

Come, Thou Fount of Every Blessing

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1. Come, thou fount of ev - 'ry bless - ing, tune my heart to sing thy grace;
 2. Here I raise my Eb - en - e - zer; hith - er by thy help I'm come;
 3. O to grace how great a debt - or dai - ly I'm con - strained to be;

streams of mer - cy, nev - er ceas - ing, call for songs of loud - est praise.
 and I hope, by thy good plea - sure, safe - ly to ar - rive at home.
 let that grace now, like a fet - ter, bind my wan - d'ring heart to thee.

Teach me some me - lo - dious son - net, sung by flam - ing tongues a - bove;
 Je - sus sought me when a strang - er, wan - d'ring from the fold of God:
 Prone to wan - der—Lord, I feel it—prone to leave the God I love;

praise the mount! I'm fixed up - on it, mount of God's un - chang - ing love.
 he, to res - cue me from dan - ger, in - ter - posed his pre - cious blood.
 here's my heart, O take and seal it, seal it for thy courts a - bove.

Robert Robinson, 1758

NETTLETON 8.7.8.7.D.
 Asahel Nettleton, 1825

Gathering Prayer

Randy Foster

Welcoming God, we are grateful that you have gathered us together in your presence. In our times of need, you have provided. When we have stubbornly followed our own ways, you have shielded us from suffering. From our days of confusion and aimless wandering, you have rescued us and restored us to our true identity. Meet us now as we worship together to shape us into a righteous, reconciling people. Amen.

Gloria Patri

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost.
As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, reign without end. Amen, amen.

Psalm 32

Randy Foster

This psalm was probably composed when Israel returned from the Babylonian exile (approx. 540 BCE). During that period the teaching aspect of worship became more significant, and this psalm teaches the practice of penitence as the mode of prayer for those committed to keeping God's covenant. It is meant not simply for personal, private repentance, but incorporates and expresses Israel's experience of God through judgement to restoration.

¹ Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

² Happy are those to whom the LORD imputes no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit.

³ While I kept silence, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long.

⁴ For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer.

⁵ Then I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not hide my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the guilt of my sin.

⁶ Therefore let all who are faithful offer prayer to you; at a time of distress, the rush of mighty waters shall not reach them.

⁷ You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with glad cries of deliverance.

⁸ I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

⁹ Do not be like a horse or a mule, without understanding, whose temper must be curbed with bit and bridle, else it will not stay near you.

¹⁰ Many are the torments of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds those who trust in the LORD.

¹¹ Be glad in the LORD and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart.

Luke 15:1-3, 11b-32

Rosemary Dawson

This parable is one of the most familiar of all Jesus' stories. It is the third and last illustration of God's love, forgiveness and joy. Like all parables it upends our notions of who God is and how God treats us. To those who are attentive to its implications this story of grace offends our sense of fairness in the face of uprightness and indulgence.

¹ Now all the tax collectors and sinners were coming near to listen to him. ² And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling and saying, "This fellow welcomes sinners and eats with them." ³ So he told them this parable:

all his belongings (and Dad's windfall) and moves, not to someplace else in Israel, but to a foreign, gentile land. He cuts himself off from his family and all his people. Can you imagine his difficulties and attitudes that would lead him to that action? Have you ever felt that sense of 'I can't take it anymore'? And what did you do then?

This son looked for a new life of freedom and easy away from Dad, but it did not go as well as he hoped. Soon, after wasting his inheritance and his life, he wakes up in a pigsty and decides he's better off now with Dad. So he heads home with the intention to simply say 'I was wrong – before God and you. I have lost my claim as your son. Will you take me on as a hired hand?'

But this Dad, when he sees his pathetic son dragging himself down the road does a very shameful thing – he runs like a happy puppy, greeting his son with hugs and kisses and tears of joy. And when his ne'er-do-well son starts to make his concession speech, Dad cuts him off, dressing him again in all the finery of a beloved child and slaughtering the best heifer for a grand feast. What a great welcome home for such an underserving soul! It is simple, sheer grace. The Father never considered this boy a 'lost cause'. He was, is, and always will be – His Son. And now that he has his son safely in his arms, it is a joy. That's a great reason to celebrate, No?

Well, no. Big brother is not happy. This dutiful Son has been out, working in the fields all day, totally unaware of his low-life brothers return, or his Dad's celebration. So when he finally drags himself home, tired, sweaty, and filthy from the day's labor, what does he confront? A Party! No one even bothered to fetch him from the field! He doesn't even enter the house to hear the news; he has to interrupt a slave's work to find out what is going on. Ouch, that hurts too, deeply!

And when his Dad comes running out to him, he lets his Dad have it, with about as much disrespect as his younger brother had. He does not acknowledge his Father, does not call him Dad or Pops. No, it's "YOU!, You did all this for the scumbag! How could you! What about me! I'm the good kid, the dutiful kid. And by the way, I've never even had a kid for a small luncheon, never mind an extravagant party!' Can't you just feel his pain? Can you imagine the burdens he bore, and the attitudes that weighed upon him? Have you ever worked so hard, for so, so long, and then felt dismissed, ignored or unappreciated? What reaction did you have? Maybe 'I've had enough, I can't take it anymore.'

Yet the Father's heart goes out to him, just as it had to his younger son. He hears him, and he reminds him that he is indeed his honored son – all the Father possesses is entrusted to this son, his son, and nothing will ever take that away. Even if the older son can't see it, his Dad knows, and his dad waits for him. This dad waits for this son too to come home to grace. Grace to celebrate his Father's love for him, grace for himself to live as the heir; and then to find and offer the same grace to the one who 'was dead and is now alive, was lost and now is found.'

Grace, sheer and simple – love, compassion, mercy, acceptance – name it was you will. It is the hallmark of the Prodigal Father, and it is the heart of God – the God of Israel, the God of Jesus Christ, and our God as well. And because grace is the nature of God it too is the nature of God's people. Will you celebrate that grace today? Will you embody that grace to another? Even to those, especially to those brothers and sisters you really don't think deserve it? After all, that is the way it should be for 'All in the Family'. Don't you think? Amen.

***Hymn**

God Our Author and Creator

NCH 530

God Our Author and Creator

Carl P. Daw, Jr., 1985

Gen. 1:1-2:3; Acts 17:22-31; Rom. 12:2; John 3:16-17

Unison

1 God our Au - thor and Cre - a - tor, in whose life we find our own,
2 Like those first a - pos-tles, Sav-ior, give us strength to love and serve:
3 Keep us faith-ful, Ho-ly Spir-it, help us bear the mes-sage true,

make our dai - ly wit - ness great-er, by our lives make your love known.
when our faint-ing spir - its wa-ver, fire our hearts and steel our nerve.
that at last all lands may hear it: "God is love; Christ died for you."

Help us show how love em-brac-es those whom fear and greed down-trod;
Teach us wis - dom and com-pas-sion: bid our rest - less thoughts be still;
Join our lives in might-y cho-rus till we come from ev - ery place,

in all yearn-ing hearts and fac - es let us see a child of God.
by your guid-ance help us fash-ion lives con-formed un - to your will.
with all those who went be - fore us, to the full - ness of God's grace.

In 1985, a hymn competition was held to commemorate the centennial of the Women's Missionary Union of the Southern Baptist Convention. This winning text by Carl P. Daw, Jr., fulfilled the guideline that the hymn address mission in the context of daily life.

Tune: JEFFERSON 8.7.8.7.D.
Southern Harmony, 1835
Harm. John Ferguson, 1973

Joys and Concerns

Prayers of the People

Loving and generous God, we thank you for the abundant mercy and extravagant grace you have granted to us. You have not only waited for our return; you have welcomed us in Jesus Christ. You have not only allowed us a place in your family, you have lavished us with the gifts of your Spirit. You have embraced us in your grace and have called to celebrate and share your love and grace with all people. And so, with joy and gratitude we come before you now seeking to live as your beloved children.

We pray for your church and for this congregation. May this be a place of extravagant welcome, gracious love and honest compassion. May we proclaim your grace to the world and may we live as servants of your goodness and grace among all our neighbors, near and far. We pray for all who are leaders among us. May they know the gift of your grace and may their eyes and hearts be open to the suffering and needs of all people. Empower them as they seek your way of peace and equity; and empower all your people to labor toward your good purpose for all peoples. We pray as well for all you need you this day. May the lost find your grace, the broken know your restoration, and the fearful know your acceptance. Grant also your healing to the ill, your comfort to the sorrowful, and your aid to the needy. We especially lift up... and we thank you for...

We praise you, Faithful God, for the depth of your love and grace and compassion towards us, through Jesus Christ who taught us to pray...

The Lord's Prayer

Choral Response

Remember Me

Offering

We have been granted extravagant mercy and generous resources. We are blessed as God's sons and daughters. In recognition of God's grace we are invited to share God's blessings with all the world. Let us dedicate our offerings with joy.

Thank you, God, for holding us dear even when we do not recognize your grace-filled love.
Thank you for welcoming us home with a celebration of life and so many precious gifts.
Thank you now for the privilege of sharing so that others may be led to your joyous embrace.
Help us to make your grace know through all our words and deeds. Amen.

Doxology

(choose the one that is best for your faith)

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, praise him all creatures here below,
praise him above ye heavenly hosts, praise Father, Son, and Holy Ghost

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below
Praise God for all that Love has done; Creator, Christ and Spirit One. Amen

* Hymn

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling NCH 43

Love Divine, All Loves Excelling

465



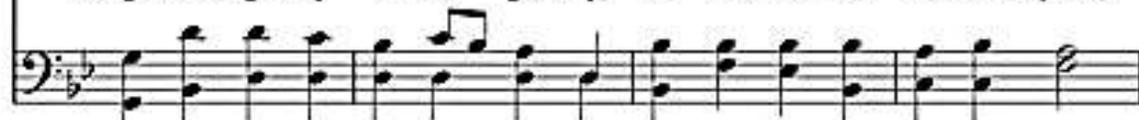
1. Love di - vine, all loves ex - cel - ling, Joy of heav'n to earth come down;
2. Breathe, O breathe thy lov - ing Spir - it in - to ev - 'ry trou - bled breast;
3. Come, Al - might - y to de - liv - er, let us all thy life re - ceive;
4. Fin - ish, then, thy new cre - a - tion; pure and spot - less let us be:



fix in us thy hum - ble dwell - ing, all thy faith - ful mer - cies crown;
 let us all in thee in - her - it, let us find the prom - ised rest;
 sud - den - ly re - turn, and nev - er, nev - er - more thy tem - ples leave,
 let us see thy great sal - va - tion per - fect - ly re - stored in thee;



Je - sus, thou art all com - pas - sion, pure, un - bound - ed love thou art;
 take a - way the love of sin - ning; Al - pha and O - me - ga be;
 Thee we would be al - ways bless - ing, serve thee as thy hosts a - bove,
 changed from glo - ry in - to glo - ry, 'til in heav'n we take our place,



vis - it us with thy sal - va - tion, en - ter ev - 'ry trem - bling heart.
 End of faith, as its Be - gin - ning, set our hearts at lib - er - ty.
 pray and praise thee with - out ceas - ing, glo - ry in thy per - fect love.
 'til we cast our crowns be - fore thee, lost in won - der, love, and praise.



Charles Wesley, 1747

BEECHER 8.7.8.7.D.
 John Zundel, 1870; alt.

***Common Commission**

Let us go forth into the world in peace, being of good courage, holding fast to that which is good, rendering to no one evil for evil, strengthening the faint-hearted, supporting the weak, helping the afflicted, honoring all persons, loving and serving the Lord, and rejoicing in the power of the Holy Spirit.

*** Benediction**

Go now into the world

And may the amazing grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the extravagant love of God, and the intimate friendship of the Holy Spirit be with each and every one of you, now and always.
2 Corinthians 13:14

Go in peace to love and serve the Lord. Amen.

Postlude

“Give of Your Best to the Master,” Mrs. Charles Barnard, arr. Gail Smith.

music provided by Chris Harris and Lynne Walker