

Sunday, June 23, 2013

Welcome – Greg Snow

Call to Worship – Revelation 19:5-7; Psalm 27; John 4:23 (Source: Sovereign Grace Ministries)

This is the word of God:

Revelation 19:5-7

And from the throne came a voice saying, "Praise our God, all you his servants, you who fear him, small and great." Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;

Before the almighty God, we don't casually come into His presence. We don't demand our artistic preferences. We don't *merely* gather with our friends. And we don't merely sing together. As the people of God, we enter into the very presence of God. Encountering God in this way is the very nature of the true church. By definition, to *be* the church is to gather in God's presence and to worship God together. And when we begin singing, we join the glorious worship that takes place unceasingly before the throne of God.

Let us be still for a moment as we draw near to worship God... Take just a few seconds to remind yourself why we are gathered together today... Listen, God speaks even through the background noise of the world around us...Let us silently pray.

-Moment of silent prayer-

Let us worship God, our light and our salvation.

The Lord is the stronghold of our lives.

We desire to live in God's house and to seek God in his holy temple.

We have come with shouts of joy, to sing and to make music to the Lord.

Let us worship God in spirit and in truth.

Teach us your ways and make straight our paths in this hour of worship and always.

We have met to worship and adore the Lord our God.

Let us exalt God's name together!

Song of Praise – Brethren We Have Met To Worship

Dwelling in the Presence of the Lord – Psalm 84:1, 2, 10; 145:3; 92:8

Worshipping God and dwelling daily in His presence should be our greatest desire. When we are dwelling in the courts of the Lord, every aspect of our lives becomes an altar because life is an experience of worship. Hear the words from Psalm, Chapter 84...

How lovely is your dwelling place, O LORD of hosts!

My soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the LORD;

my heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God.

For a day in your courts is better than a thousand elsewhere.

Great is the Lord and greatly to be praised!

You, O LORD, are exalted forever.

Song of Worship – Better Is One Day

Confession of Sin – Psalm 24 (Source: Charles H. Spurgeon)

As we continue to worship the Lord our God, let us answer the following question, found in Psalm 24...

Who shall ascend the hill of the LORD? And who shall stand in his holy place?

Those who have clean hands and pure hearts, who do not lift up their souls to what is false, and do not swear deceitfully.

They will receive blessing from the LORD, and vindication from the God of their salvation. Such is the company of those who seek him, who seek the face of the God of Jacob.

If our hands are not clean, let us wash them in Jesus' precious blood, and so let us lift up pure hands unto God. But "clean hands" will not suffice, unless they are connected with "a pure heart." True religion is heart-work. We may wash the outside of the cup and the platter as long as we please, but if the inward parts be filthy, we are filthy altogether in the sight of God, for our hearts are more truly ourselves than our hands are; the very life of our being lies in the inner nature, and hence the imperative need of purity within. The pure in heart shall see God, all others are but blind bats.

Let's take a few moments and silently pray to God asking Him to not just give us clean hands but a pure heart, as well. Let's pray.

Song of Worship – Give Us Clean Hands

Assurance of Salvation – *James 4:8, 10*

Hear these words of promise found in James, Chapter 4, Verses 8 & 10...

Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts. Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

Song of Worship – *I Am Thine, O Lord*

Offering - *"In the maxims of the law, God is seen as the rewarder of perfect righteousness and the avenger of sin. But in Christ, His face shines out, full of grace and gentleness to poor, unworthy sinners."* John Calvin

Abundant Grace - *Grace in the Life of John Newton (Source: James Montgomery Boice)*

Hear the word of God: 2 Peter 1:2

May grace and peace be multiplied to you in knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

The first greeting with which Paul begins each of his epistles is grace, and he uses it with its full Christian meaning. Grace! God's grace! The unmerited favor of God toward humanity.

It seems unnecessary to have to emphasize that grace is unmerited, for that is the definition of grace. Yet we must emphasize it. For man always imagines that God loves him for what he is intrinsically. We imagine that God has been gracious to us because of what we have done — because of our piety, because of our good deeds, because of our repentance, because of our virtue. But God does not love us because of that. And God is not gracious to us because of that. Paul says in Romans 5:8 that "God commendeth his love toward us in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Christ died for men who were hideous in His sight because of sin. And we are like that. You are like that, and so am I. If we are ever to understand the grace of God, we must begin with the knowledge that God has acted graciously toward us in Christ entirely apart from human merit.

There is a wonderful illustration of the nature of grace in the life of John Newton. John Newton had been raised in a Christian home in England in his very early years. But he was orphaned at the age of six and lived with a non-Christian relative. There Christianity was mocked, and the young boy was persecuted. At last, to escape the conditions at home, Newton ran away to sea and became an apprentice seaman in the British Navy. He served in the Navy for some time. At last he deserted and ran away to Africa. He tells in his own words that he went there for just one purpose: and that was "to sin his fill."

In Africa he joined forces with a Portuguese slave trader, and in his home he was very cruelly treated. At times the slave trader went away on expeditions, and the young man was left in the charge of the slave trader's African wife, the head of his harem. She hated all white men and took out her hatred on Newton. He tells that she exercised such power in her husband's absence that he was compelled to eat his food off the dusty floor like a dog.

At last the young Newton fled from this treatment and made his way to the coast where he lit a signal fire and was picked up by a slave ship on its way to England. The captain was disappointed that Newton had no ivory to sell, but because the young man knew something about navigation he was made a ship's mate. He could not keep even this position. During the voyage he broke into the ship's supply of rum and distributed it to the crew so that the crew became drunk. In a stupor Newton fell into the sea and was only saved from drowning by one of the officers who speared him with a harpoon, leaving a fist-sized scar in his thigh.

Toward the end of the voyage near Scotland the ship on which Newton was sailing encountered heavy winds. It was blown off course and began to sink. Newton was sent down into the hold with the slaves who were being transported and told to man the pumps. He was frightened to death. He was sure that the ship would sink and that he would drown. He worked the pumps for days, and as he worked he began to cry out to God from the hold of the ship. He began to remember verses he had been taught as a child. And as he remembered them he was miraculously transformed. He was born again. And he went on to become a great preacher and a teacher of the Word of God in England. It was this John Newton who wrote:

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

Newton was a great preacher of grace, and it is no wonder. For he had learned what Paul knew and what all Christians eventually learn: grace is of God, and it is always unmerited. It is to the undeserving — and hence to you and to me — that the offer of salvation comes.

Perhaps God is coming to you in this moment. If so, you must respond to His grace. And God will pour out, not only peace, but love and joy, and He will give access into His presence, and the sure hope of life beyond the grave. Don't delay...come today!

Songs of Worship – *Amazing Grace/Christ Is Able*

Message – *“The Wheat and The Tares”*

Scripture Reference: Matthew 13:24-43

Time of Prayer

Song of Worship – *Take My Life*

Benediction