace that is greater than all our sin!

- 2) Sin and despair, like the sea waves cold,
Threaten the soul with infinite loss;
Grace that is greater, yes, grace untold,
Points to the refuge, the mighty cross. [Refrain]
- 3) Dark is the stain that we cannot hide.
What can avail to wash it away?
Look! There is flowing a crimson tide,
Brighter than snow you may be today. [Refrain]
- 4) Marvelous, infinite, matchless grace,
Freely bestowed on all who believe!
You that are longing to see his face,
Will you this moment his grace receive? [Refrain]

Reading #1: PREVENIENT GRACE – Reader: Jane MacQueen

It is universally agreed, almost without question, that the single biggest contribution John Wesley and the Methodists have made to the body of Christian thought and doctrine is the theology of grace. John Wesley had a God-given ability to examine, describe and explain grace in a way that makes sense and is entirely relevant. To this day, grace continues to be the hallmark of the Methodist movement in the world.

At the most basic level, grace is defined simply as a gift that cannot be ‘earned’. It is something we don’t deserve, something we did nothing to secure, and something initiated and administered entirely by God. Grace is what God does. We just receive it.

Human beings are created by God with free will. We aren’t pre-programmed robots. And so, before we are even born, throughout our childhood, into our adulthood, and throughout our lives, God works in our hearts, our minds, our circumstances, our friends and family. God will use whatever God can to lay the groundwork for faith. John Wesley called this **PREVENIENT GRACE**.

Prevenient grace is why we baptize infants. Prevenient grace is why our communion table is open to all people. We accept the premise that an individual person does not have to understand it in order for God to already be at work within it.

As we open our hymns sing today, we turn to a new hymn, one that invites us into the journey within ourselves, to discover the Spirit at work within us and the power we need to begin faith’s journey. You may remain seated as we turn in the black *Faith We Sing* Hymnal to #2128: “Come and Find the Quiet Center”:

HYMN FWS #2128 – “Come and Find the Quiet Center

- 1) Come and find the quiet center in the crowded life we lead,
find the room for hope to enter; find the frame where we are freed:
clear the chaos and the clutter, clear our eyes, that we can see
all the things that really matter, be at peace, and simply be.
- 2) Silence is a friend who claims us, cools the heat and slows the pace;
God it is who speaks and names us, knows our being, touches base.
Making space within our thinking, lifting shades to show the sun,
Raising courage when we're shrinking, finding scope for faith begun.
- 3) In the Spirit let us travel, open to each other's pain,
Let our loves and fears unravel, celebrate the space we gain:
There's a place for deepest dreaming, there's a time for heart to care,
In the Spirit's lively scheming there is always room to spare!

Reading #2: JUSTIFYING GRACE – Reader: Peg Wilken

Now, hopefully, the prevenient grace of God will lead us to a place where the light bulb goes on in our heads, where our hearts are strangely warmed, and we say to ourselves, “Oh, I get it! I am a sinful being. Christ died to save me from sin. I believe in Jesus Christ, and I want the new life that Christ can give.” When we repent our sin and make a commitment to Christ, the **JUSTIFYING GRACE** of God is now at work. Simply defined, justifying grace is the act of God whereby we are pardoned of our guilt and cleansed of our sin. When we recognize just how deeply we are loved and just how often God wipes the slate clean in forgiveness, justifying grace has touched our lives. It may take two hours or two years—every one of us is different—but God’s grace is in that process.

One of the great old hymns of justifying grace was written by Augustus Toplady in the late 1700s. The hymn – “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me” – is based on a prayer of John Wesley printed in Wesley’s 1745 edition of the Methodist hymnal, where Wesley writes: *O Rock of Israel, Rock of Salvation, Rock struck and cleft for me, let those two streams of blood and water, which once gushed out of thy side, bring down pardon and holiness into my soul...* In this hymn, Jesus is the rock that is cleft, stabbed in the side with a sword during his crucifixion, in order to save us. True to grace’s nature, the hymn writer reminds us that our labors, our zeal, and our sorrow cannot save – only Christ alone can redeem us.

When you turn to #361 from the Blue United Methodist Hymnal “Rock of Ages Cleft for Me”, you’ll notice in the top left corner that you’re in a section of the hymnal entitled “Justifying Grace”. You may remain seated as we sing it together.

HYMN UMH #361 – “Rock of Ages, Cleft for Me”

- 1) Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee;
Let the water and the blood, from thy wounded side which flowed,
Be of sin the double cure; save from wrath and make me pure.
- 2) Not the labors of my hands can fulfill thy law's demands;
Could my zeal no respite know, could my tears forever flow,
All for sin could not atone; thou must save, and thou alone.
- 3) Nothing in my hand I bring, simply to the cross I cling;
Naked, come to thee for dress; helpless, look to thee for grace;
Foul, I to the fountain fly; wash me, Savior, or I die.
- 4) While I draw this fleeting breath, when mine eyes shall close in death,
When I soar to worlds unknown, see thee on thy judgment throne,
Rock of Ages, cleft for me, let me hide myself in thee.

Reading #3: SANCTIFYING GRACE – Reader: Jude Mertz

Once we make that commitment to Christ and embrace his love and forgiveness, then we have before us the task of living it out the rest of our lives. For John Wesley, the life of faith is not some kind of static thing. We don't 'get saved', and then we're done. The life of faith is a process of continually growing in our understanding, our commitment, our love, and our service. That process is overseen by God through God's gift of **SANCTIFYING GRACE**.

Wesley described the experience of sanctifying grace with the term "going on to perfection". This is an intimidating prospect, but by this, Wesley did not mean that we are not subject to human infirmities, ignorance, or mistakes, but rather, that our motives and purpose are refined and perfected by the Holy Spirit to love God and neighbor with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength. In striving for perfection, we seek to be more loving day by day.

We return to a favorite newer hymn to remind us again that we are on a faith journey and that all the service we render and the growth we undertake within is rooted in God's grace. Please stand if you are able and let's sing together our Closing Hymn from the *Black Faith We Sing* Hymnal #2162 "Grace Alone".

***CLOSING HYMN FWS #2162 – "Grace Alone**

- 1) Every promise we can make,
Every prayer and step of faith,
Every difference we will make is only by his grace
Every mountain we will climb,
Every ray of hope we shine,
Every blessing left behind is only by his grace.

Chorus: Grace alone, which God supplies
Strength unknown he will provide
Christ is us, our cornerstone;
We will go forth in grace alone.

- 2) Every soul we long to reach,
Every heart we hope to teach,
Everywhere we share his peace is only by his grace.
Every loving word we say,
Every tear we wipe away
Every sorrow turned to praise is only by his grace. [Chorus]