

Confession and Absolution

744 Amazing Grace

sts. 1–5

- 1 Amazing grace—how sweet the sound—
That saved a wretch like me!
I once was lost but now am found,
Was blind but now I see!
- 2 The Lord has promised good to me,
His Word my hope secures;
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures.
- 3 Through many dangers, toils, and snares
I have already come;
His grace has brought me safe thus far,
His grace will lead me home.
- 4 Yes, when this flesh and heart shall fail
And mortal life shall cease,
Amazing grace shall then prevail
In heaven's joy and peace.
- 5 When we've been there ten thousand years,
Bright shining as the sun,
We've no less days to sing God's praise
Than when we'd first begun.

Text (sts. 1–4): John Newton, 1725–1807, alt.; (st. 5): A Collection of Sacred Ballads, 1790, Richmond
Text: Public domain

Stand

The sign of the cross may be made by all in remembrance of their Baptism.

Invocation

- P** In the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.
C Amen.

Exhortation

LSB 184

- P** Beloved in the Lord! Let us draw near with a true heart and confess our sins unto God our Father, beseeching Him in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to grant us forgiveness.
P Our help is in the name of the Lord,
C **who made heaven and earth.**
P I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord,
C **and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.**

Kneel/Stand

Silence for reflection on God's Word and for self-examination.

Confession of Sins

LSB 184

- P** O almighty God, merciful Father,
C **I, a poor, miserable sinner, confess unto You all my sins and iniquities with which I have ever offended You and justly deserved Your temporal and eternal punishment. But I am heartily sorry for them and sincerely repent of them, and I pray You of Your boundless mercy and for the sake of the holy, innocent, bitter sufferings and death of Your beloved Son, Jesus Christ, to be gracious and merciful to me, a poor, sinful being.**

Absolution

LSB 185

- P** Upon this your confession, I, by virtue of my office, as a called and ordained servant of the Word, announce the grace of God unto all of you, and in the stead and by the command of my Lord Jesus Christ I forgive you all your sins in the name of the Father and of the ✠ Son and of the Holy Spirit.

C Amen.

Stand

Service of the Word

Introit

Psalm 27:4–6; antiphon: Psalm 25:15

P My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

C One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple.

P For he will hide me in his shelter in the day of trouble; he will conceal me under the cover of his tent; he will lift me high upon a rock.

C And now my head shall be lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the LORD.

P My eyes are ever toward the LORD, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

Gloria Patri

**Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;
as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be forever. Amen.**

Kyrie

LSB 186

**C Lord, have mercy upon us.
Christ, have mercy upon us.
Lord, have mercy upon us.**

Salutation and Collect of the Day

P The Lord be with you.

C And with thy spirit.

P Let us pray.

Almighty God, our heavenly Father, Your mercies are new every morning; and though we deserve only punishment, You receive us as Your children and provide for all our needs of body and soul. Grant that we may heartily acknowledge Your merciful goodness, give thanks for all Your benefits, and serve You in willing obedience; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

C Amen.

Sit

Old Testament Reading

Isaiah 42:14–21

¹⁴For a long time I have held my peace;
I have kept still and restrained myself;
now I will cry out like a woman in labor;
I will gasp and pant.

¹⁵I will lay waste mountains and hills,
and dry up all their vegetation;
I will turn the rivers into islands,
and dry up the pools.

¹⁶And I will lead the blind
in a way that they do not know,
in paths that they have not known
I will guide them.

I will turn the darkness before them into light,
the rough places into level ground.
These are the things I do,

and I do not forsake them.

¹⁷They are turned back and utterly put to shame,
who trust in carved idols,
who say to metal images,
“You are our gods.”

¹⁸Hear, you deaf,
and look, you blind, that you may see!

¹⁹Who is blind but my servant,
or deaf as my messenger whom I send?
Who is blind as my dedicated one,
or blind as the servant of the LORD?

²⁰He sees many things, but does not observe them;
his ears are open, but he does not hear.

²¹The LORD was pleased, for his righteousness’ sake,
to magnify his law and make it glorious.

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Epistle

Ephesians 5:8–14

⁸For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹(for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), ¹⁰and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. ¹¹Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them. ¹²For it is shameful even to speak of the things that they do in secret. ¹³But when anything is exposed by the light, it becomes visible, ¹⁴for anything that becomes visible is light. Therefore it says,

“Awake, O sleeper,
and arise from the dead,
and Christ will shine on you.”

A This is the Word of the Lord.

C Thanks be to God.

Stand

Holy Gospel

John 9:1–41

P The Holy Gospel according to St. John, the ninth chapter.

C Glory be to Thee, O Lord.

¹As [Jesus] passed by, he saw a man blind from birth. ²And his disciples asked him, “Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?” ³Jesus answered, “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him. ⁴We must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; night is coming, when no one can work. ⁵As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” ⁶Having said these things, he spat on the ground and made mud with the saliva. Then he anointed the man’s eyes with the mud ⁷and said to him, “Go, wash in the pool of Siloam” (which means Sent). So he went and washed and came back seeing.

⁸The neighbors and those who had seen him before as a beggar were saying, “Is this not the man who used to sit and beg?” ⁹Some said, “It is he.” Others said, “No, but he is like him.” He kept saying, “I am the man.” ¹⁰So they said to him, “Then how were your eyes opened?” ¹¹He answered, “The man called Jesus made mud and anointed my eyes and said to me, ‘Go to Siloam and wash.’ So I went and washed and received my sight.” ¹²They said to him, “Where is he?” He said, “I do not know.”

¹³They brought to the Pharisees the man who had formerly been blind. ¹⁴Now it was a Sabbath day when Jesus made the mud and opened his eyes. ¹⁵So the Pharisees again asked him how he had received his sight. And he said to them, “He put mud on my eyes, and I washed, and I see.” ¹⁶Some of the Pharisees said, “This man is not from God, for he does not keep the Sabbath.” But others said, “How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?” And there was a division among them. ¹⁷So they said again to the blind man, “What do you say about him, since he has opened your eyes?” He said, “He is a prophet.”

¹⁸The Jews did not believe that he had been blind and had received his sight, until they called the parents of the man who had received his sight ¹⁹and asked them, “Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?” ²⁰His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind. ²¹But how he now sees we do not know, nor do we know who opened his eyes. Ask him; he is of age. He will speak for himself.” ²²(His parents said these things because they feared the Jews, for the Jews had already agreed that if anyone should confess Jesus to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue.) ²³Therefore his parents said, “He is of age; ask him.”

²⁴So for the second time they called the man who had been blind and said to him, “Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner.” ²⁵He answered, “Whether he is a sinner I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” ²⁶They said to him, “What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?” ²⁷He answered them, “I have told you already, and you would not listen. Why do you want to hear it again? Do you also want to become his disciples?” ²⁸And they reviled him, saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. ²⁹We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” ³⁰The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. ³¹We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does his will, God listens to him. ³²Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. ³³If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” ³⁴They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

³⁵Jesus heard that they had cast him out, and having found him he said, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” ³⁶He answered, “And who is he, sir, that I may believe in him?” ³⁷Jesus said to him, “You have seen him, and it is he who is speaking to you.” ³⁸He said, “Lord, I believe,” and he worshiped him. ³⁹Jesus said, “For judgment I came into this world, that those who do not see may see, and those who see may become blind.” ⁴⁰Some of the Pharisees near him heard these things, and said to him, “Are we also blind?” ⁴¹Jesus said to them, “If you were blind, you would have no guilt; but now that you say, ‘We see,’ your guilt remains.”

P This is the Gospel of the Lord.

C Praise be to Thee, O Christ.

Apostles' Creed

C I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth.

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died and was buried.
He descended into hell.
The third day He rose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty.
From thence He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy Christian Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life † everlasting. Amen.

Sit

571 God Loved the World So That He Gave

1 God loved the world so that He gave
His only Son the lost to save,

That all who would in Him believe
Should everlasting life receive.

2 Christ Jesus is the ground of faith,
Who was made flesh and suffered death;
All then who trust in Him alone
Are built on this chief cornerstone.

3 God would not have the sinner die;
His Son with saving grace is nigh;
His Spirit in the Word declares
How we in Christ are heaven's heirs.

4 Be of good cheer, for God's own Son
Forgives all sins which you have done;
And, justified by Jesus' blood,
Your Baptism grants the highest good.

5 If you are sick, if death is near,
This truth your troubled heart can cheer:
Christ Jesus saves your soul from death;
That is the firmest ground of faith.

△ 6 Glory to God the Father, Son,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One!
To You, O blessed Trinity,
Be praise now and eternally!

Text: Heiliges Lippen- und Hertzens-Opffer, c. 1778, Stettin; tr. August Crull, 1845–1923, alt.
Text: Public domain

Sermon

Grace, Mercy, and Peace to you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

When I lived in St. Louis, it seemed that most murders happened in the wee hours of the morning. It seemed rare when a murder was committed outside of the first three or four hours of day. Yet, for most of us, the idea of being out and about between 12 midnight and 4 am is far-fetched. We are inside if not sleeping then. And so, it seems highly unlikely that one of us would be a homicide victim in St. Louis. It isn't that any murder victim is more evil or sinful. It isn't whether you are Christian or not. It isn't about whether you are poor or rich. But what seems to keep one from being a victim of a deadly crime, is not being outside, especially the wee hours of the morning. Years ago, to reduce crime in the city of St. Louis, city government installed streetlights throughout the entire city. At first, there was a marked decrease in crime, but the trend reversed. While light had initially overcome the darkness and the crime associated with darkness, the darkness and crime, at least in the city of St. Louis, has overcome the light.

In today's Epistle, Paul writes to the Ephesians to encourage them in the faith. Paul uses the gospel instead of the law to inform living the Christian life. Paul has been clear in the readings for Lent from Romans and the Letter to the Ephesians. Life in Christ is a freely given gift, not something accomplished on their own. The often-quoted Ephesian 2:8-10 spells this out very clearly “⁸For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, ⁹not a result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Paul knows the culture the the Ephesians Christians had come out of. And Paul knows the temptations to return to that culture surround these believers. The devil, the sinful world, and their own sinful nature surrounding these Christians is as bad or worse than today.

It is easy to mishear or misunderstand the first part of verse 8. “for at one time you were darkness”. Since the fall into sin, every human born, except one, has been born a sinful enemy of God, whose very nature is sinful and evil. It is not that we are simply immersed in darkness. It is that we are sinful. We are enemies of God. Without God’s grace and mercy, we stand completely and total depraved. Without God’s grace and mercy, we are active enemies of God. Without God, our entire being is evil.

But God does not leave you in your sin. You were not created to remain a condemned enemy of God. Instead, God’s plan from before creation was to send Jesus, the Light of the World, to overcome sin, death, and the devil on your behalf. In the waters of Baptism, you became a child of the light. You are no longer a child of darkness. You are no longer totally evil. Your transformation was complete and total. But your sinful nature remains. Your sinful nature attracts you back to the darkness. But you are to walk as a child of light, in goodness, righteousness and truth. While the Law serves as a curb, mirror and guide, the Law also tempts and accuses. Paul writes in Romans 7:7-11 “⁷ What then shall we say? That the law is sin? By no means! Yet if it had not been for the law, I would not have known sin. For I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “You shall not covet.”⁸ But sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, produced in me all kinds of covetousness. For apart from the law, sin lies dead.⁹ I was once alive apart from the law, but when the commandment came, sin came alive, and I died.¹⁰ The very commandment that promised life proved to be death to me.¹¹ For sin, seizing an opportunity through the commandment, deceived me and through it killed me.” Sin calls you into the darkness and darkens you by separating you from God.

The Holy Spirit dwells within you, enlightening your life. The Holy Spirit leads you to seek what is good and right and pleasing to the Lord. The Holy Spirit calls you to repent when sin enters your life and forgives your sins. The Holy Spirit causes you to walk in the good works God has created for you. Not to earn or merit your righteousness before God. But in response to the unmerited gift given you in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The gift of the Holy Spirit lights your life and your way. You know God’s ways and thoughts as God has revealed them in His Inspired Word, the Scriptures. The Scriptures reveal God’s good and gracious will as Paul tells Timothy (1 Timothy 2:3-6) “³ This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior,⁴ who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.⁵ For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man^[a] Christ Jesus,⁶ who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time.”

Yet the world claims to know what is good and right and true. Yet the ways of the world lead to darkness. In opposition to God’s Word, the world teaches that sex between any two people is good instead of sex being intended for procreation and mutual encouragement of two married people of the opposite sex. And what is the result? Sexually transmitted diseases, untimely pregnancies, and exploitation of those involved in premarital sex. The world teaches that living together prepares a couple for a successful marriage when in fact those living together are far more likely to divorce than those who haven’t lived together. Mental Health challenges abound. Suicide rates for children and teens are at all-time highs. And only too often, new technology leads to accepting “what we can do” instead of “what should we do”. Can surgery and hormone treatments cause a male body to look like a female body? Yes. But what are the consequences? What psychological impacts are there? While we have unprecedented access to facts and data, we also have unprecedented access to pornography. While we have almost unlimited access via Social Media to have open and honest discussion of ideas and thought, Social Media breeds discord and isolation. It is not unusual to see a family gathered for a meal yet isolated by their screens, engaging those not present instead of enjoying the company and fellowship of those present. And often, when we as believers call out the works of darkness, we are met with opposition and hate, being called bigots and haters.

You are the light of the world. The Light of Jesus dwells within you. Jesus died to bring you out of your darkness into His marvelous light. And because Jesus died for your sins, you seek God’s Will and Way. Your eyes are focused on eternity, not on the things of this earth. Assured of your salvation, you shine God’s marvelous light into this sin-darkened world and into the sin-darkened lives of those around you. You look forward to being in God’s kingdom for all eternity, basking in the light of Jesus, your Lord and Savior. Amen.

And now, may the peace of God which surpasses all understanding keep you heart and mind in Christ Jesus to life everlasting. Amen.

Stand

Offertory

Prayer of the Church

In peace, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the Church of God, that she, enlightened by the Gospel, would be a home for those cast out by this world, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For all who seek refuge in the Church of Christ, that God would raise up pastors in every age to serve them in His name, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those baptized into the light of Christ, that He would guide us in His ways and teach us to both know and do His will, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For those who wander in the darkness through rough places in this life, that they would wait on the salvation of the Lord and not be put to shame, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For the afflicted in body or soul, [*especially _____*,] that they would take heart, trust in Christ for healing and find Him even amid their trials, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

For a right reception of the Lord's Supper, that God would unite His people in a true confession of His Word and bring them with penitent hearts to receive the great riches of His Son's body and blood for their salvation, let us pray to the Lord: **Lord, have mercy.**

Hear us, heavenly Father, for the sake of Christ Jesus, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen.**

Lord's Prayer

LSB 196

P Our Father who art in heaven,
 hallowed be Thy name,
 Thy kingdom come,
 Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven;
 give us this day our daily bread;
 and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us;
 and lead us not into temptation,
 but deliver us from evil.

C For Thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever and ever. **Amen.**

Prayer

Almighty God, grant to Your Church Your Holy Spirit and the wisdom that comes down from above, that Your Word may not be bound but have free course and be preached to the joy and edifying of Christ's holy people, so that in steadfast faith we may serve You and, in the confession of Your name, abide unto the end; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever.

Benediction

LSB 202

P The Lord bless you and keep you.
 The Lord make His face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
 The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and ✠ give you peace.

C Amen, amen, amen.

422 On My Heart Imprint Your Image

1 On my heart imprint Your image,
 Blessèd Jesus, King of grace,
 That life's riches, cares, and pleasures
 Never may Your work erase;
 Let the clear inscription be:
 Jesus, crucified for me,

Is my life, my hope's foundation,
And my glory and salvation!

Text: Thomas Hansen Kingo, 1634–1703; tr. Peer O. Strömme, 1856–1921, alt.
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