

# GRACE AND PEACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

## Grace and Peace Home Worship Guide for August 30, 2020

**Opening Prayer**

**Call to Worship**

Psalm 148:1-3, 11-14

**Song<sup>1</sup>**

“Jesus”

**Scripture**

John 8:48-59

**Sermon<sup>2</sup>**

“*I Am!*”

Pastor Jonathan

**Prayer**

**Giving<sup>3</sup>**

**Song**

“Before the Throne of God Above”

**Benediction**

Revelation 7:10, 12

---

<sup>1</sup> Lyrics are provided in this PDF.

<sup>2</sup> A full transcript of the sermon is provided in this PDF.

<sup>3</sup> You can give online through our website, our church app, or by mail.

## Jesus

There is a truth older than the ages  
There is a promise of things yet to come  
There is One born for our salvation, Jesus  
There is a light that overwhelms the darkness  
There is a kingdom that forever reigns  
There is freedom from the chains that bind us, Jesus, Jesus

### CHORUS:

Who walks on the waters, Who speaks to the sea  
Who stands in the fire beside me  
He roars like a lion, He bled as the Lamb  
He carries my healing in His hands, Jesus

There is a name I call in times of trouble  
There is a song that comforts in the night  
There is a voice that calms the storm that rages  
He is Jesus, Jesus

### CHORUS

Messiah, My Savior, there is power in Your name  
You're my rock and my Redeemer  
There is power in Your name, in Your name

### CHORUS 2:

You walk on the waters, You speak to the sea  
You stand in the fire beside me  
You roar like a lion, You bled as the Lamb  
You carry my healing in Your hands (repeat)

Jesus, There is no one like You, Jesus

## Before The Throne Of God Above

Before the throne of God above  
I have a strong and perfect plea  
A great High Priest whose name is Love  
Who ever lives and pleads for me  
My name is graven on His hands  
My name is written on His heart  
I know that while in heaven He stands  
No tongue can bid me thence depart  
No tongue can bid me thence depart

When Satan tempts me to despair  
And tells me of the guilt within  
Upward I look and see Him there  
Who made an end to all my sin  
Because the sinless Savior died  
My sinful soul is counted free  
For God the Just is satisfied  
To look on Him and pardon me  
To look on Him and pardon me

Behold Him there the risen Lamb  
My perfect spotless righteousness  
The great unchangeable I Am  
The King of glory and of grace  
One with Himself I cannot die  
My soul is purchased with His blood  
My life is hid with Christ on high  
With Christ my Savior and my God  
With Christ my Savior and my God

# GRACE AND PEACE

---

## COMMUNITY CHURCH

*The following are questions that can be used for personal reflection or group discussion on Pastor Jonathan's August 30<sup>th</sup> sermon:*

- 1) How does this portion of the Bible speak to the common belief today, that all religions and spiritual views are just different ways to know and experience God?
  
- 2) What opportunities has God given you today to speak the hard truths of “unbelief as a lie,” and “the only way to know God is Jesus”? What needs to be rearranged in your life – what sacrifices need to be made – to proclaim Jesus to neighbors and nations?
  
- 3) What did Pastor Jonathan mean when he said “Sin is a tool to talk about the good news, and proclaim the gospel of Jesus”?
  
- 4) In what struggle, or suffering, or person, or injustice, or confusion, or unanswered prayer, do you need to fight to believe that Jesus, the great I AM, is working in all things for your spiritual good?

# GRACE AND PEACE

---

## COMMUNITY CHURCH

August 30, 2020

*“I Am!”*

Pastor Jonathan Olsen

**John 8:48-59**

*48 The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” 49 Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. 50 Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. 51 Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.” 52 The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, ‘If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.’ 53 Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?” 54 Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, ‘He is our God.’ 55 But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad.” 57 So the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” 58 Jesus said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am.” 59 So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.*

*Cogito ergo sum.* Now I don't often quote Latin, but translated into English it means something like this: I think, therefore I am. It was coined by the 17th century philosopher Descartes, and it basically means, if I think, even if I doubt, it's evidence that I exist. I am.

Maybe a little less heady, in a 1992 Nike commercial a basketball superstar was portrayed as a demigod when after he dunked the basketball he said, “I jam, therefore I am.”

Well today we come to another great I AM statement. A greater I AM statement. Not, I think therefore I am... nor I jam therefore I am... but I AM. Jesus says to the Jews who he has been debating with, “before Abraham was, I am.” Now by way of outline:

1. **I Am: No Demon (verses 48-51)**
2. **I Am: No Deception (verses 52-56)**
3. **I Am: No Doubt (verses 57-59)**

Now Jesus has been in the middle of “intense fellowship” between common folk and Jewish leaders in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. And things are beginning to boil over now because last week Jesus told the Jews who are questioning what he has to say about them and what he has to say about himself, he said, “Look your rejection of me is evidence that God is not your father, but actually Satan, the devil, the evil one is your father.” And Jesus didn't need ancestry.com in order to find this information out, because as we see today, Jesus is God. He knows everything. He is the great I AM.

### **I AM: NO DEMON**

*<sup>48</sup> The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?”<sup>49</sup> Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon, but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. <sup>50</sup> Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is One who seeks it, and he is the judge. <sup>51</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone keeps my word, he will never see death.”*

Now look the Jews have been very frustrated by what Jesus has been saying... that he was the bread, the sustenance of heaven... that he is the true food from God... that he's the illumination of truth for the world sent from God... because they reject him, Jesus says, it's evidence that they they don't belong to God. So they're seeking now to find fault in Jesus. Much like you and I will often do when someone kind of calls us out or shut us down... we will often want to find fault with them. So the Jews say look you're a Samaritan. And you have a demon. Now it's important to note that the setting here is, they're still in the temple. The holy temple of the Jews, where worship and sacrifice and prayer and praise occurred. They're in church, as it were! And so others would hear what the Jews were saying. The Jews were not merely accusing him, but trying to put false things into other people's heads of Jesus that they could no longer unhear.

It's a reminder for us to be careful with what we say and how we say it and who's around when we do speak, because we can subtly - maybe deliberately - fill other people's heads with manipulations. For example, he refused to answer my call. That's getting at the motive of someone, rather than, “Well I tried to call and I wasn't able to get ahold of him.” The Jews are speaking loudly in the temple, making false accusations about Jesus, and other people would have been able to hear it. And they say, “And they're saying you're a Samaritan.” The Samaritans were like kind of a quasi-Jewish cult. They weren't true Jews... they were sort of impostors, if you want to say that. It was really a 1st century racial slur for a Jew to be called a Samaritan. The Samaritans were not of God, and therefore Jesus, you're not of God. Of course, Jesus had just told them what we what we studied last week, that they were not of God. And now they're saying it of him.

And they say “you have a demon, Jesus.” We saw this back in John 7.20, after earlier disputes with the Jewish leaders, and after he accurately said that the Jewish leaders were trying to kill him.

*The crowd answered, “You have a demon! Who is seeking to kill you?”*

“What are you talking about, Jesus? No one is trying to kill you. You have a demon.” Being said of him again here in John chapter 8. They think he is out of his mind, to be saying that they the Jews don't really know God. As we said all along throughout our studies in the gospel of John, Jesus is either

- A. Truly the Lord - he is the savior, he is God, or
- B. He's a liar - he's intentionally misrepresenting God and misleading people or
- C. He's a lunatic - he's out of his mind

He has a demon. He's crazy.

And notice Jesus doesn't touch the accusation of being called Samaritan. Others could have easily testified that he wasn't from Samaria. But he keeps his unique relationship with the father front and center. He says, “Look I don't have a demon but I do honor my father and you dishonor me. And since you dishonor me, you can't know and honor the father.” Back in John chapter 5 verse 23 we read this:

*Whoever does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.*

There is no way to honor, to love, to have, to know the true God without accepting God the Son. That is Jesus, whom God has sent. So Jesus says, “Look, I'm not seeking my own glory. I'm not trying to draw attention to myself. I'm trying to draw your attention to God, the father. He's the one who seeks my glory. I don't seek my own glory. The father seeks my glory. The father seeks my honor, because he will glorify and honor me, because he's the judge of all. Oh and by the way, you'll have to answer to him because he is the judge, if you reject me.” Much like a loving father, if he sees his son being picked on will try to hold those accountable who are picking on his son, so God the father holds accountable everyone who picks on, or everyone who (we should say) rejects God the son, Jesus. Jesus whom God the father has sent into the world.

Now as the Jews' minds continue to spin here, Jesus gives them his mission statement of why he was sent. “Truly, truly” or “Amen, amen” ... “Listen up carefully. If you keep my word... if you accept and obey... if you believe what I have to say and internalize it... you will not see you, will not enter into death.”

You can imagine the Jews saying, “What is he saying now?” He's going to say it again in John Chapter 11. After his good friend Lazarus died and he said to Lazarus' sister Martha,

*Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*

It is good for us to be asking of ourselves, and to be asking of others as well. Jesus did not have a demon... he's speaking the truth from God. Do you believe that he offers everlasting life free from death? That's what he says. Do you take him at his word? He offers you everlasting life. You'll die physically, but you'll live forever with God. It's just the entry point into eternity.

### **I AM: NO DECEPTION**

*<sup>52</sup> The Jews said to him, "Now we know that you have a demon! Abraham died, as did the prophets, yet you say, 'If anyone keeps my word, he will never taste death.' <sup>53</sup> Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? And the prophets died! Who do you make yourself out to be?" <sup>54</sup> Jesus answered, "If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, of whom you say, 'He is our God.' <sup>55</sup> But you have not known him. I know him. If I were to say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you, but I do know him and I keep his word. <sup>56</sup> Your father Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day. He saw it and was glad."*

Well the Jews say, "Well look, now we *know* that you have a demon, because Abraham the great father of our faith... he died. As well as all the holy prophets of old. They all died... they all heard God's word... they obeyed God's word... they were the greatest of the great. They feared God... and yet they all still died. How can *you* say, Jesus, that if we keep *your* word, we won't taste death? Are you death's cure?"

Again Jesus is not talking of living life here on earth forever without a physical death. Because of sin, we will die. We all die. The result of the fact that every single one of us has sin... the result of that, the reason why people die, is because of the curse of sin on humanity.

But Jesus is not talking about living a death free life here on earth forever. No, what Jesus is talking about is eternal death - death under the judgment of God, which our sin deserves. And he's talking about freedom from that - having eternal life over eternal death if you take him at his word. Our physical death for all who trust in Jesus is just a catalyst for eternal life. How do we know this? Well that's because Jesus, who is God, became a man. And he lived as a human being under the law of God. He lived the human life that every human being is supposed to live, accountable to God. And yet unlike Jesus, we all fall short. We do not obey perfectly whatsoever. We fall short from obedience to God. But Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience. He was the perfect human being. And then what Jesus did in his perfection was, he offered himself over to the judgment of

God not for his sin, but as a substitute for the sin of sinners like you and me. And therefore he died on a cross as an innocent man, taking on the wrath of God for the sin of sinners like us. He was judged, he breathed his last, and he was put to death. And then he was buried. Praise the Lord, three days after he was buried, he was raised from death to show that he was a sufficient substitute, that God accepted his substitution. And Jesus was raised from death over sin and death for all eternity, so that anyone who believes this good news, who takes Jesus at his word, will themselves also be free from eternal death, from eternal judgment... because you have believed in the one who took on judgment for you.

Have you believed in Jesus in this way? Do you accept that he was judged for you? Is he your sufficient substitute with God? There's only one substitute with God every one of us needs a mediator, and we need substitution. Jesus is it! He's sufficient. He's done all that's needed to be done for you and for me... to have our sins forgiven... to have God's judgment removed... and to have eternal life.

This is what Jesus is talking about with the Jews. Of course he hadn't yet died. But he was pointing to what he would do to accomplish eternal life.

Now the Jews are rightly up in arms: "Are you saying that you're greater than Abraham and all of the prophets? Who do you make yourself out to be?" It's a make-or-break question for the Jews and it's a make-or-break question for you and me. Who do *you* make Jesus out to be? It's a make or break question, kind of like on the Pennsylvania drivers license exam, the written portion. You get 15 questions and you've already missed two... you're allowed to miss 2, but you're at the 15th question, so if you get the next one wrong, you fail. We don't want to fail, not getting Jesus right. The Jews ask him, who do you make yourself out to be? My question to you is, who do *you* make Jesus out to be?

Jesus replies, "Look if I glorify myself, if I honor myself, it's nothing. I'm not pointing you to me. I'm pointing you to the father. There's nothing glorious about hearing someone talk about how great they are... look, my glory, my honor, it's from my father, whom you falsely say is your father. He's not your father, he's my father. His glory is my glory."

In a famous prayer called the high priestly prayer (we'll get to it God willing in John chapter 17), we have this from Jesus:

*When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you, <sup>2</sup> since you have given him authority over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom you have given him. <sup>3</sup> And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent. <sup>4</sup> I glorified you on earth, having accomplished the work that you gave me to do. <sup>5</sup> And*

*now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed.*

Jesus honor and glory never was, never is, never will be, a self-glory. It's a shared glory, a one-with-the-father glory... What the Jews simply didn't get, and couldn't accept.

And so in holy repetition Jesus says, "Look I know him. I know the father. But you don't. And if I didn't tell you that, then you know what I'd be? I'd be a liar like you." It sounds mean, but it is actually loving. He's speaking truth. Even hard truth. And the lies of unbelief have to be exposed first in order to come to and accept the truth of Jesus.

What opportunities has the Lord given you to speak the hard truths of unbelief as a lie, and then the hard truth of the only way to know God is to know Jesus? Follow up question: when and why are you afraid to speak the hard truths of unbelief being a lie, and the only way to know God is to know Jesus? And when and why do you feel bold? I would encourage you whether you are afraid or whether you are bold, to pray either way. Because if you're afraid, you want to pray that God would make you bold. And if you feel bold, you want to pray that God would keep you humble and loving. Jesus was both bold and loving as he spoke hard truths. And believers in Jesus, followers of Jesus, his representatives here on earth are to be bold, and yet humble and loving as well.

Now the evidence Jesus says of knowing the father is that he keeps, he obeys the word of God. The same is meant to be true for followers of Jesus. Now the way we evidence that we know God is our obedience to God. But unlike Jesus, we only obey ish... half heartedly. Everything about us has a taint of sin in it somewhere. We sort of obey God... not with full worship, in full love for him... that can't be attained this side of heaven. And so how in our failures do you rest, and hold onto and proclaim the gospel? Resting in Jesus finished work for you... holding onto Jesus finished work for you *alone* as your righteousness... holding onto his obedience as your full obedience in the presence of God... And holding out to others that you're not perfect, you're far from it... that you have a message that deals with your imperfections. THAT's the gospel. Our sin can be a tool.. *IS* a tool to talk about the good news, the gospel, the life and death and burial of Jesus Christ and his resurrection as sufficient to secure the salvation of everyone who will trust in him. How in your failures do you rest, hold onto, and even proclaim the gospel?

And then an almost ridiculous claim: Jesus says, "Abraham rejoiced to see my day." Now Abraham didn't look for Jesus of Nazareth, but he had a messianic anticipation. He was anticipating one who would be sent from God, an anointed one, the Christ, the Messiah, one that God said back in Genesis chapter 12, God promised Abraham that through him, all the nations of the world would be blessed. It would come through his offspring, of which he didn't have any. And he was an old man. But miraculously God gave him Isaac, and then were many more that came after him.

Abraham knew that the blessing to the nations would come from God. He would be faithful to bring it about. He believed it solid, as it were by faith, and rejoiced. And that's the day that Jesus is talking about when he tells the Jews that Abraham rejoiced to see his day. It's the day of the gospel. The day of gospel blessing flooding to the nations. Believers in Jesus are called to rejoice and to take that blessing into the nations, to share it.

### **I AM: NO DOUBT**

*<sup>57</sup> So the Jews said to him, "You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?" <sup>58</sup> Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I am." <sup>59</sup> So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.*

Now the Jews understandable say, "Hey, look. How can you say you've seen Abraham. That was like 2000 years ago! You're not even 50 years old (which is just a round number). His reply is one of, if not the clearest self declarations that he is one with God and that he is God in the whole Bible. He says before Abraham was, I am. No doubt about it.

I am means, I am who I am. I am, and I will continue to be who I am. I am the unchangeable I am. I am is God's special name: Yahweh. So special that at the Jews actually would never say it. Yahweh. I am. It means the UN created God. The independent God. The eternal God. The self existent God.

And this name I am was revealed in a famous story in the Old Testament, the first part of the Bible. It was revealed to Moses, pastor Moses, one of the other great leaders of Israel, after Abraham. It was revealed to him in a story about a burning bush in Exodus chapter three. God told Moses to lead the Jews who were in Egyptian captivity to lead them out of captivity. God spoke to Moses in a burning bush, but was not being consumed. And so Moses rightly said, well whom should I tell the Jews sent me to lead them out of Egyptian slavery? Exodus 3.14-

*<sup>14</sup> God said to Moses, "I am who I am." And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel: 'I am has sent me to you.'"*

The uncreated, independent, eternal, self existent God, the only God, the great I am has sent you, Moses, to the Jews. I am. God is. Everything else is derivative of God. Everything else is created by God. God alone is because he is the I am.

And that's exactly what Jesus is saying to the Jews: that's me. I am! I am God.

Now there's an eternity worth of sermons to preach about Jesus saying I am. But I want us to consider five things.

**The first is this.** It is it's very important to say it. And I've already said it. And we're supposed to keep saying it. First, Jesus is God. He is the I am, no doubt. Of course John's gospel began by telling us that Jesus is God:

*John 1.1-2*

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. <sup>2</sup> He was in the beginning with God.*

The word, the *logos*, the logic the reason of God... Jesus was with God, one with God, and he was God from the beginning. Before anything else was, Jesus was. God was, or God IS from the beginning.

So Jesus is God, and therefore he is without beginning and he is without end. He is eternal. He is as God omnipotent. All power belongs to Jesus. He can do anything that he wants. In accordance with his holy will, he is never powerless. He may not might not choose to exercise his power, but he has all power, and his people ought to be praying as if he does have omnipotence - all power in all things. We should cry out for him to exercise it as God.

Not only is he omnipotent he's omniscient. He knows all things - things that are known or could be known are all known to the all knowing God. The great I am knows everything. There's never anything we have to inform him of - he already knows it.

He's also omnipresent. He's everywhere at all times, and in every way. Or as we've said before at grace and peace, everywhere is in the presence of Jesus at all times.

He's also sovereign. He's in complete control of all things, at all times, in every way.

You know it's in light of these things that we can persevere with the hostile and unjust and sinful world that we live in. God Jesus is on the scene and he He is with us.

**Secondly,** therefore nothing surprises him or is independent of his will - his mysterious will which can be difficult for us to understand, but we can take comfort in this as well. Two of the great comfort passages in the New Testament:

*Ephesians 1.11b*

*Who works all things according to the counsel of his will,*

*Romans 8.28*

*And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.*

Believers in Jesus, what do you what do you really, genuinely struggle with, when you think about it being worked out for your good, in accordance with the council of God's will? What is it that you wrestle to see fitting in with that? You know in Jesus you're free to struggle. It's OK to struggle. It's OK to wrestle. It's OK to wonder, how do these things work with God's counsel, and how is he working these things according to his will for my good? Name it. You're free to. Name whatever it is, whatever our person you're struggling with. Whatever suffering you're struggling with. Whatever injustice you're struggling with. Whatever confusion you're struggling with. What unanswered prayer might you be struggling with? I encourage you because you have a mediator in Jesus Christ with God, pray. Pray about it. Don't pretend. Don't think you can't talk about it. You can talk about it with God. And fight to believe God is working in all things under the counsel of his will for your spiritual good.

**Third**, Jesus reveals all of this, because the Jews needed to hear it, and we need to hear it. We need to hear that he is God. We cannot come to know God unless we first understand that Jesus is one with God and is God. And Jesus said this, even when it put him in harm's way, because the Jews said this is absolute blasphemy. Verse 59 so they picked up stones to throw at him, to kill him. But Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple. And we saw back in John 5:18-

*This was why the Jews were seeking all the more to kill him, because not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God.*

Jesus being declared as God confronts our God complex like nothing else. It's why it infuriates people like nothing else - just as we see with the Jews here.

What are you willing to risk to proclaim that Jesus is God? To proclaim his gospel to the world? Maybe we need to reevaluate our lives a little bit in order to make greater sacrifices to declare Jesus. What might need to be rearranged in your life? What new sacrifices are you willing to make to proclaim Jesus to neighbors and nations?

**Fourth**, against the Jehovah's Witnesses (really any cult, anybody who says that Jesus is not God), there's only one way to interpret John 8:58 - and that is Jesus saying he is God. The Jews completely understood what he was saying. This is one of the best places in all of the Bible where you could see Jesus saying, I am God.

**Fifth**, Jesus being God is not just him being God on paper or in our heads. The great I am means Jesus is the Lord of your life, if you are a believer in him. How is Jesus the great I am, Lord of your speech, and Lord of your thoughts, Lord of your thoughts on others, maybe especially

thoughts on other brothers and sisters in the church? How is the great I am Lord of your free time, and of your work? How's the great I am Lord of your prayers, and your desires? How is he the great I am, Lord of your life as you are called to love the people that you know.

Of course this begins with Jesus being the God, the great I am, the Lord of your Salvation. Is he? Have you turned to him and trusted and him alone for your Salvation? If not, today can be the day that you say yes to Jesus. Let today be the day.

One summarizes Jesus' words here in John 8:58 by saying this: "To know him is to know God. To see him is to see God. To believe in him is to believe God. To receive Jesus is to receive God. To honor Jesus is to honor God. To hate Jesus is to hate God. To reject Jesus is to reject God." This is the essence of John's gospel. The essence of Jesus' message and really the whole Bible. The great I am is now on the scene in the person of Jesus, and his rescue mission to save! And in one of the greatest prophecies about Jesus, the great I am, God coming to save his people, we have these words in Isaiah 25:9 -

*It will be said on that day,*

*"Behold, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us.*

*This is the Lord; we have waited for him;*

*let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation."*

The very thing Abraham rejoiced to see... have you seen God's salvation for you in Jesus? If so will you take the good news, at whatever cost, in sacrifice, to neighbors and to nations? This is the blessing of God for the world! This is the blessing of god that the world is crying for: Jesus. Amen.