

Tim Chester, *An Ocean of Grace*

Some comments on, jottings arising from, questions, prayers and hymns to accompany:

Tim Chester, *An Ocean of Grace: A Journey to Easter with Great Voices from the Christian Past* (The Good Book Company, 2021)

Book available: <https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/an-ocean-of-grace>

All my jottings were shared at <http://marclloyd.blogspot.com/> 08/02/2021-04/04/2021

(Comments welcome)

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I am hoping to post something about the Lent Book, which you may or may not find of interest or use, here at least most days at least to begin with:

<http://marclloyd.blogspot.com/>

The first introductory post is here:

<http://marclloyd.blogspot.com/2021/02/an-ocean-of-grace-introduction.html>

Feel free to comment.

You are welcome to share about it in the church WhatsApp group. Please let me know your mobile number if you would like to join that if you don't belong already.

If people would like to have a Zoom about it, we could arrange something for the week of Mon 22nd March and or the week of Monday 12th April. Please let me know if this is of interest.

Please feel free to share this with anyone else who is reading along with us.

Best,

Marc

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<https://www.thegoodbook.co.uk/an-ocean-of-grace>

Read the Introduction (p7ff)

Some questions for reflection

Think about Hebrews 12:1-2.

Are you conscious of any sins or other distractions that keep you from running the Christian race with perseverance?

What helps you / might help you to fix your eyes on Jesus?

Pray that this book and our engagement with it might help us to follow Jesus more faithfully.

Are there any witnesses who have gone before us, either biblical or post-biblical, who especially encourage you to follow Jesus? How? Why? What is it about Jesus that these witnesses have especially highlighted for you?

(When I was a youth the 19th Century Baptist preacher Charles Haddon Spurgeon was important to me. I learned a love of Scripture and its authority from him. And The Doctrines of Grace or the Five Points of Calvinism TULIP – Google will know more about them. He preached to the heart in a way that some contemporary conservative evangelicals can fail to do.

C. S. Lewis helped me to see the rationality and appeal of the Christian faith.

John Calvin has also mattered to me.

For an Anglican, Bishop J. C. Ryle.

John Owen and Jonathan Edwards are probably the greatest British and American theologians who have ever lived.

There are probably many others I'd like to know better: Augustine of Hippo, Martin Luther, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Herman Bavinck.

It would be good to add some women to the list too.

And as evangelicals perhaps we tend to neglect the period from Augustine to Luther. It would be good to know more about Bernard of Clairvaux or Thomas Aquinas, for example.)

Do you think it's appropriate to have Christian heroes and heroines? Can you see any dangers in this?

(Do you ever fall into the trap of fascination with the witness and failure to focus on Jesus? What would the witness make of that?)

Could you read something by or about a Christian from the past which might help you? Maybe study one of the Bible characters mentioned in Hebrews 11. Or buy a Christian biography. E.g., <https://www.10ofthose.com/uk/products/christian-life/biography>

You might like to adopt a Christian from the past and try to get to know their witness to Jesus better.

How can we too be witnesses to Jesus Christ? Is there someone you could encourage?

A prayer:

Father God, thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith.

And for all the Christian witnesses who have gone before us.

Help us as we read this book and reflect on it to be encouraged by their voices urging us on.

May we throw off all that hinders and the sin which entangles us and run with perseverance the race which is marked out for us.

Show us afresh the faithfulness of Jesus Christ and fix our eyes ever on him and his victory we pray.

Grant us perseverance in him and bless our witness to a watching world.

In the name of Jesus. Amen.

Suggested hymn: By Faith We See The Hand of God

<https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/by-faith/>

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Ocean of Grace (1): Ash Wednesday – Heal Me

Consider and confess your sins:

Sins of thought, word and deed.

Sins of commission and omission: things done and things left undone.

Confess to God that you not only sin but you are a sinner: your sinful actions come from your sinful heart.

How are you influenced by the world (the prevailing non-Christian culture), the flesh (your own sinful desires) and / or the devil (evil)?

Look afresh to Christ as your all-sufficient Saviour with repentance and faith. Turn from your sin and trust him.

How does Becon describe our need? Do you find any of these particularly striking?

In what ways is Jesus such a wonderful and appropriate Saviour?

Again, do you find any of these titles / descriptions of Christ especially striking?
(Are there others you would have added?)

Reflect on Christ's sinless humanity and his powerful and infinitely valuable divinity. Can you not believe that he is good and mighty enough to save and forgive you?

Read the Parable of the Good Samaritan from Luke Chapter 10v25ff. In what ways does the Good Samaritan provide a picture of Jesus our Saviour? Can you see yourself in the robbed and wounded man in need of aid?

For more on Jesus as the Good Samaritan see: <https://christthetruth.net/2008/09/29/he-saved-my-life-and-i-dont-even-know-his-name/>

Have you ever thought of Christ as like a Father before? (Hebrews 2:13f might be relevant here)

Do you find it over the top to say that we find in ourselves "nothing but sin, death and damnation"?

Perhaps the point is not to deny that we are made in the image of God, though Fallen. Rather, every part of us is affected by sin. This is the doctrine of Total Depravity: not that we act as wickedly as we might but that there is no pure core in us. We cannot merit our own salvation and left to ourselves we would be spiritually dead and condemned.

We admit this about ourselves whenever we use the Prayer Book Confession of sin, saying that "there is no health in us".

Our only hope is for Jesus to give us new spiritual life that we might be born again: regeneration (as the theologians call it), resurrection!

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Ocean of Grace (2): THURSDAY – I will call upon Christ (p14ff)

What are the dangers of comparing ourselves to others?

What if we think ourselves better?

What if we think ourselves worse?

We don't really know ourselves.

And we certainly don't know others: we are ignorant of aspects of their makeup and circumstances.

Who knows how we would behave if we had had different upbringings etc.

What is the value of comparing ourselves to Christ?

He is the True Adam so he shows us what humanity is meant to be.

He is the only perfectly sinless human being there has ever been.

Jesus The Light exposes our darkness.

On Christ as example and Saviour see 1 Peter 2:18-end.

Some Christians have sometimes wanted to treat Jesus merely as an encouraging example, but how would this save us? In particular, how would Jesus' death even be an example if it were only a futile gesture? It is because Jesus dies to save us that his death is an example of self-sacrificial servant-hearted love in action.

Do any of the contrasts in Catherine Parr's prayer seem particularly striking to you?

Take a moment to thank God for his many blessings. Perhaps specify some.

Turn from your sins.

Give thanks for Christ our Saviour and his character.

Is there one aspect of the example of Christ mentioned here that you might especially seek to emulate today / this week?

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Ocean of Grace (3): FRIDAY – Rouse Yourself To This End (p17ff)

Christian meditation is a prayerful reflection on the Scriptures. It differs from some forms of Eastern Meditation in that it is not an attempt to empty the mind but to fill it with something good. To meditate is to chew over the truth of God's word, to ruminate on it, to inwardly digest it that it might go down into us and become part of us and do us good. We might, as it were, preach to ourselves, exhort our own souls, as the Psalmist sometimes does. We reason with ourselves. We might look out for something in our readings today which we can murmur to ourselves later in the day. It might help us to mark or highlight something we want to hang on to or to jot something down. We might try to phrase something memorably and stick it to the fridge!

In what ways does Luther suggest we meditate on the suffering of Christ?

Take some time to do so.

You might want to read a relevant Bible passage slowly (such as Psalm 22 or Isaiah 53 or one of the gospel accounts of the crucifixion).

What does the cross tell us about our sin?

If the cross was strictly necessary, as presumably it was...

Think of the cross as the infinite penalty your sins deserve.

What might your attitude have been to Jesus if you had met him in his earthly ministry?
(Think even of the actions of Jesus' disciples when he was arrested)

Think of sin as a kind of regicide or deicide. We want to kill God our king so that we can run our lives our way for ourselves. When God shows up, human beings kill him. (Acts 2:22-24; 10:39-43)

What does the cross tell us about the love of God?

God gave his only begotten infinitely precious son for sinners like me and you.

Do you agree that “we are more sinful than we like to think and more loved than we dare to dream”?

If this is so, what difference might it make to us?

Do you think it’s right to fear the holy judgement of God? Indeed, in Luther’s phrase to be “terror-stricken”?

(Would it be right to fear e.g., a burning building?)

Do you really believe that left to yourself you deserve the judgement of God?

What would a right and wrong despair be for a Christian?

Why must we despair of ourselves?

Ironically, perhaps, it is this despair of saving ourselves which will lead us to hope in Christ and doing so we can be confident of God’s omnipotent love and of our salvation.

Of course, simply terror and despair would be a disastrous and insufficient response to the cross. How and why can we move beyond them? To what?

Is there anything distasteful to you which you have to do today which could prompt you to remember the infinitely greater suffering of Christ?

For another powerful meditation on the death of Christ from Luther see:

<https://www.reformation21.org/mos/1517/luther-on-christs-substitutionary-atonement>
 Jesus took our place on the cross and bore our sin. It is as if he became us and paid our penalty.

Prayer:

Father God, I turn from all my sin which took Christ to the cross.

Cause me to see afresh the horror of all wrong-doing and to flee from it to the arms of Jesus.

Thank you for your infinite and unmerited love for me which triumphs over judgement.

May it drive out all my fears except for holy reverence for you.

Help me today to go Christ’s way of love and self-sacrificial service.

For his name’s sake. Amen.

Suggested hymn: How Deep The Father’s Love For Us

<https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/how-deep-the-fathers-love-for-us/>

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Ocean of Grace (4): SATURDAY – The Great Physician (p20ff)

What are the biblical qualifications / criteria for coming to Christ?

What does this imply about how we should come to him?

In Mark 2, Jesus is not of course suggesting that there are some really healthy people who don't need him. We are all sick sinners but some people fail to recognise their own disease. Are there sins of ours about which we might be in denial?

Do we ignore or minimise symptoms which show that we need treatment?

Have we settled for living with ailments which really require surgery?

The only thing we can bring to Jesus is our sin!

If we think we have no sin, or our sin is not really serious, we'll never come to Christ in repentance and faith, just like we might never go to the doctor if we thought we'd be healthy enough without, or that we could cure ourselves.

Our sickness is not just a spiritual tummy bug but fatal heart disease. The surgery we need is heart surgery, not cosmetic surgery. Thankfully, Jesus is in the heart transplant business! He can make us new and clean and give us new spiritual life. Or to put it slightly differently, we can and must be born again.

Reflect on the idea of sin as a sickness or disease. Allow this to help you to see it as unattractive and harmful. How has sin wounded or bruised you? Ask Jesus to heal you and make you whole and healthy. Pray for spiritual soundness.

We can only come to Jesus as hungry and needy beggars. We come knowing we are empty, not claiming to be full. God gives grace to the humble but opposes the proud.

How does it feel to need charity? Bleeding charity, as C. S. Lewis once called it.

Again, consider the contrasts in this prayer and how Jesus perfectly meets our needs. Our wants he supplies. We desperately need him and he is all we really need.

Be encouraged that you can always come to Jesus as you are! He already knows the worst about you. It is pointless and unnecessary to put on any pretence with him. As the Collect for Purity has it, he is Almighty God, to whom all hearts are open and from whom no secrets are hidden.

Remember that grace is the undeserved love of God, his kindness and generosity. Love with stoop in it. The love of a prince for a pauper. GRACE: God's riches at Christ's expense. God loves us in all our unloveliness and his love beautifies us.

It is necessary for us, sometimes, to take a long hard look at ourselves and our sins. But for every look within, we ought to have a hundred looks at Him!

Hymn: Rock of Ages Cleft For Me

<https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/1058>

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Ocean of Grace (5): SUNDAY – Your Grace Shines Brightest (p24ff)

Meditate on the fact that every good thing we have is a gift from God. Each breath, each heartbeat, every thought is a God's grace to us. This greatly increases our joy in all these things: we are not just enjoying them as good stuff, but as the gift of our heavenly Father who loves us. It's all personal and planned for our good and for his glory!

The gospel diamond shines brightest against the black back-cloth of our sin.

Each of the paragraphs is worth reflecting on:

Christ's humility, although he was Almighty God by right

His patience with our repeated slowness and foolishness and the same old sins

His love in all its self-sacrifice

His mercy to debtors who could never repay him

His meekness when he could have commanded armies of angels

On the humility of Christ, see further Philippians 2:5-11.

Isn't it striking how we undervalue the infinitely valuable Christ? We foolishly consider other things more valuable than him, as did the Rich Young Ruler in the Gospels (e.g., Mark 10). Rather, like Paul, we ought to consider all things rubbish, dung, compared to knowing Christ. (Philippians 3).

What matters most to you and why?

Why is Jesus valuable?

How could you increase your appreciation of him?

Consider him as the Pearl of Great Price or the Treasure hidden in a field. (Matthew 13)

Do you often think of God / Jesus as happy? Blessed? Joyful?

The Christian tradition is that God is entirely blessed. He is eternally unchanging (immutable) and cannot be acted upon. He does not have emotions like ours. He is impassable. God can never be down in the dumps! If God were to lose any of his attributes, he would no longer be God. God is always perfectly happy and satisfied. Though, speaking of him in human terms, the Bible also tells us of course that God is angry with sin and grieved over suffering etc. The Happy God loves and cares for us.

Again, the richness of this imagery deserves dwelling upon: Christ as beauty, music, honey, perfume, health etc.

Maybe we think more about the truth and goodness of God than we do about his beauty?

We might do well to dwell on this.

Do you find Christ attractive like this?

Pray that God would open your eyes afresh to Jesus' loveliness and cause you to fall more deeply in love with him.

Suggested hymn: Amazing love (My Lord what love is this)

<https://www.grahamkendrick.co.uk/home/graham-kendrick-songs/make-way-for-the-cross-let-the-flame-burn-brighter/amazing-love-my-lord-what-love-is-this>

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Ocean of Grace (6): MONDAY – As God, As Man (p27ff)

Enjoy the contrasts / parallels in this prayer and wonder at our incarnate Saviour: The Living One who dies, the Shepherd who is the slain lamb, the Fountain of Life who is poured out for us, the Bread of Life who hungers, the Word who was silenced, the Healer who was bruised etc.

Think of what Jesus the God-man did for others and for us. He did not use his divinity to serve himself but to save us. (His temptations, which perhaps we think about in this season of Lent, show us that. He did not feed himself but he would feed others. He did not grasp at power but humbled himself. He was the obedient Servant-Son who came to save.) Jesus' miracles are never self-serving or mere demonstrations of power: they are signs of the breaking in of the Kingdom and they show Jesus love and care for others. Jesus was the God-man for us.

Jesus' humanity and divinity are both essential to our salvation.

It was as a man that Jesus fulfilled the law and paid the penalty for sin. His obedience and death were human. God could not die! A human being was a suitable representative and substitute for us. Just as Adam's sin brought us ruin, the Second Adam restored us. Jesus was born of a woman, born under the law, to die and to redeem us from the curse of the law. Sin is a human problem; Jesus is a human Saviour.

Jesus' divinity and humanity are not somehow in competition as a zero-sum game. His divinity does not cancel out his true humanity. Jesus wasn't 50% God and 50% man. He was fully and truly human and divine. As a man, God hungered and became tired and died, in his human nature and not in his divine nature (which can never suffer or change). Jesus' temptations were real human temptations. It wasn't pretend because Jesus was God! As a human Jesus lived a fully tested human life, tempted as we are in every way yet without sin. It was the person God the Son who did all these things (hungered, tired, resisted temptation, died), but according to his humanity.

And yet it was as God that he was our Saviour. God must save and God alone. He will not give his glory to another. Only God could redeem his creation. As God, Jesus' life was invincible and of infinite value. The God-man was able to pay the price of sin. Of course the grave could not hold the God-man.

Even while Jesus was laid in a manger or hung upon a cross, as God he was omnipotent and omnipresent. Although Jesus' divine glory was (normally) concealed, he did not cease to be God so that he could be man. The Son assumed a human nature to himself so that he exists

as a man. The Word became flesh, but he did not change in that becoming, because as God he is unchangeable (immutable).

Take a moment to thank and praise the Lord Jesus. Marvel at the mystery of the incarnation.

Although we are not divinised, we too are invited, even, in a creaturely way, and as far as it is possible for a human being, to share the divine life: into union with the Triune life of God. (2 Peter 1:3-4)

Suggested hymn: Thou who wast rich beyond all measure

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cXWgFCx6oWE>

<https://store.gettymusic.com/us/song/thou-who-wast-rich-beyond-all-splendor/>

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Ocean of Grace (7): TUESDAY – All Love and Thankfulness (p30ff)

God, of course, comes “first” in every respect. He is eternal and pre-existence. Everything is all his initiative and grace all the way down. He is the unmoved mover. God’s love for us is prior to ours in salvation. But his overflowing love is also the basis of our very creation and being and of our continuation in existence.

Thinking of God’s love for us in all our filth and sin, we might think of the Biblical images of the people of God as his bride / unfaithful wayward wife. (Cf. Isaiah 62:5; Jeremiah 2:2; Hosea; Ezekiel 16; Ephesians 5; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19-22) We have committed spiritual adultery by chasing after other “gods”. We deserve to be divorced, and yet he woos us back. He beautifies us and betroths us to himself. He will cleanse and purify and adorn us for our wedding day.

Christ is our champion, our prince, who kills the dragon and gets the girl. The Bible is a love story, a romance, a heroic quest. Despite the tragedy of sin, it is a comedy which ends in a marriage.

God’s loving choice of us is his eternal purpose of election. Of course, he knows the end from the beginning. All time is “present” to him. But God’s foreknowledge of us is not to do with him anticipating or foreseeing goodness in us. He’s not placing a bet, however certain, on you or I coming up trumps with faith or good works. The word for “knowing” can be used much more relationally as when Adam “knew” his wife Eve. This is not about information! God chose us out of sheer undeserved love (grace), not because he thought Lloyd would be a good addition to his team. Cf. Deuteronomy 7:7.

Meditate again on all that Christ did for us: in our place and on our behalf and for our benefit. The pain was his; the reward ours. He did not deserve his sufferings and we do not deserve his glory. This is love, grace!

The fruit growing upon the cross is a striking image. The Bible sometimes calls the cross a tree. It is the tree of life to us. Think of the wonderful harvest of the death of Christ. We might relate this to the image of Jesus the vine: we are the branches called to be fruitful too. (John 15)

Jesus is also the grain which dies and is buried in the earth but which brings forth new life (John 12), thirty, sixty or a hundred times what was sown. In truth, many millions, billions of times what was sown. Jesus' resurrection is the first fruits which guarantees the great crop to come. His resurrection is the first bluebell of spring, and soon there will be blooms as far as the eye can see, a great multitude that no one can number, covering the forest floor.

If you are tempted to sin today, think on the cross of Christ so that to choose to sin might seem unthinkable to you. If you are to get to sin, you have to trample over the wounds of Christ and despise the blood which he shed for you.

Remember that luxury, which seems so attractive and pleasant might actually "harass" and harm your soul.

Suggested hymn: My Song is Love Unknown

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMart4wXsI0>

Text etc.: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/nt/96>

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Ocean of Grace (8): WEDNESDAY – The Lord Our Lover (p33ff)

What makes you want to sing? Pray for a similar, a greater, delight and joy in Christ. We should be more overflowing with excitement for Jesus even than for Wales beating England in the rugby!

Meditate on God's rapturous and extravagant delight in us. Although he is fully satisfied and blessed in himself and eternally impassable and immutable and so on, our loving heavenly Father really does love us and is pleased with our weak and stammering expressions of faith and love (which are after all his own work in us).

Yesterday we mentioned some of the texts which speak of God's people as his wife / bride or of the Church as the bride of Christ. We should perhaps have mentioned above all the Song of Solomon / The Song of Songs (which by the way, means the best of songs) which speaks of God's love for his people.

For talks and resources on The Song of Songs see: <http://rosclarke.co.uk/the-greatest-song/>
<http://rosclarke.co.uk/publications/>

Luther also describes the wonderful exchange which takes place when we are joined by faith to Christ our husband. He takes on our debts and disgrace and we get his honour and name and riches.

“...Christ and the soul become one flesh [Eph. 5:31-32]. And if they are one flesh, and if between them there is a true marriage... it follows that everything they have they hold in common, the good as well as the evil. Accordingly, the believing soul can boast of and glory in whatever Christ has as though it were its own, and whatever the soul has, Christ claims as his own. ... Let us compare these, and we shall see inestimable benefits. Christ is full of grace, life and salvation. The soul is full of sins, death and damnation. Now let faith come between them, and sins, death and damnation will be Christ's, while grace, life and salvation will be the soul's... By the wedding ring of faith he shares in the sins, death and pains of hell, which are his bride's.... Her sins cannot now destroy her... and she has that righteousness of Christ, her husband, ... and [can] say, "If I have sinned, yet my Christ, in whom I believe, has not sinned, and all his is mine and mine is his..."

<https://www.reformation21.org/blogs/luthers-royal-marriage.php>

(The Freedom of a Christian, 1520, if I recall correctly. I went through a phase of sending this extract to Christian friends on their wedding days!)

We might pray with the Apostle Paul that we would have power together with all the saints to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ for us and that we might know this love which surpasses knowledge. (Ephesians 3:14-21). What a love! We can know it truly but never completely because it is inexhaustible. It can never be used up or run out. However far along we get in the way of love, it still stretches out to the far horizon. We can soak deep down into it, but we can never plumb its depths.

Jesus' love is of every love the best. It is the love of loves, and worth singing about.

Hymn: Jesus Lover of My Soul

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K7ijNGxMWU>

Words etc.: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/1057>

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Ocean of Grace (9): THURSDAY – Eat and Be Satisfied (p36ff)

Jesus is the Bread of Life (John 6:35). And he is daily bread – the essential staple - for our souls. He feeds and sustains us for our earthly pilgrimage as he calls us to walk his way. He is the Manna, the bread of God which has come down from heaven. The Son is the Father's gracious provision for us.

Let us savour Christ and pray for a greater appetite for him.

We are to hunger and thirst for Jesus. And to be satisfied in him. Reflect on how we may both be full and long for more.

We feed on Jesus in our hearts by faith with thanksgiving (as the Communion service says).

Now, in the Lord's Supper Jesus gives us himself and he gives us bread and wine, a complete meal and a festive one. He sets a table in the midst of our enemies (cf. Psalm 23). He welcomes us as part of his family who belong at his Table. (Think how often Jesus is eating and drinking in the gospels or teaching about meals and parties). We are companions of Jesus – literally, we eat bread with him.

But this feast is a foretaste, a down payment, of the greater feast to come when we will share in the Wedding Supper of the Lamb (Revelation 19). We will eat and drink with Christ in his kingdom (Mark 14:25; Luke 22:30), in our heavenly home. When the battle is finally over, the victory banquet. The Lord's Supper of course looks back to the cross (we eat and drink in remembrance of Christ) but it also looks forward as we proclaim the Lord's death until he comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26).

We are incessantly hungry creatures. And we tend to be dissatisfied and restless. In his *Confessions*, Augustine also famously said that our hearts are restless until they find their rest in God. Let us pray that we would know that rest more and more, perhaps in the midst of busyness and grief and dangers. Let us pray that our work would issue from and result in rest. And that we would know this rest fully and finally when we enter into our Eternal Rest.

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/an-analysis-of-one-of-the-greatest-sentences-ever-written/>

Hymn: Guide Me O Thou Great Jehovah

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5NOVcefEYU>

Words: https://hymnary.org/text/guide_me_o_thou_great_jehovah

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Ocean of Grace (10): FRIDAY – Surpassing Knowledge (p39ff)

Consider God the eternal Son's pre-incarnate glory with the Father in the bond of the Spirit. Of course it's beyond our imagining, but think of their blessedness, their love for one another.

In a sense, the Son might have remained in heaven without blame.

And now consider the Son's glorious humiliation.

The Son willingly came to be born in a humble backwater amidst the whiff of scandal. He went into exile, fleeing for his life. He lived in obscurity and embraced poverty and

homelessness. He was often misunderstood and scorned. His own family thought he was out of his mind. All his friends deserted him. He was beaten and unjustly convicted.

He had the right to the praise of all heaven and earth, and yet he willingly bore so many slights and injuries.

His death was shameful. The agony was awful. Here was the worst possible death that the might Roman empire could conceive as a deterrent. It was so horrendous as to be reserved for foreigners and slaves. It was unmentionable. To speak of it would put people off their breakfast.

And yet many people endured such a death. Perhaps some of them bravely, even if it was unheard of for a man to pray for the forgiveness of those who crucified him!

Well might the experienced Centurion in charge of the crucifixion be amazed at the manner of this man's death because it was unique.

Surely the worst thing for Jesus – the thing which made his death unlike any other - was not the nakedness, or the pain, or the mockery, or the isolation but the spiritual agony of the cross. He was paying in his body the price of sin for the countless multitude he was redeeming. In those hours on the cross, he faced many eternities of hell for his elect. He drank the cup of God's wrath to its dregs for all who would trust in him, finishing up your portion and mine.

A lot of nonsense is spoken about the cross. We need to tread carefully on this holy ground. We should not think that the Trinity was ruptured at the cross. God the Son and God the Father have always and will always love one another in the bond of the Spirit. The Father was always well pleased with his beloved Son. This was the Son's great moment of faithful obedience to the Father, the hour for which he had come. Of course the Father loved the Son as he died in our place.

But Jesus the God-Man faced the frown of his Father for you and me. The Father turns his face away. Jesus is forsaken. He took the pain and bore the wrath so that I might stand forgiven at the cross. We cannot imagine what that must have been like *for him*.

We are so forgetful and indifferent to God that the prospect of his absence doesn't terrify us as it should. And yet for the first time ever at the cross, Jesus, who revelled above all things in the love of his Father, tasted God's holy displeasure at sin for you and me.

Once again, pause to remember that Jesus did all this willingly for you. This is what the love in action of God our Saviour looks like.

Take a moment to pray Spurgeon's final line again.

(If you are interested in more things Spurgeon, you might like to take a look at:
<https://www.spurgeon.org/resource-library/>)

Hymn: From The Squalor of a Borrowed Stable (Immanuel)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YksTeR61O1I>

Words etc.: <https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/immanuel/>

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Ocean of Grace (11): SATURDAY – A Candle to a Mighty Flame (p42ff)

What has struck you about the love of Christ this week?

How do you / should you / can you respond to it?

Do you talk to yourself / preach to your own soul?

Are there aspects of your self-talk / internal monologue which are less than helpful? Are there ways you could challenge yourself? Or perhaps replace some of your negative self-talk with something more positive? (Maybe by focusing on the love of Christ and your response to it, perhaps with the stress on the former rather than the latter. I am loved by Christ though I know my love for him and for others will only ever be a dim reflection of his love for me. In my better moments, I want to try to fan the flame of my love for Christ, with the Spirit's breath and to draw on the burning passion of Christ's heart).

This meditation is a helpful reminder that we can't stir up ourselves out of nothing to Christ-like love. We are spiritually dead left to ourselves. We need Jesus to ignite our hearts with love for him. We burn with the fire we get from Jesus!

It might also be worth remembering that in a sense God calls us to progress not perfection. I might love Christ very little, but if I perhaps love him a little more than I did yesterday, I rejoice in his grace to me. A little progress repeatedly over time can get us a long way, even if as we grow in love for Christ we also become even more aware of our own sin.

We may recall John Newton (the former slaver)'s famous words:

I am not what I ought to be —
ah, how imperfect and deficient!

I am not what I wish to be —
I abhor what is evil, and I would cleave to what is good!

I am not what I hope to be —
soon, soon shall I put off mortality, and with mortality all sin and imperfection.

**Yet, though I am not what I ought to be,
nor what I wish to be,**

**nor what I hope to be,
I can truly say, I am not what I once was;
a slave to sin and Satan;
and I can heartily join with the apostle, and acknowledge,
“By the grace of God I am what I am.”**

– John Newton, as quoted in *The Christian Pioneer*

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/trevin-wax/by-the-grace-of-god-i-am-what-i-am/>

How could I choose to love Christ and not myself? How could I express that love?

Are there substitutes / rivals for Christ to which I tend to look for enjoyment or comfort etc.?

What do you have to give up / turn your back / deny yourself on that you might gain Christ?

Do you cling on to candles when you could have the sun?

(Or to use C. S. Lewis' metaphor, do you love to make mud pies in the slum, when you could go to the beach?!)

Does your soul feel full or empty or somewhere in between? Why? What might you do about this?

Hymn: O For A Closer Walk With God

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wWVpafJX8A>

Text etc: <https://hymnary.org/text/o-for-a-closer-walk-with-god>

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Ocean of Grace (12): SUNDAY – Love Bade Me Welcome (p46ff)

You might like to look online for video / audio of these poems.

E.g. The Agony: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFvGG0MkYvk>

The Love: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gunHbqY4PJw>

We are invited to come home to God. But in a way it is a home we have never seen – a home from which we have always been alienated. There is in us by nature a hatred of God and also a remnant or shadow of love for God, or at least a space left by its absence (for we were made in his image for friendship with him). Without Christ, although we do not realise it, we are homesick for God even while we run from him.

We often say there is no such thing as a free lunch, but the prophet Isaiah offers us a genuinely free meal. It cost Christ everything. It is his gift to us. But it is not cheap grace to us: there is a cost to following Christ, but it is genuinely free.

The Agony

In many of these readings we have been trying to measure (or at least get some fuller understanding of) sin and love, and we have found that we cannot know them fully. It is striking to compare the study of them with the feats of science. Calculating the height of Everest or the dimensions of China is easy, compared to knowing the human heart or the heart of God.

We are more sinful than we often care to admit and more loved than we dare to dream.

And we have thought a number of times already about the relationship between sin and love. To know the depths of one helps to illuminate the other. Christ's love goes deeper than the depths of our sin. We foolishly sin against his fathomless love.

To know sin and love, we might try to turn within, to understand our own hearts. Herbert directs our view to Christ, to the Garden of Gethsemane and to the cross. Here we see an objective demonstration of sin and love made visible.

Olivet = The Mount of Olives, connected to the Garden of Gethsemane where Jesus agonised before the cross. (You may wish to re-read the gospel accounts, e.g., Mark 14). The word "Gethsemane" is derived from two Hebrew words: *gat*, which means "a place for pressing oil (or wine)" and *shemanim*, which means "oils." Gethsemane is the oil press. Jesus faces the crushing burden of sin there, from which the shining richness of the anointing Spirit will flow for us. For the biblical associations of a winepress see also Isaiah 63:3. The poem *expresses* sin and love, the agony and the blessing we get from the blood of Christ signified by the wine of Holy Communion.

Remember that water and blood flowed from Jesus' side as it was pierced (John 19). Jesus' body becomes a wine cask opened for us by the death of Christ.

(Some of these comments draw on Malcolm Guite, *Word in the Wilderness: A Poem a Day for Lent and Easter* (Canterbury Press, 2014))

Love

Think of God wooing and inviting us, taking care to gently encourage us. We must let him be the judge of whom he will draw in, even if we feel (rightly and accurately) unworthy.

Jesus does of course call us to his service. But first we must allow him to serve us. Like Mary, we should sit at his feet and hear his word as his disciple rather than being worried and distracted by many duties, like Martha (Luke 10). Like Peter, we must allow the Servant King to wash our feet (John 13).

(Analysis and commentary on both Herbert poems is also only a Google away)

Hymn: King of God, King of Peace (by George Herbert)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tSEsknhPd0>

Words etc.: <http://www.hymntime.com/tch/htm/k/g/l/o/kglokpea.htm>

(You can find a list of many George Herbert hymns here:
https://hymnary.org/person/Herbert_G)

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Ocean of Grace (13): MONDAY – A Better Word (p49ff)

The word for atoning sacrifice in 1 John 2v2 would best be translated “propitiation”, the turning aside of wrath by the payment of a price.

The word for “advocate” is the word Paraclete. Its etymology is one who is called alongside, that is, as a friend or helper, like a defence barrister or maybe a union rep who would stand with you at a tribunal. Jesus is thus our advocate who speaks to the Father on our behalf, pleading his blood. (Jesus also calls the Holy Spirit another Paraclete like himself – a kind of replacement Jesus to his disciples. Jesus goes away by his death and resurrection but at Pentecost he sends the Spirit to be a friend and helper alongside us).

Christ’s death is a pleasing aroma, a sweet-smelling sacrifice offering, to the Father on our behalf. (cf. 2 Corinthians 2)

Christ’s saving work was finished at the cross (John 19) in the sense that the price for sin was fully paid. Jesus could sit down at the right hand of God on high (Hebrews 10). But he also lives ever to intercede for us (Hebrews 7). He continues our mediator. It is as if he continually presents to the Father his finished work. Satan is our accuser (that’s what his name means); Jesus is our defender (his name means the LORD saves).

We may also add that Jesus will be our judge. Our advocate will declare us innocent! In a human court this might amount to corruption and a conflict of interest, but it is perhaps a way of showing the wonder of the gospel that with perfect justice he who has already paid the price of sin in full will declare innocent those for whom he died.

We can imagine the defence case which Jesus would present: not denial of our sins, or pleas in mitigation, but the fact that the full sentence of our crimes has already fallen on him. It would be unjust of God to punish us when Christ has already been punished in our place. Yes, many of Satan’s accusations may be true: we are guilty sinners who deserve death and hell. But we are guilty sinners for whom Christ has died.

Jesus’ pleas for us are better than the most expensive legal team. The Son’s case will no doubt prevail with his Father.

Abel's blood cried out for vengeance and justice against his murderous brother, Cain; Jesus blood cries out for mercy and secures reconciliation for his brothers (Hebrews 12), rather as he prayed even for the forgiveness of those who drove the nails into his wrists (Luke 23).

Hymn: Crown him with many crowns

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7OCs0d_4vM

Words etc.: [https://hymnary.org/text/crown him with many crowns](https://hymnary.org/text/crown_him_with_many_crowns)

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Ocean of Grace (14): TUESDAY – Such a Soul-Friend (p52ff)

What makes a true friend?

What might a good friend do for us?

Do you think of Jesus as your friend?

What do you value in his friendship?

What are our needs / desires? What do we seek?

How does Jesus fulfil these needs or desires, or the real needs and desires of which they are distortions?

Does the friendship of Jesus make the "things of the world" grow strangely dim? What are luxury or plaudits (or...) compared to the firm friendship of the King of Kings?

It makes sense, of course, that Jesus should be a friend of sinners because he has come for the sake of sinners, to do for them what they most need. He is indeed a friend to us in our need! As we have previously seen, all of us are sin-sick, but Jesus, the Saviour of Sinners, will seem useless and irrelevant to those who claim they are already righteous and healthy without him, as they will think they have no need of this doctor. (See further Luke 5:32)

Jesus is falsely accused of being a glutton and a drunkard. His ministry was characterised by joy rather than fasting. He was the bridegroom with the wedding guest (Mark 2:19). It is striking how frequently in the gospels Jesus is at meals or parties, or how much of his teaching is about food and drink or banquets and weddings. Heaven is often pictured as a wedding party. (The Lord's Supper is a foretaste of the Wedding Supper of the Lamb).

Once again, the extract shows how Jesus perfectly meets our need. Our desires are fallen and distorted and often misdirected. We do not really know what would make for our true and lasting happiness and we so easily become addicted to God-substitutes, idols which we hope will make us secure or happy or powerful or popular or.... But we were made for friendship with Jesus so all our true God-given desires find their ultimate satisfaction in him: in him is honour and glory and power and love and satisfaction and rest and security and peace and joy and...

Only Jesus can really satisfy. With Jesus the Lord as our Shepherd we shall not be in real or ultimate want (Psalm 23).

If we are to be friends of Jesus, likely we will experience the enmity of the world. As he warns his disciples, the world will hate us as it hated him. James 4:4 tells us: “friendship with the world means enmity against God. Therefore, anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.” Jesus is the friend of sinners but he is no friend to sin. To choose the friendship of Jesus means to turn our back of the world in the sense of God-less Christ-rejecting society.

With the friendship of Jesus we can cope with insults, slights and opposition. God plus one is a majority!

Jesus is our friend who loves us and lays down his life for us (John 15:13). He goes on to say to his disciples: “I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” (Abraham too is called a friend of God in James 2:23). The prophets too are like friends of God since he reveals his purposes to them (Amos 3:7; see also Jeremiah 23:18, 23) – they know their master’s business. Jesus has made us his friend by making God and his plans and purposes known to us. Of course we still have many questions and uncertainties, but in Christ we know who we are, what we are made for and where we are going.

Hymn: What a Friend We Have in Jesus

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8SCorW9r Is>

Words etc.: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/789>

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Ocean of Grace (15): WEDNESDAY – Stars Dwelling With Dust (p55ff)

It is appropriate that during Lent we should be reminded that “dust you are and to dust you shall return”, words God uses to Adam after his sin in Genesis 3:19, which are used in the Ash Wednesday service.

God’s grace and condescension are shown not only to humble creatures such as us but to sinners. We are not only dust but sinful dust.

Think on your sin as rebellion / treachery / insurrection / attempted revolt / regicide. We don’t want God as our God and king and we try to throw him off his throne climb onto it ourselves and rule as the god and king of our own lives.

Of course such rebellion is laughably pathetic and impossible. Our attempts to run our lives our way for ourselves often end in disaster and tears. God’s throne turns out to be too big

and high for us. His crown doesn't fit our little heads so its unsurprising that they are uneasy while they try to wear his crown.

You might like to read Psalm 2 as a meditation on this kind of rebellion against the LORD and Jesus his anointed King, the Messiah.

(The Two Ways to Live gospel outline also helpfully describes sin as rebellion:
<https://twowaystolive.com/>)

God could of course simply have crushed us his enemies, but he graciously came in Christ to make peace, to offer us amnesty. Jesus reconciles the Father to us so that we are no longer enemies (he pays the price of our enmity) and can be welcomed back as friends.

Again, we might dwell on the gracious welcome the Father gives to his prodigal Son in Luke 15, running to embrace him, giving him a ring and a robe and a banquet.

Hymn: Rejoice! The Lord is King.

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2N0iVysrykU>

Words etc.: https://hymnary.org/text/rejoice_the_lord_is_king_your_lord_and_k

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Ocean of Grace (16): THURSDAY – A Bottomless Ocean of Grace (p58ff)

Give thanks to God for his infinite and inexhaustible grace. The need and sin of all his people might be very great, but his all-sufficient grace abounds all the more. Can you imagine a great pile of sin, dwarfed by souring mountains of grace? Or a great load of sin plunged into the ocean and sunk deep beneath the love of God so that the dead weight of sin vanishes from sight and is beyond recovery? Dwell on the fact that all your sin is more than paid for and covered. God is able to save completely. He promises cleansing and forgiveness for *all* your sin.

Thank Jesus for the gift of Living Water which can always make us alive and clean and which can never run dry (John 4:10ff; 7:37-39). Indeed, pray that the life of the Spirit might overflow from us to others. May God the Father refresh and renew us today with the good news of Jesus Christ in the power of the Spirit.

If you find yourself feeling guilty or troubled today, think of the infinite grace of God shown us in Christ.

Your maker, the LORD (Yahweh, the Great unchangeable, faithful, trustworthy, covenant promise keeping I AM) Almighty, the Holy One of Israel, the God of all the earth is your husband and Redeemer. He is personally and irrevocably committed to you. He has redeemed you from the penalty of sin and he will redeem you finally from the lingering presence of sin when you. He means to bring you safely to glory to his nearer presence

when there will be no more sin, or sorrow or sadness. Can you doubt his ability to do what he has promised?

Hymn: There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Immanuel's veins

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x3qebDnoaFQ>

Words etc.: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/1006>

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Ocean of Grace (17): FRIDAY – A Highway to his Heart (p61ff)

Give thanks that Jesus, our brother, our Great High Priest, is able to sympathise with us in our weakness. He knows what it's like to be a human being not only because he is the all-knowing God but by personal experience, from the inside. He did not stand aloof from our predicament but entered fully into a real human life. He knows what it is to be tired and tempted. He was hungry and limited and finite according to his human nature. As a man, Jesus learned and grew and suffered. Although he was always sinlessly perfect, his faithfulness was perfected in the sense of tested and matured by suffering. We have a Saviour who like a precious metal has gone through the fire for us and has proved to be true. Jesus was authenticated as a perfect High Priest suitable for us by his trials.

The Bible tells us Jesus was tempted in every way, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:14). Dwell on that!

No doubt his temptations were worse than ours. Would not Satan have assaulted Jesus more fiercely than he would have attacked any other human beings? Jesus hated sin much more than we do. In a way we are quite happy to sin: we give in to temptation easily enough sometimes. Temptation must have been such a trial to Jesus' pure soul whereas in a way it is sometimes very congenial to us!

Our temptations are often short-lived because we give in to them! But Jesus never took the easy way out marked "SIN". He endured temptation, resisting and resisting going the long, narrow and difficult way of faithful obedience. For him the battle went on where we would long ago have admitted defeat embraced sin.

May Christ be a comfort to us when we are tempted.

Lord Jesus, thank you for your perfect holiness and your sympathy for weak sinners. Help me to flee from the tempter to you. Give me a holy hatred of sin and a love for you and your ways. I long today to be a little more like you. By your grace and the power of your spirit, help me to make progress in the way of holiness today, for your name's sake. Amen.

Hymn: How Sweet The Name of Jesus Sounds

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gytGndHEMZY>

Words: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/66>

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Ocean of Grace (18): SATURDAY – Perfumed by Jesus (p64ff)

Maybe the thought that “not an hour goes by without us having business with the court of heaven” could be a spur to you to take a moment or two to pause in the day to offer a brief prayer. Is there a request to make, a sin to confess, a need to be supplied or a blessing for which to give thanks? Be encouraged that through Jesus we always have ready access to our loving heavenly Father.

We would find it very difficult to get in to see the Queen, however briefly. What a privilege, then, that as his children we can always come before the King of Heaven sure of a welcome for Jesus’ sake. It is a privilege for which we should be much more thankful and of which we ought to make much more use.

It is true that everything we do is tainted by sin, but give thanks that because of Jesus our weak and failing efforts are pleasing to God. The sin is covered. Our Father loves to hear his children speak honestly to him. Every action and word prompted by love actually pleases him. He smiles at you his child! Remember that however badly you mess up and however inadequate your best efforts, he says to you in Christ: “You are my child whom I love. With you I am well pleased.”

On our lives as a sacrifice of thanks and praise, see also Romans 12:1ff. Notice the “therefore”. This is our response in the light of the gospel, in view of God’s mercy, we offer our bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God through Christ. May we do that afresh today knowing that we can always “approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.”

Hymn: Only by grace can we enter

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O06MS_F56ro&t=22s

Words etc.: <http://www.divinehymns.com/lyrics/only-by-grace-can-we-enter-song-lyrics/>

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Ocean of Grace (19): SUNDAY – The Stars Were Confounded (p68ff)

We might think of the dying thief as a striking recipient of Christ’s grace (Luke 24). The thief acknowledges that by being crucified, he is receiving what his deeds deserve whereas Jesus has done nothing wrong. The guilty criminal is getting justice but he is promised grace, paradise. The thief has no good works to offer Christ. He can literally do nothing to earn his salvation or to repay Jesus since he is nailed to a cross. He is a striking demonstration of salvation by grace along through faith alone. He prays, “Jesus remember me when you

come into your kingdom.” Salvation, mercy and forgiveness are only ever a prayer away. We can be sure of heaven if we will but look to Jesus in faith.

On the great exchange of the cross, we might meditate on:

2 Corinthians 5:21 – “God made him [Christ] who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”

Jesus died in our place, taking the punishment that our sin deserved so that we might be righteous and acquitted in God’s sight. God credits our sin to Jesus and Jesus’ spotless perfect righteousness to us.

Hymn: it is finished! The messiah dies

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAdzDk43YRU>

Words etc.: <https://www.music-ministry.org/hymns/it-is-finished/>

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Ocean of Grace (20): MONDAY – A Happy Exchange (p71ff)

It might do us good to dwell afresh on the happiness of the gospel, the goodness of the good news, the joy and wonder and blessedness of these glad tidings for us. Christianity really is the best news in the world ever – news worth sharing.

For us, the exchange of the cross is happy. That seems too weak a way to put it. When we think about it we want to cry out, “Oh, happy exchange!” Jesus gets our sin and death and we get his righteousness and life. He becomes poor that we might become rich. He becomes a slave and a pauper and we are set free as princes and princesses. Here is a salvation to sing and shout about! Even middle-class middle-aged Englishmen might be tempted to dance by so happy a gospel.

Of course the cross was unspeakable sorrow and agony for Christ. But the Bible tells us he went to it for the joy set before him (Hebrews 12:2). We must reckon on the horror of Gethsemane and Golgotha, but Christ also looked beyond it to the happy outcome of all his suffering and grief.

Even as he died as our sin-bearer, Jesus delighted to obey his Father and to win his people. Love for God and for you and me drove him to go to the cross willingly, rejoicing, even, not in the pain of it, but in the happy fruit which it would produce.

Jesus was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, but as God he was also the ever-blessed Happy One who was anointed with the oil of gladness.

We might have sorrows many and bitter. But can we also see reasons for rejoicing? Do we see the cross as a happy exchange? Pray that God would give you grace to press on faithfully, even if you are suffering, for the joy held out to you in the gospel.

Hymn: Man of Sorrows! What a name

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MWOvD06hJqM>

Words etc.: https://hymnary.org/text/man_of_sorrows_what_a_name

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Ocean of Grace (21): TUESDAY – Christ Comes To You In The Word (p74ff)

This last Sunday in church we thought from John 1 and 2 about the fact that Jesus is the New Temple: he is the place to go to meet with God. But where do we go to meet with Jesus? As Chester and Bunyan remind us today the place to go to meet Jesus is the “word of the gospel.” It is in Scripture that we meet Jesus. He walks off the pages of the Bible to encounter us.

Jesus himself explains that this is the purpose of the Scriptures. It is possible to diligently study the Scriptures and yet miss the whole point of coming to Jesus in faith that we might have life in him (John 5:39-40).

Martin Luther called the Scriptures the swaddling-clothes and manger in which Christ lies:

Therefore let your own thoughts and feelings go, and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines, which can never be worked out, so that you may find the wisdom of God that He lays before you in such foolish and simple guise, in order that He may quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling-clothes and the mangers in which Christ lies, and to which the angel points the shepherds.

Simple and little are the swaddling-clothes, but dear is the treasure, Christ, that lies in them.

(Introduction to the Old Testament, 1545)

Christ is the sum and substance of the Scriptures and of God’s gospel message to us. All the Scriptures testify about him (Luke 24). He is God’s full and final Word to his world (Hebrews 1).

Pray that you might meet Christ afresh in the Scriptures today as you consider his gospel.

Hymn: Speak O Lord as we come to you

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ubRIJj8xkds>

Words etc.: <https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/speak-o-lord/>

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Ocean of Grace (22): WEDNESDAY – Today We Have Clean Escaped (p77ff)

Today's reading is a vivid evocation of that Passover night, isn't it? We can perhaps imagine something of the horror in Egypt and the wailing at the death of the first-born sons, whereas Israel was kept safe, sheltering under the blood of the Lamb. That scene shows us afresh the horror of sin and the terrible judgement it deserves, and the wonder of salvation by the death of God's own Son as our substitute.

The Bible gives a rich description of slavery to sin and the redemption God provides, setting us free to serve him. Let's give thanks that we have been set liberated from the tyranny of sin and death and hell to serve and worship God. Sin might seem to offer much, but he is a cruel task master who will ruin us. We might reflect both on what we are set free FROM and what we are set free FOR: a life of worship as God's forgiven people.

God's people sometimes grumbled during their Exodus journey and seem to have recalled their slavery in Egypt as if it were a luxurious holiday camp with abundant food which compared favourably with their privations in the wilderness. We might pray for grateful hearts that we might not grumble against Christ. Give thanks for his provision for you. And if you are tempted by the allure of sin, pray for a clear vision of its cruelty and oppression. Though sin might seem good and desirable, as Adam and Eve found, it does not lead to The Good Life but to guilt, shame, pain, curse, death and a downward spiral of broken relationships.

As we think about offering ourselves to Christ in response to what he's done for us (Romans 12:1-2), we might be helped by the Post-Communion prayer from The Book of Common Prayer:

"... we offer and present unto thee, O Lord, ourselves, our souls and bodies, to be a reasonable, holy, and lively sacrifice unto thee; humbly beseeching thee, that all we... may be fulfilled with thy grace and heavenly benediction. And although we be unworthy, through our manifold sins, to offer unto thee any sacrifice, yet we beseech thee to accept this our bounden duty and service; not weighing our merits, but pardoning our offences, through Jesus Christ our Lord; by whom, and with whom, in the unity of the Holy Ghost, all honour and glory be unto thee, O Father Almighty, world without end. **Amen.**"

Hymn: Christ Once Was Sacrificed

Words: https://jubilate.co.uk/songs/christ_once_was_sacrificed

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Ocean of Grace (23): THURSDAY – Fury is Made Gentle (p80ff)

We have said before that all the Bible is ultimately about Jesus. It is Jesus we really need. All the promises of God are yes and amen in him (2 Corinthians 1:20). It is in the Scriptures that we meet him, enabled by his Holy Spirit.

Jesus fulfils many specific prophecies of Scripture (which are worth a Google) but he also fulfils many of the patterns or picture of Scripture, what theologians sometimes call “types” (“typology”).

For more on Jesus as the true and better Adam, Abel, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Rock of Moses, Job, David, Esther, Jonah, Passover Lamb, Temple, Prophet, Priest, King etc. see this video / animation by Dan Steven:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lGFtfggBQkM>

Or this from Tim Keller “The Bible Is Not About You” – The Gospel Coalition Video address: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10154660677507723> – text below:

“Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and whose obedience is imputed to us.

Jesus is the true and better Abel who, though innocently slain, has blood now that cries out, not for our condemnation, but for acquittal.

Jesus is the true and better Abraham who answered the call of God to leave all the comfortable and familiar and go out into the void not knowing wither he went to create a new people of God.

Jesus is the true and better Isaac who was not just offered up by his father on the mount but was truly sacrificed for us. And when God said to Abraham, “Now I know you love me because you did not withhold your son, your only son whom you love from me,” now we can look at God taking his son up the mountain and sacrificing him and say, “Now we know that you love us because you did not withhold your son, your only son, whom you love from us.”

Jesus is the true and better Jacob who wrestled and took the blow of justice we deserved, so we, like Jacob, only receive the wounds of grace to wake us up and discipline us.

Jesus is the true and better Joseph who, at the right hand of the king, forgives those who betrayed and sold him and uses his new power to save them.

Jesus is the true and better Moses who stands in the gap between the people and the Lord and who mediates a new covenant.

Jesus is the true and better Rock of Moses who, struck with the rod of God’s justice, now gives us water in the desert.

Jesus is the true and better Job, the truly innocent sufferer, who then intercedes for and saves his stupid friends.

Jesus is the true and better David whose victory becomes his people's victory, though they never lifted a stone to accomplish it themselves.

Jesus is the true and better Esther who didn't just risk leaving an earthly palace but lost the ultimate and heavenly one, who didn't just risk his life, but gave his life to save his people.

Jesus is the true and better Jonah who was cast out into the storm so that we could be brought in.

Jesus is the real Rock of Moses, the real Passover Lamb, innocent, perfect, helpless, slain so the angel of death will pass over us. He's the true temple, the true prophet, the true priest, the true king, the true sacrifice, the true lamb, the true light, the true bread.

The Bible's really not about you—it's about him"

There is really a wonderful artistry to the Bible, so gloriously presenting Christ to us in so many different ways. To my mind, this is a very strong argument for the divine inspiration of Scripture: that forty different authors writing over many centuries provide such a unified and variegated portrait of Jesus.

Hymn: Join All The Glorious Names

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdHoPwp07LM>

Words etc.: https://hymnary.org/text/join_all_the_glorious_names

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Ocean of Grace (24): FRIDAY – The Matchless Man (p83ff)

We might remind ourselves of what the Nicene Creed says on the divinity and humanity of Christ:

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;

he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again...

The Athanasian Creed goes into rather more detail:

... We worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity;
Neither confounding the Persons: nor dividing the Substance.
For there is one Person of the Father, another of the Son: and another of the Holy Ghost.
But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty co-eternal.
Such as the Father is, such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost.
The Father uncreate, the Son uncreate: and the Holy Ghost uncreate.
The Father incomprehensible, the Son incomprehensible: and the Holy Ghost incomprehensible.
The Father eternal, the Son eternal: and the Holy Ghost eternal.
And yet they are not three eternals: but one eternal.
As also there are not three incomprehensibles, nor three uncreated: but one uncreated, and one incomprehensible.
So likewise the Father is Almighty, the Son Almighty: and the Holy Ghost Almighty.
And yet they are not three Almightyies: but one Almighty.
So the Father is God, the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.
And yet they are not three Gods: but one God.
So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord: and the Holy Ghost Lord.
And yet not three Lords: but one Lord.
For like as we are compelled by the Christian verity: to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord;
So are we forbidden by the Catholick Religion: to say there be three Gods, or three Lords.
The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten.
The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created, but begotten.
The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding.
So there is one Father, not three Fathers; one Son, not three Sons: one Holy Ghost, not three Holy Ghosts.
And in this Trinity none is afore, or after other: none is greater, or less than another;
But the whole three Persons are co-eternal together: and co-equal.
So that in all things, as is aforesaid: the Unity in Trinity, and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshipped.
He therefore that will be saved: must thus think of the Trinity.
Furthermore it is necessary to everlasting salvation: that he also believe rightly the Incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ.
For the right Faith is that we believe and confess: that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man;
God, of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds: and Man, of the Substance of his Mother, born in the world;
Perfect God, and Perfect Man: of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting;
Equal to the Father, as touching his Godhead: and inferior to the Father, as touching his Manhood.

Who although he be God and Man: yet he is not two, but one Christ;
 One, not by conversion of the Godhead into flesh: but by taking of the Manhood into
 God;
 One altogether, not by confusion of Substance: but by unity of Person.
 For as the reasonable soul and flesh is one man: so God and Man is one Christ.
 Who suffered for our salvation: descended into hell, rose again the third day from the
 dead.
 He ascended into heaven, he sitteth on the right hand of the Father, God Almighty: from
 whence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead....

Some questions for reflection on the text in *An Ocean of Grace*:

Why did Jesus have to be truly human?

Why did Jesus also have to be truly divine?

What reasons for worshiping Jesus are given here? Which do you find most moving?

In what ways is Christ matchless?

Worship Jesus, perhaps in prayer or in song.

In what ways can you see “an attraction” in Jesus (maybe especially in his true humanity)
 “that leads” you “to approach” him “in faith”?

Come to Christ afresh in repentance and faith.

Pray for grace to live in the light of these great truths of which we’ve been reminded today.

Hymn: Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Dvy4154ivkl>

Words etc.: https://hymnary.org/text/thou_didst_leave_thy_throne_and_thy_king

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Ocean of Grace (25): SATURDAY – O Sweet Exchange (p86ff)

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones famously preached on the words “but God” from Ephesians 2:4.
<https://www.mljtrust.org/sermons-online/ephesians-2-1-10/but-god/> (audio and some text)

Or:

Martyn Lloyd-Jones - [#4042](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP1yUwhc8zU) - But God' The Christian Message to the World (Ephesians)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gP1yUwhc8zU> – he comes onto the word “but”
 especially about 6 minutes in!

In both Titus 3 and Ephesians 2, these words help us to see that the decisive intervention of God is absolutely necessary. Left to ourselves we would have been entirely lost BUT GOD loved us and acted in grace towards us making all the difference. We could not save ourselves, but of course God could save us. His action changes everything. Nothing could prevent his salvation.

* * *

Although God is not the morally responsible author of sin (we sin because we want to – God doesn't force us against our will), God must have had a morally sufficient reason to permit the Fall. God is all knowing so of course, he made men and women knowing that they would sin against him, but he always had in mind the great redemption which he would bring about. Some theologians have even called the Fall a "happy fault" (*felix culpa*, in Latin) because of the wonderful salvation from sin which followed from it. Sad and sinful though the Fall was, God thought it worth it.

Wikipedia tells us the earliest known use of the term happy fault is in the Catholic Paschal Vigil Mass Exsultet: "O happy fault that earned for us so great, so glorious a Redeemer."

Ambrose speaks of the fortunate ruin of Adam in the Garden of Eden in that his sin brought more good to humanity than if he had stayed perfectly innocent.

Augustine says: "God judged it better to bring good out of evil than not to permit any evil to exist."

Thomas Aquinas argued that: "God allows evils to happen in order to bring a greater good therefrom".

In *Paradise Lost*, Milton has Adam proclaim that the good resulting from the Fall is "more wonderful" than the goodness in creation:

O goodness infinite, Goodness immense!
That all this good of evil shall produce,
And evil turn to good; more wonderful
Than that which creation first brought forth
Light out of Darkness!
(Book 12)

Hymn: There is a new song (Your love has lifted me) / When I was lost, you came and rescued me

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=73JuxCgFEgk>

Words: <https://www.music-ministry.org/hymns/when-i-was-lost/>

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Ocean of Grace (26): SUNDAY – Be A Jesus To Me (p90ff)

We flee from the wrath of the Son to refuge in the Son. Jesus is rightly angry with us for our sin, but he also welcomes repentant sinners to receive his love, forgiveness and grace. There is no where we can run from God (Psalm 139) but we can run to the open arms of God our loving heavenly Father who welcomes back prodigal children (Luke 15).

Anselm vividly describes danger and judgement all around us (above, beneath, within). We might also picture ourselves surrounded by the mighty protection of the Son, our shield, defender and stronghold. The wide and high and long and deep love of Christ surrounds us (Ephesians 3). In Christ, it is within the love of God that we live and move and have our being. No accusation or judgement can touch us because Jesus has paid the price of our sin in full. He has drunk the cup of God's wrath to the dregs.

Are there things that keep you from coming to Christ?

How would the gospel (or today's Bible passage or reading) encourage you to come to Christ?

What arguments does Anselm use with Christ? On what basis does he appeal to him? Could you make his prayers your own?

Hymn: Oh, to see the dawn (The power of the cross)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nwzt9jRUPNg>

Words etc.: <https://www.stuarttownend.co.uk/song/the-power-of-the-cross/>

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Ocean of Grace (27): MONDAY – Our Compassionate Saviour (93pff)

How do you think we should approach God? Why?

Some people imagine that if God exists we could bowl up into his presence self-confidently. Maybe they think they're alright. After all, I'm no Hitler or Stalin. I may not be perfect, but I'm not what you'd call a big sinner. And I'm not as bad as so-and-so. God is like a kindly grandfather. He'll forgive. That's his job.

But the Bible would say this kind of brash presumption would be totally wrong.

(For further reading: Ecclesiastes 5:1-7)

Yesterday's reading from Anselm was called "A Meditation to Stir Up Fear". There can be a right and a wrong kind of fear of God. Anselm obviously thought it was good and helpful to promote a certain kind of fear of God. We should not let a cringing terror keep us from

coming to God. But we should come to him with reverence and awe, remembering his greatness and holiness. Many of the Old Testament descriptions of Sinai, or the Tabernacle and the Temple show us that God wants to relate to his people and be known by them, but that it is not a straightforward thing for sinners to come into the presence of a Holy God. We must come in God's way, in repentance and faith, trusting in his promise and sacrifice for us.

So what would a right kind of holy confidence and boldness before God look and feel like? What reasons do we have to come to God knowing that we will receive a gracious welcome?

Give thanks afresh for our access to our holy God – for the curtain of the temple torn down by the death of Jesus, for a new and living way into God's presence. Praise Jesus for his saving work and for his intercession for us.

Hymn: Just As I, Without One Plea

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CxAOTFe3-Uo>

Words etc.: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/1048>

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Ocean of Grace (28): TUESDAY – Cast Us Not Aside (p96ff)

It is worth dwelling on and clinging to this great promise of Jesus to us: “whoever comes to me I will never drive away.” (John 6v37). The rest of the passage is obviously worth reading too!

How could you begin to write this precious promise on your heart in gold letters? Could you memorise this verse? Ponder it. Pray over it. Praise God for it. Should you stick this verse up on the bathroom mirror or fridge door?

Whenever we come to Jesus in repentance and faith (however imperfect our repentance and weak our faith) we can be sure that Jesus always welcomes sinners. We might come hesitantly, haltingly and in a terrible mess, but he will welcome us and keep us. We come with many doubts and unresolved issues, but he will never drive us away.

There is no one better than Jesus to whom we could come. Remember he is the matchless man. He has no worthy rivals, only imitations. Only he can save. Come to him!

What drew us to Christ when we first came to him? What draws us to Christ still and keeps us coming back to him?

And our very coming is a result of the work of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. We come. But it is all whom the Father gives to Christ who will come. He draws us. The Spirit makes us alive and gives us the desire and ability to come. Christ responds to the work of God in us.

The Father and the Son are more than able to keep all those who are theirs. No one can snatch us from the divine hands. We are held, secure, kept. Our salvation depends on Christ and his hold on us, not on our weak grasp of him. We couldn't be safer than in our Saviour's grip. Blessed assurance!

Take the prayer in the final line of our reading to heart: "May we never lose the comfort of our security in you for lack of meditating on this."

Hymn: Jesus Calls Us O'er The Tumult

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y5IxbPK8Ow4>

Words etc.: https://hymnary.org/text/jesus_calls_us_oer_the_tumult

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Ocean of Grace (29): WEDNESDAY – The Usefulness of Christ (p99ff)

Reflect on the questions Chester asks. What do you boast in / glory in / rejoice in / delight in? What do you treasure and value (about yourself)? What are you tempted to depend upon before God?

How does boasting in the cross of Christ nullify all other boasting?

(There are 38 references to boasting in the New Testament. You might want to follow up some of them. <https://www.stepbible.org/?q=strong=G2744&options=VNHUG>)

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It can be helpful to examine our hearts, but Chester is surely right to imply that for every look within (at our own hearts) it is wise to take several looks to Him (to Christ). We can rejoice that our salvation and standing before God depends on Christ not on us. We glory and boast and delight and rejoice in Christ Crucified.

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Is wallowing in our guilt and sin our danger? Maybe we are also sometimes tempted to ignore and deny it? There has no doubt been a shift since the 17th Century in our cultural besetting sins!

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Do you want to pick one office or title of Christ from the reading to reflect on and thank God for today?

Could you preach to yourself about the difference Christ makes? What do you see when you look at yourself? And at Christ? How does he answer your need?

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We could, of course, also do a useful bible study on the meaning of the word “flesh” (*sarx*) in the Bible and in the Apostle Paul in particular. The word is used 149 times, as well as other related forms like “fleshly” (a further nine times). Sometimes it is translated rather freely as “sinful nature” (NIV). Sometimes it is used in relation to circumcision so there is more than a hint of literal bodily flesh, though of course the Bible is normally positive about the body as a good gift created by God. It would be useful to think of all the words “flesh” is associated with in the Bible and what it is contrasted with, for example, the Spirit.

Various free online Bible study tools can be helpful e.g.

<https://www.biblestudytools.com/lexicons/greek/nas/sarx.html>

<https://www.stepbible.org/?q=strong=G4561&options=VNHUG>

Hymn: Worthy, O Worthy are you, Lord

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yR9lu0Ak_OQ

Words etc.: <https://www.divinehymns.com/lyrics/worthy-oh-worthy-are-you-lord-song-lyrics/>

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Ocean of Grace (30): THURSDAY – Cordial For A Fainting Heart (p102ff)

We can feel so condemned and discouraged if we feel that we have sinned very seriously, or very often, or repeatedly in the same way. Sometimes we feel we make little or no progress in holiness. So it is good news that Jesus is the friend of sinners. That he came for sinners. That he loves and seeks and saves sinners.

Always this side of glory we will be simultaneously righteous in Christ and sinners by nature. We will always battle with sin and it is a sign of grace in us that we sometimes care enough for holiness to fight sin.

Jesus knows that. He knows you and your struggles and situation. He knows we sin and we always will. He knows our sins better than we do. He made us and understands us. And yet he still loved us and died for us and advocates for us. *Jesus* pleads your cause.

Jesus is the great physician for sinners ever nigh with sovereign balm. Jesus’ powerful saving blood is a sure remedy for sin and guilt. Allow Jesus to heal your heart and refresh your spirit. Ask him to take care of you.

We must choose to believe Jesus rather than the accusations of Satan or the fears of our own hearts. We are his and he is ours. Thanks be to God!

Hymn: Be still, my heart! These anxious cares

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JceAzZtPO-Y>

Words: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/712>

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Ocean of Grace (31): FRIDAY – The Faith-Look (p105ff)

The idea of the faith-look to Christ was especially important to Spurgeon as Isaiah 45:22 — “Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else” - was the text that God used for his conversion. You can find a brief account of it here: <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/charles-spurgeons-conversion-in-a-primitive-methodist-chapel/>

When we think of looking to Jesus in saving faith, we may also think of Numbers 21 where the people who looked to the bronze serpent were saved according to God’s promise. We might compare Jesus lifted up on the cross as in John 3:14-15: “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, so the Son of Man [Jesus] must be lifted up, that everyone who believes may have eternal life in him.” It is striking thought that a mere look with faith can save. We do not have to do any meritorious good works to earn God’s favour: we only have to look and trust. You may feel very unable, but you can look (by God’s grace and power). Or to put it another way, you only have to receive Jesus crucified to be saved. Look to him! Don’t be distracted. Don’t look elsewhere. Fix your eyes upon Jesus!

Can you make Spurgeon’s prayer your own? Can you echo his testimony of the faithfulness of Christ, whether you have been a believer for a long or a short time?

How might this prayer prompt you to confession of sin and repentance?

To praise and thanksgiving?

And to prayer asking for God’s help?

Isn’t it a staggering thought that we might be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19), especially when we consider God’s infinite fullness? We could never be that full but we can be full to the brim and we can grow in our capacity. It should encourage and motivate us that there is always more to know of the fullness of God’s love. We can never come to an end of it. The oldest and most devout and learned saints can never exhaust it. The adventure of knowing Jesus always continues. We can always go higher up and further in to God’s kingdom grace. May we know Christ little more of it afresh today and tomorrow and the next day.

Hymn: Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F2tKVqZZiI4>

Words etc.: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/645>

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Ocean of Grace (32): SATURDAY – While Christ Ever Lives (p108ff)

It is interesting to ask what the risen Lord Jesus would pray for us. And it seems sensible to take his prayers on earth as a model for his prayers in heaven. They reveal his heart, his priorities, his vision and longing for his people. He would, perhaps, pray rather less about our health and happiness than we might and rather more for our holiness and unity and love and....

What priorities do the prayers of Jesus (and of the Bible) reveal? How might we make our prayers more like the biblical patterns?

(Don Carson's book, *A Call To Spiritual Reformation / Praying With Paul*, is an excellent study of the priorities revealed in the Apostle Paul's prayers (Baker))

Our passage today also alludes to Paul's confident thanks and prayer for the Philippians 1v3ff:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, **being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.**

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.

Our assurance of course rests on the sovereign grace of God and the saving work of Christ, applied to us by Christ's heavenly intercession for us. We trust in Christ in the power of the Spirit and we can depend upon God to keep us and bring us to glory. Jesus' prayer should encourage us and give us confidence and boldness: the Father surely hears and grants the prayers of the Son. He will lose none of those the Father has given him. Praise him!

Hymn: I Know Not Why God's Wondrous Grace

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OUFz_tGxFxo

Words etc.: <https://www.hymnal.net/en/hymn/h/333/3>

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Ocean of Grace (33): SUNDAY – A Rich Store Abounds In Him (p112ff)

It's a wonderful text from Colossians 2, isn't it? "... full riches of complete understanding... the mystery of God, namely, Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" (2v2f).

God is infinite and we are finite so he will always remain mysterious, Other, incomprehensible. We can never totally comprehend or tie down or box in the eternal Uncreated One.

But God has revealed himself. In the Bible, a mystery often has that sense of something that was hidden but is now revealed (in particular, God's plan for the gentile nations to be included in Christ on equal terms with Israel, as Ephesians and Colossians emphasise).

Whilst we can't know God fully and completely (any more than my dog can fully understand me, I assume), God has revealed himself so that we can truly know him. We were made in his image for relationship with him and he has made himself known in Christ.

All the fullness of God is found in Christ in human, bodily form. He is God as man.

Jesus is God revealed and made known, God with us and for us. When we see him we see the Father for the Father and the Son are one in the bond of the Spirit.

So Christ is an infinite treasure: the eternal, infinite, uncreated I AM WHO I AM. He is the pearl of great price. We can never come to the end of his riches, or worth, or beauty, or value. There is always more of him to know and adore. He more than perfectly meets all our needs.

Like those in today's gospel, John 12, we would do well to pray that we might see Jesus afresh. He will meet us in his Word in the power of the Holy Spirit if we prayerfully seek him there in repentance and faith.

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Perhaps there are aspects of Jesus' life, incarnation, death, resurrection, reign in heaven and return which we don't often think about?

This brief excerpt from The Litany of The Book of Common Prayer (1662) might help us to reflect on some of these things:

By the mystery of thy holy Incarnation; by thy holy Nativity and Circumcision; by thy Baptism, Fasting, and Temptation,
Good Lord, deliver us.

By thine Agony and bloody Sweat; by thy Cross and Passion; by thy precious Death and Burial; by thy glorious Resurrection and Ascension; and by the coming of the Holy Ghost,

Good Lord, deliver us.

In all time of our tribulation; in all time of our wealth; in the hour of death, and in the day of judgement,

Good Lord, deliver us.

(The whole Litany can be found here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/litany>)

Has some aspect of the person or work of Christ stood out to you afresh today? Make this the basis of prayer and praise.

Hymn: I will sing the wondrous story

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hDPCFbAysBc>

Words: <https://hymnary.org/text/i-will-sing-the-wondrous-story-of-the>

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Ocean of Grace (34): MONDAY – The Every Flower Of Love (p115ff)

It is a change of perspective, perhaps, for us to think of the world and life as God saturated and permeated. God is the maker and sustainer of all things. And the Lord of all things. He rules over all things and orders them according to the purpose of his will in love and wisdom. This means that all the good things we have (many of which we are not even aware of) come to us from the gracious hand of our loving heavenly Father. And even hard and horrible things are for our ultimate good. God works in and through all things to make us more like Jesus and to get us to glory and the new creation. (cf. Romans 8:28)

What good things do you have / has God given you today?

How can you see God's providential and sovereign love and care?

Are there good gifts which you tend to ignore, or forget, or take for granted and fail to thank God for?

Ponder the cross. Can you see the love of God there? In giving Christ, the Father gave the one he loved completely, his One and Only eternally begotten Son. How much more will he not also along with Christ give us all things?

Marvel afresh at Christ's excellence, his value to his Father and to your soul.

What reasons are there for thanks and praise in Christ and his cross and gospel that are independent of circumstances? Remember that in Christ you are already seated in the heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6). Your salvation couldn't be more secure since you are united to Christ by faith.

Give thanks to God for your creation and redemption.

You might want to use The General Thanksgiving from The Book of Common Prayer:

ALMIGHTY God, Father of all mercies, we thine unworthy servants do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us and to all men; [*particularly to those who desire now to offer up their praises and thanksgivings for thy late mercies vouchsafed unto them.] We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ, for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we shew forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom with thee and the Holy Ghost be all honour and glory, world without end. **Amen.**

(The above prayer can be found online here: <https://www.churchofengland.org/prayer-and-worship/worship-texts-and-resources/book-common-prayer/prayers-and-thanksgivings>)

(A modern English version from The Church Society can be found here at number 16, along with various other prayers and thanksgivings:
https://churchsociety.org/docs/english_prayer_book/05_EPB_prayers_thanksgivings.pdf)

Hymn: Now thank we all our God

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HGmuJ4U7zT8>

Words: https://hymnary.org/text/now_thank_we_all_our_god

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Ocean of Grace (35): TUESDAY – All Goodness (p118ff)

Another way to describe the relationship between God the Father and God the Son is to say that the Son is fully God in the same way that the Father is. The Son is all that the Father is except Father. It is their eternal relation of origin which distinguishes them: The Father is the Unbegotten God; the Son is the Begotten God, God of God, Light of Light, True God of True God.

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All the fullness of God is to be found in Christ in bodily form. But, of course, as God the Son is also omnipresent. According to his human nature, he is in one physical location. As God he fills and is present to all things.

This idea is sometimes called the Extra-Calvinisticum (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/kevin-deyoung/theological-primer-the-extra-calvinisticum/>) although it is not original to Calvin.

See further: <https://marclloyd.blogspot.com/2008/11/extra-catholicum.html>

<https://marclloyd.blogspot.com/2008/11/what-can-so-called-extra-calvinisticum.html>

This might seem a bit technical and esoteric, but I think there's cause here to wonder afresh at the greatness and majesty of Christ. Our view of him may have been too small. So we may find here reasons for repentance and fresh awe and praise.

This also helps to explain how Jesus can be with us now (according to his divine nature) and also seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven (in his resurrection body). (Though of course we also know that we are joined to Christ by faith in the Spirit and also seated in the heavenly places in him, as well as living here on earth!)

It probably does us good once in a while to have our minds blown and there is plenty here to do it.

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For reflection on the Catherine Parr text:

What might distract us from Christ?

What might be prize above Christ?

Why is Jesus best?

What would we be without Jesus?

Pray for a greater desire for Christ and an appreciation of his presence and its blessings.

Further reading: Philippians 3; John 6:66-69

Two Wesley hymns for today:

Hymn: Let earth and heaven combine

Video (from 1 minute 15): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AObZgDqBMIA>

Words etc.:

https://hymnary.org/text/let_earth_and_heaven_combine_angels_and_?fbclid=IwAR0JH_5N-k4kSIWK5_0MaLYjNagkyxmYAQ2Qd6zDYMeg4wUO1Wp2g0pOZ_E

And:

Glory be to God on high, And peace on earth descend

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fTyMBQRIR1Y>

Words etc:

https://www.hymnsandcarolsofchristmas.com/Hymns_and_Carols/glory_be_to_god_on_high1.htm?fbclid=IwAR08JYfzIHNSjb8m_H6NqTrMKsAFmjQXyNpDUACv9-U9VC8eD1hZsSDLm_M

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Ocean of Grace (36): WEDNESDAY – The History of Love (p121ff)

God is love (1 John 4). Jesus is God. So we might say Jesus is love.

But God is One. He is not made up of parts. (Theologians call this the doctrine of God's Simplicity – he is not complex or compounded but essentially one). We cannot divide up God and we cannot play off one attribute or characteristic of God against another.

God's love is a just, wise, holy, powerful, good love. These are all different aspects or ways of looking at God's perfect being and character.

God's love actually requires his wrath. He hates sin because he cares. He is angry at sin because he loves. God's wrath is his holy love in relation to sin.

* * *

Can you think of ways the love of Christ is shown? In his incarnation, birth, life, teaching, actions, death, resurrection, reign in heaven and return? What incidents in the gospels stand out for you as showing the love of Jesus?

Who does Jesus love? Why? How?

Who may come to Christ? Why should they come? What will they find when they do?

“Christ loves you and Christ is lovely” could be something to cling on to today.

The love of Christ should cause us to love him and to love others.

1 John 4:7-end (on God and love) would make excellent further reading.

The Song of Songs is a vivid portrayal of the love of Christ for the church, his bride.

I have been enjoying Julian Hardyman's book, *Jesus, Lover of My Soul: Fresh Pathways in Spiritual Passion* (IVP) <https://www.10ofthose.com/uk/products/26584/jesus-lover-of-my-soul>

Also excellent is Dane Ortlund's *Gentle and Lowly: The Heart of Christ for Sinners and Sufferers* (Crossway, 2020)

See further: <https://marclloyd.blogspot.com/2020/08/dane-ortlund-gentle-and-lowly.html>

Hymn: O The Deep, Deep Love of Jesus

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dPXapFFesA>

Words: [https://hymnary.org/text/o the deep deep love of jesus](https://hymnary.org/text/o%20the%20deep%20deep%20love%20of%20jesus)

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Ocean of Grace (37): THURSDAY - The Fountain Of All Supplies (p124ff)

Rejoice afresh that there is so much stored up for us in Christ: far more than all God's people could ever need. He is rich and kind and loving and powerful and good beyond anything we can imagine. Give thanks that this fountain of love, and grace, and joy, and peace can never run dry.

Jesus is always both willing and able to meet all our needs. He can save us completely.

If the Lord Jesus is our shepherd, we shall not be in want. We can lack nothing we really need.

So often we *think* we need other things. Yes, Jesus, fine, great, but.... These other things are broken cisterns (Jeremiah 2:13). Jesus alone can satisfy. Drinking the living water he gives, we need never thirst (John 4).

We are always thirsty and tend to become empty and dry; Jesus is ever full and overflowing with life and love and power. He can always cleanse and refresh and renew. He can revive our parched souls.

His blood can make the foulest clean. His blood avails for me.

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you that I have fullness in you by faith.

Help me not to be distracted or unfaithful.

Keep me abiding in you that your life might be mine and that I might bear much fruit for you.

Amen.

(cf. John 15)

Hymn: Here is Love Vast As The Ocean

Video: <https://www.emw.org.uk/2020/05/here-is-love/>

Words: [https://hymnary.org/text/here is love vast as the ocean](https://hymnary.org/text/here-is-love-vast-as-the-ocean)

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Ocean of Grace (38): FRIDAY – Medicine For The Soul (p127ff)

Everything is really grace, undeserved gift, all the way down, for how could we ever deserve or merit favour from God? Our existence, our creation, is a matter of grace. What do we have that we did not receive as sheer gift? Some theologians have sometimes contrasted “nature” and “grace”. Our human nature is certainly fallen and corrupt, but in a way we might say nature is grace. Certainly creation is a free undeserved gift of the overflowing abundant generosity of God. Praise Him!

* * *

And we should not think of grace as a thing as if it were a substance or a force. It is good to remember that grace is the kindness and generosity of God Himself towards us. It is love to undeserving sinners. It is personal and relational: God relating and acting towards us on the basis of his character not our merit.

* * *

If grace is “love with stoop in it”, condescension, the love of a prince for a pauper, the rich for the poor, the full for the empty, the Lord for the beggar, the judge for the criminal, consider the grace of Christ, the eternal Son to us sinners. There could be no one fuller, richer, kinder. He gives and gives and gives and never runs out.

* * *

Christ is honey, cordial for the heart, the concentrated essence of the gospel, for he came from the hive of sweetness to conquer obstinacy with kindness. (After Thomas Watson)

Hymn: Wonderful grace of Jesus

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vsPc-lx3_ow

Words: [https://hymnary.org/text/wonderful grace of jesus](https://hymnary.org/text/wonderful-grace-of-jesus)

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Ocean of Grace (39): SATURDAY – The Altogether Lovely (p130ff)

For the Ancient Greeks (Plato etc.), truth, goodness and beauty are a classic triad. Perhaps we tend to neglect beauty. We might do well to dwell on the attractiveness of Jesus' person, character, words and actions – his beauty.

Has Jesus stolen your heart?

What can you say about his loveliness?

What do you admire in him / find pleasing / fitting / appropriate?

What captivates you about him?

Why are you passionate about him?

Do you have a sense of his longing and affection for you?

Jesus desires us and in our right minds we desire him. He is the Desire of the Nations (Haggai 2:6-7), although of course we don't always realise it is Jesus we want and need. Oh for a fresh vision of his beauty and how we might be satisfied in him.

Hymn: Beautiful One

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DAPHq-g1vgQ>

Words etc.: <https://www.worshiptogether.com/songs/beautiful-one-tim-hughes/>

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Ocean of Grace (40): PALM SUNDAY – We May Lift Him Up In Our Hearts (p134ff)

There is a real irony in the gospel accounts of Holy Week as we see Jesus The Judge on trial. In fact, it is humanity which is on trial. The reactions of the disciples, the religious leaders, Herod and Pilate and all the others to Jesus reveal the state of their hearts: they incriminate themselves. Jesus is condemned, but he alone is the Innocent One. Jesus was silent before his accusers, but one day he will speak words of judgement or acquittal to all who must stand before the court of heaven. Left to ourselves, we are all guilty. Humanity's sinful instinct is to crucify God. But Jesus offers us his pardon. His innocent death is salvation for the guilty who will put their trust in him.

* * *

In a sense those responsible for the crucifixion did not know what they were doing – at least not with great clarity or to its full extent. (cf. Luke 23:34)

The Apostle Paul can say: "we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this

age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (1 Corinthians 2:7-8)

(If I hadn't suggested it earlier, I might have chosen My Song Is Love Unknown as the suggested hymn here. It's one of my favourites.)

Hymn: All Glory Laud and Honour

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pHN8UAK6Yow>

Words: [https://hymnary.org/text/all glory laud and honor](https://hymnary.org/text/all_glory_laude_and_honor)

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Ocean of Grace (41): MONDAY – Our Phoenix Rises (p137ff)

Chester describes something of the already-not yet tension of the Christian life. Theologians sometimes call this inaugurated eschatology in contrast to a hope that is entirely in the future or overly realised in the present. Eschatology is the Christian doctrine of the last things – the Second Coming of Christ, the final judgement, heaven, hell and the new creation and so on. We call the Kingdom of God inaugurated in Christ (it really has begun in a new way through Jesus) but it has not yet come in all its fulness (sin and death remain).

Jesus has won the decisive victory by his cross and resurrection, but sin and Satan have not yet finally entirely given up the fight. Though they are defeated, they still mount a desperate last resistance and whilst they cannot win, they can do much harm. The power of sin is broken in our lives, but it often still feels rather powerful to us! We continue to mess up, often again and again in the same way. And the battle will carry on until glory. Sin will be a constant presence until Jesus calls us home. There are many real blessings to the Christian life here and now, but the best is yet to come. All things are ours now in principle in Christ, but we don't yet have the full enjoyment of them.

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It is an interesting point that Christians transferred the Sabbath from a Saturday (the last day of the week) to a Sunday (the first day of the week, resurrection day, representing a New Creation). Each Lord's Day is a celebration of Easter and the Resurrection when the risen Jesus meets his people to bless them and renew covenant with them. We work from rest, not to achieve it by our work. The week begins with the gift of Sunday, new life day.

* * *

On the Jubilee Year see Leviticus 25:8ff. It was a year of liberty, the cancellation of debts and sabbath rest. It required trust in God and his provision. It's not hard to see how this provides a picture of the gospel and cultivates gospel faith.

In a way we might think of the New Creation as an eternal Sabbath rest, though I suspect there'll also be work to do (without toil or curse).

Hymn: Hail the day that sees him rise

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7b_ODz_igTs

Words: [https://hymnary.org/text/hail the day that sees him rise](https://hymnary.org/text/hail_the_day_that_sees_him_rise)

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Ocean of Grace (42): TUESDAY – Resurrection Sweetness (p140ff)

Reflect on how and why God loved us (Romans 8:37). How was that love demonstrated and proved? Give thanks that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35). We are secure because our salvation does not depend on our performance but on God's grace, his undeserved love for us, and all that he has done for us in Christ. God promises to keep all his people and to bring us safely to glory. We may have real assurance, which is not presumption or self-confidence, as we trust in Jesus. We depend on God and his promises and nothing could be more sure.

Notice the unbroken golden chain on Romans 8:28-30. The point here is that none are lost at any stage. God's people are called, foreknown, predestined; predestined, called, justified, glorified. God's foreknowledge is not mere prediction or anticipation nor merely an operation of his omnipotence (he knows in advance that we will believe). It is something much more active and personal. God foreknows his people. It is relational as when Adam knew Eve. It speaks of God's sovereign choice.

We are glorified spiritually speaking in Christ (we are joined to him by faith in the Spirit) in the heavenly realms and we will be glorified. Our future glorification is so certain it can be spoken of as a past event which is already accomplished in Christ. Now it is a reality already in Christ; one day we will have the full enjoyment of it when sorrow and sin are ended.

* * *

We rightly emphasise the centrality of the cross. But all Christ's saving work incarnation-birth-life-death-resurrection-reign-return etc. really belongs together. We sometimes concentrate on the importance of the historical evidence for the resurrection: we want to show that the tomb was empty, and that's vital. But we would also do well to reflect on its significance. Jesus was raised from the dead. So what? Certainly the resurrection proves that Jesus was who he claimed to be and that the cross worked, but the Bible has much more to say about why the resurrection matters and what it means for us.

You might find something in the following notes useful (which I think are based on Sam Allberry's book, which I highly recommend):

Why the resurrection matters (1 Cor 15)

The meaning / significance on the resurrection

So what? What the resurrection can do for you:

Sam Allberry, *Lifted: Experiencing the resurrection life* (IVP, 2010) 144 pages ISBN: 9781844744237 £6.99

(1) ASSURANCE

(a) The resurrection assures us that Jesus was who he claimed to be

(b) The resurrection assures us of what Jesus has done

Rm 4:25; 1 Cor 15:17

“the resurrection is the consequence and demonstration of our salvation because death is the consequence and demonstration of our sin.”

Death as the wages of sin Gen 2:17; 3:2-5, 19; Rm 6:23

(2) TRANSFORMATION

Spiritually raised now (Col 3:1), physically raised at Final Day (Rm 8:23)

God gives life & new life - Rm 4:17; 1 Sam 2:6; Ez 37; Ps 16:10; Phil 2

(a) New life - Eph 2:1-10

(b) New perspective - Col 3:1-4

(c) New conduct - Eph 5:8, 11-14 Col 3:5, 8-10; Acts 4:32-35

(d) New power - Rom 8:9-11; Rom 6:5-14

(e) New ambition - Phil 3:10-11

(3) HOPE

Mistake 1: The mistake that the resurrection has already taken place (2 Tim 2:17-18)

(a) Wrong to think: We have it all now

(b) Wrong to think: This is all there is

Mistake 2: There is no resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12)

Jesus is the first of many - Rm 8:11

Look at nature:

(i) put death in, get life out - 1 Cor 15:36

(ii) what you get out wasn't what you put in - 1 Cor 15:37-38

(iii) God is, of course, able to give things the appropriate kinds of bodies - 1 Cor 15:39-41

Look at the risen Jesus:

1 Cor 15:49; Phil 3:21

Continuity & discontinuity - 1 Cor 15:42-44

Resurrection hope for creation - Rev 21:1, 5; Is 65:17; 11:6-9; Gen 9:11; Mt 19:28; 1 Cor 15:58

“God says, ‘I will make all things new’, not ‘I will make all new things’.”

Frustration & Promise - Rm 8:19-22

(4) MISSION

Acts 17:30-31

The exaltation of Jesus - Phil 2:5-11

The reality of judgement - Rm 1:3-4; Dan 12:2; John 11:25; Acts 4:1-2

The necessity of mission - Mt 28:19-20

Hymn: Love's redeeming work is done

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qzmjFmXZVo8>

Words: https://www.jubilate.co.uk/songs/loves_redeeming_work_is_done_jubilate_version

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Ocean of Grace (43): WEDNESDAY – All Things Applaud You (p143ff)

It is perhaps not too fanciful to see the pattern of death and resurrection as written in to creation in the form of night and day (sleep is a picture of death followed by resurrection) and winter followed by spring.

The continuation of the seasons is a sign of God's faithfulness and kindness to humanity (Genesis 8:22).

Jesus himself frequently drew upon creation in his teaching, not least when he spoke of his body as a seed which must die and be buried in the earth that it might produce a harvest of life (John 12:23-25).

Jesus means to redeem and renew the whole cosmos and bring in a new creation. His own resurrection body provides a kind of pattern for the renewal of all things. The same body rose from the tomb but it arose a spiritual body, transformed, renewed, glorified. Similarly creation will be renewed. See e.g. Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 15; Revelation 21. Our hope is not just for a disembodied "spiritual" heaven, but for resurrection bodies and New Creation

(the renewal of all things). God's plans for this creation will not be thwarted by sin. He means for his kingdom to come on this earth in all its fulness. He will take the world he has made from one degree of glory to another.

Jesus' resurrection is a kind of first fruits of the resurrection. His rising from the grave proves that death is defeated and a great harvest is coming. Jesus is like the first bluebell of spring. Soon there will be a great multitude that no one can number.

Hymn: How Great Thou Art

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cc0QVWzCv9k>

Words: https://hymnary.org/text/o_lord_my_god_when_i_in_awesome_wonder

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Ocean of Grace (44): THURSDAY – Mental Anguish (p146ff)

Reflecting on Jesus' experience in the Garden of Gethsemane on this Maundy Thursday evening might complement our reading from John 12. See Matthew 26:36ff / Mark 14:32ff / Luke 22:39ff. Jesus goes willingly to his agonising death because he knows it is the only way for him to save his people. He chooses to drink the cup of God's wrath to the dregs so that we don't have to.

Hebrews 12:1-4 is also relevant as we think about how Jesus contemplated the cross. He endured the agony for the joy set before him.

* * *

For the early church fathers, the full and true humanity of Jesus, along with his divine nature, was essential to our salvation. They often appealed to the principle Cyril sets out here: "for that which has not been taken into your nature has not been saved".

Gregory of Nazianzus said the same thing about Jesus' true humanity: "For that which He has not assumed He has not healed".

https://earlychurchtexts.com/public/gregoryofnaz_critique_of_apollinarianism.htm

Hymn: From heaven you came helpless babe ... The Servant King

Video: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A0FSZ_iSY08

Words: <https://www.worshiptogether.com/songs/the-servant-king-graham-kendrick/>

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Ocean of Grace (45): GOOD FRIDAY – Our Greatest Glory (p149ff)

The cross is indeed a glorious meeting of mercy and justice. This is captured in Psalm 85v10:

- You, LORD, showed favour to your land;
 you restored the fortunes of Jacob.
- ²You forgave the iniquity of your people
 and covered all their sins.^[b]
- ³You set aside all your wrath
 and turned from your fierce anger.
- ⁴Restore us again, God our Saviour,
 and put away your displeasure towards us.
- ⁵Will you be angry with us for ever?
 Will you prolong your anger through all generations?
- ⁶Will you not revive us again,
 that your people may rejoice in you?
- ⁷Show us your unfailing love, LORD,
 and grant us your salvation.
- ⁸I will listen to what God the LORD says;
 he promises peace to his people, his faithful servants –
 but let them not turn to folly.
- ⁹Surely his salvation is near those who fear him,
 that his glory may dwell in our land.
- ¹⁰**Love and faithfulness meet together;
 righteousness and peace kiss each other.**
- ¹¹Faithfulness springs forth from the earth,
 and righteousness looks down from heaven.
- ¹²The LORD will indeed give what is good,
 and our land will yield its harvest.
- ¹³Righteousness goes before him
 and prepares the way for his steps.

As Romans 3 argues, the cross is God's just way of justifying (declaring righteous) the unjust (sinners) by faith in Jesus (the righteous one). (See especially v26). See also Romans 4v5: God justifies the ungodly, their faith is credited as righteousness (justification / justice).

We may glory / boast / delight in the cross of Christ (Galatians 6:14). Its surprising hidden glory re-writes all our notions of greatness and power. What looks like humiliation and shame is victory. As Jesus is degraded, he is exalted. Here is the glory of the crucified God! It turns out that self-sacrificial service, self-giving, pouring out your life and rights for the sake of others, is the most glorious God-like thing you can do.

Hymn: I will glory in my redeemer

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CR4wRqL0Cn0>

Words: <https://sovereigngracemusic.org/music/songs/i-will-glory-in-my-redeemer/>

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Ocean of Grace (46): HOLY SATURDAY – Conquering Love (p152ff)

The cross is Jesus' great victory. And we may think of ourselves and all the redeemed as the spoils of the cross. By his triumph, Jesus wins us. We belong to Jesus both by creation and redemption. We are not our own: we are bought at a price. The cross set us free from slavery to sin and Satan and now we have a new Lord to whom we belong body and soul. He has claimed us. May we be glad to be conquered by Christ and wholly dedicated to his good service.

On the cross as Jesus' triumph, see further Colossians 2:15. Jesus leads us in triumphal procession (2 Corinthians 2:14). Ephesians 4:8 also pictures Christ as the victor giving gifts to his people after his conquest.

Spurgeon is surely right that the gospel is endlessly astonishing and marvellous. Let it move us to repentance and to delight in the love of God for us afresh. May this theme never be stale to us.

Hymn: Low in the grave he lay

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0arouoCJ8es>

Words: https://www.jubilate.co.uk/songs/low_in_the_grave_he_lay

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Ocean of Grace (47 & 48): EASTER SUNDAY – To Wake More Merry (p155ff)

Thank God that Jesus has tamed the old ogre, death. Our enemy has become a servant who ushers our souls into the nearer presence of King Jesus. And meanwhile our bodies sleep in the grave as we await the Resurrection Day. Cemetery means sleeping place or dormitory. And the nap of our bodies until judgement day is nothing to fear. Death has lost his sting.

We may think of ourselves clothed now (by grace through faith) not with the fig-leaves (or indeed the filthy rags) of our supposed works righteousness but in the glorious righteousness of Christ.

Give thanks that what Adam marred, Christ has mended. Paradise is restored for believers – only better for Jesus will bring us not just back to The Garden but to the glorious Garden City and to the New Creation.

Glory, power and praise indeed to Jesus the crucified and risen one.

Hymn: Jesus Christ is risen today

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rMwPEmUMP7U>

Words: https://hymnary.org/text/jesus_christ_is_risen_today_our_tri

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Some other hymns which I thought of which I'm not sure I got round to using:

The King of Love My Shepherd Is

The Lord's My Shepherd

O Love that wilt not let me go