

GRACE AND PEACE COMMUNITY CHURCH

Grace and Peace Home Worship Guide for September 13, 2020

Opening Prayer

Call to Worship

Psalm 66:1-5

Song¹

“At Your Name”

Scripture

John 9:18-34

Sermon²

“*What’s Your Testimony?*”
Pastor Jonathan

Prayer

Giving³

Song

“Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)”

Benediction

Jude 24-25

¹ Lyrics are provided in this PDF.

² A full transcript of the sermon is provided in this PDF.

³ You can give online through our website, our church app, or by mail.

At Your Name

At Your name the mountains shake and crumble
At Your name the oceans roar and tumble
At Your name angels will bow
The earth will rejoice
Your people cry out

CHORUS:

Lord of all the earth we shout Your name
Shout Your name
Filling up the skies with endless praise
Endless praise
Yahweh Yahweh
We love to shout Your name oh Lord

At Your name the morning breaks in glory
At Your name creation sings Your story
At Your name angels will bow
The earth will rejoice
Your people cry out

CHORUS

There is no one like our God
We will praise You praise You
There's no one like our God
We will sing we will sing
There is no one like our God
We will praise You praise You
There's no one like our God
We will sing

CHORUS 2x

Yahweh Yahweh
We love to shout Your name oh Lord

Amazing Grace (My Chains Are Gone)

Amazing grace how sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me
I once was lost but now I'm found
Was blind but now I see

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear
And grace my fears relieved
How precious did that grace appear
The hour I first believed

CHORUS:

My chains are gone I've been set free
My God my Savior has ransomed me
And like a flood His mercy reigns
Unending love amazing grace

The Lord has promised good to me
His word my hope secures
He will my shield and portion be
As long as life endures

CHORUS 2x

The earth shall soon dissolve like snow
The sun forbear to shine
But God who called me here below
Will be forever mine
Will be forever mine
You are forever mine

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COMMUNITY CHURCH

The following are questions that can be used for personal reflection or group discussion on Pastor Jonathan's September 13th sermon:

- 1) What is your ultimate profession or declaration or testimony? What would others say are the three most obvious things/causes/people your life is a testimony to?

- 2) “[*The good news of Jesus is*] intended, not just to forgive us of our sins and heal us in our relationship with God, but then... emboldens us to share what has been graciously shared with us.” How does this challenge or encourage your understanding of the good news of Jesus?

- 3) Why are you so afraid of others that you won't testify to Jesus when you have an opportunity? How might Jesus' worthiness grow to overcome your fears?

- 4) How have you experienced being cast out or persecuted for testifying about Jesus to family, friends, or peers?

GRACE AND PEACE

COMMUNITY CHURCH

September 13, 2020

“What’s Your Testimony?”

Pastor Jonathan Olsen

Amen, Amen. What a privilege and joy it is for us to be able to pray together. Hi everyone, it’s Pastor Jonathan, and I want to welcome you to this Grace and Peace worship service. Thank you so much for joining us today. If I haven't met you yet, then I hope that sometime soon we will get to meet in person, but more importantly if you have not met Jesus yet as your personal Lord and Savior, I want to encourage you to listen carefully as we study him today, as we listen to him, and I encourage you to listen in such a way that you say yes to believing in Jesus and to giving your life and following Jesus.

Well, we're going to study of Jesus today from his word, the Bible, and a part of the Bible called the Gospel or the book of John, Chapter 9, that's the big number in the Bible, Chapter 9, little numbers, verses 18 through 34. John Chapter 9, verses 18 through 34. Those verses will be on the screen for you. After I read the passage there will also be a response that we will share in together that also will be on the screen for you

So here now is God's Word for us today from John Chapter 9, verses 18 through 34:

The 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 and asked them, “Is this your son who you say was born blind and then how does he now see?” His parents answered, “We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but 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.” 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. Therefore, his parents said, “He is of age. Ask him.” So 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.” He answered, “Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind now I see.” They said to him, “What did he

do to you? How did he open your eyes?” He 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?” They reviled him saying, “You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses! We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from.” The man answered, “Why this is an amazing thing! You do not know where he comes from and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Ever since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind? If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God will stand forever.

Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Amen.

What is your testimony? What is your declaration and profession to others? Maybe it's a profession, a profession or declaration or testimony of allegiance to a political party. Or maybe it's a profession or declaration or testimony to some kind of cause: anti-abuse, anti-racism, anti-human-trafficking, or anti-abortion. What is your *ultimate* profession or declaration or testimony? What is it that you are willing to put yourself in harm's way for as you testify to it?

Well today we come to a very bold testimony from a man who had received his sight, the healing of blindness, received his sight from Jesus. We see a bold testimony, in contrast to the fear of his parents, as this man and his parents stand before the 1st century religious leaders of the day, the Pharisees.

And by way of outline, we see in verses 18 through 23 **a testimony of fear**, that's with the man's parents, verses 18 through 23 **a testimony of fear**; and then we see in verses 24 through 29 a **testimony of frustration**, that comes from the man who had been healed, **a testimony of fear, a testimony of frustration**; and then lastly, in verses 30 through 34, **a testimony of faith** from the man. **A testimony of fear, a testimony of frustration, and a testimony of faith**

Now last week, Jesus ran into a man born blind, and he graciously and miraculously restored the man's sight. But this was done on Saturday, on the Sabbath, the Jewish holy day when no work was to be done. After the man's neighbors were left unsatisfied with how his sight had been restored, his neighbors then took them, took him to the Pharisees, the law-making, the law-keeping, the law-enforcing Jewish leaders of the 1st century. And the Pharisees were divided.

They were divided because Jesus had done this on the Sabbath and yet he had done this. And the man even professed that Jesus was a prophet. Who was this Jesus, really?

Well, this is where we pick up today again. **A testimony of fear** in verses 18 through 23:

The 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 and asked them, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind? How then does he now see?" His parents answered, "We know that this is our son and that he was born blind, but 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." 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. Therefore, his parents said, "He is of age. Ask him."

Now after the Jews had heard the testimony from this man of how Jesus had healed him, we studied this last week, that Jesus spat on the ground, and then he took that mud, and put it on the man's eyes, and anointed him, and told him to go wash, and then he could see. After the man told them that, the Pharisees did not want to believe it. They didn't want to believe that he was born blind. Maybe they didn't think he was blind at all. They didn't want to accept that Jesus was a miracle worker. In fact, what they wanted was Jesus shut up. They wanted him dead. And so they discredit the man's testimony.

Now note here, what he was telling was the truth, but he was being questioned as a liar all because of his association with Jesus. It's somewhat of a form of persecution that this man is experiencing. He was being hated because they hated Jesus, and that's how it goes often for Christians. It goes with the territory of knowing Jesus often for Christians. Hated, despised, not believed, because people don't want anything to do with Jesus.

But for the first time in this man's life he was able to see, he was actually able to *see*, but what he sadly saw were people's angry faces, their negative body language, their eye rolling condemnation, things that many of us have experienced because we've been associated with Jesus, because we are associated with Jesus by his grace. People just rolling their eyes at us or angry; they have negative body language; they condemn you.

So, the Pharisees, they call in the man's parents to testify, and they say, "Hey look, is this guy your son? Was he born blind? How does he now see?" Now we will see their testimony in just a moment here, but their testimony might reflect they had already shunned their son, cast him out, again, something many of us know about, what it feels like to be cast out or rejected because

of Jesus. And what they say is amazing. They say, “Yes, this is our son. Yes, he was born blind, but we don't know how he sees.” In fact, what they actually say here is, “We don't know *by whom* he sees; we don't know *who* it is that opened his eyes.” They knew someone had done this, someone had done something to their son, and they knew it. And maybe they knew was Jesus, but they certainly didn't say it.

So seemingly without any joy from his parents, without any gratitude from his parents, without any celebration from his parents, that their son, their baby boy, could *now see*, they say to the Pharisees, “Ask him, ask him how he can now see. He is of age.” He's at least 13, and most people think he was much older than that. He's of age. Ask him. He's an adult. *We're* not going to get involved, we're going to wash our hands from that question in this situation. You ask him. Let him tell you.

Of course, all of this was, was within his hearing. It was also within his newfound sight, and yet he's all alone as he watches his parents say, “Oh no, we're not answering that. You can ask him.” Much like being all alone with his neighbors' reaction to how Jesus had healed him. He is experiencing Psalm 27, verse 10

For my father and my mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.

Minus Jesus, who we will see really does take him in next week, minus Jesus, this poor man has no one else in his corner, not even his parents. They pass on an opportunity to protect and defend their son, to stand up for him. Maybe they're embarrassed by him; we don't know. What we do know is that their love for their son was trumped by their fear of the Jews because if anyone would confess that Jesus is the Christ, that is the Messiah, the Anointed One that the Jewish people were waiting for, the *promised One* that God said he would send, if anyone said that this *Jesus* was the Anointed One, the final prophet, the one the Jews were waiting for, and the fact that the man actually was saying that Jesus had healed him could be construed that he was saying Jesus is the Christ, if anyone says that, then they'd be kicked out of synagogue. They'd be disciplined, excommunicated from the faith. Of course, discipline is a mark of the true church, but what we see here in John chapter 9 with these Pharisees is not the true church.

When might you, how might you feel cast out for being willing to testify about Jesus? Whether it's with your family or your friends, maybe coworkers, maybe it's your neighbors. How do you experience being cast out, or the fear of being cast out for testifying about Jesus? And what do you do when you are afraid? Do you stand up or do you shut down? How do you fear, how does your fear of others lead you to not testify to Jesus? And why? Why is it that you are afraid of others, so afraid that you won't testify to Jesus when you have an opportunity?

Fear of man, fear of other people is debilitating, and it leads to foolish decisions just like we see here. In Proverbs 29, we have these words:

The fear of man lays a snare but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.

There is no freedom, there is no safety when we live in light of the fear of man, but just one bad master of entrapment after another. That's what the fear of man brings about. Now the Jews thought that they were rendering service to God. The man's parents were scared that their son wasn't rendering service to God. The question for us is, is Jesus really worth it for us to stand up for? Is it really worth it for us to kick fear in the face and stand up and share the good news of Jesus?

And the answer is yes because God himself, Jesus, the great I Am, who has no beginning and no end, who was before all things, entered into this world as God. But he came into this world as a baby, born of a Virgin under the law and lived under the law, just as you and I are called to live in accordance with God's law, perfectly obeying it in every way. And Jesus did that unlike us. He never fell short from obeying the law of God. He lived the perfect human life, innocent of wrongdoing before God. And the reason why Jesus entered this world, as God and yet as a human being as well and lived perfectly in accordance with God's law, was so that his very life, innocent of any sin and wrongdoing, could be handed over to death, to the judgment of death, to judgment for sin, not his sin but my sin and your sin and the sin of the world. And he was a sufficient sacrifice, willing to hang on a Roman cross, and be judged by his Father and put to death and taking on the debt for all who will trust in him, *paying* the debt for all who will trust in him. And he was buried and to prove that he paid the debt for all who trust in him, on the third day after his death he was raised from death to prove that he has power over sin and death, to forgive sinners of their sin, to welcome them into eternal life the second they believe in him as their savior. As you believe in him as your savior.

Jesus is worth it because he came here to rescue sinners like you and me, to make us worshippers and followers and testifiers to his glorious grace of his life and death and burial and resurrection for your Salvation. *Yes, Jesus is worth it, amen!*

But what we saw first was **a testimony of fear** from the healed man's parents, but next we see **a testimony of frustration**, as it were, from the man because we see in verse 24 and following

So, for the second time they [the Pharisees] called the man who had been blind and said to him, "Give glory to God. We know that this man is a sinner." He answered, "Whether he is a sinner, I do not know. One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see." And they said to him, "What did he do to you? How did he open your eyes?" He 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?" And they reviled him, saying, "You are his disciple, but we are disciples of Moses. We know that God has spoken to Moses, but as for this man, we do not know where he comes from."

Now it's the second time that this man is now before the Pharisees, and they kind of spiritualize things, or maybe spiritually manipulate and abuse the situation, as they say, "Give glory to God," a Jewish phrase which means, "Worship God by telling the truth, swear to God," as it were. We see something similar in Joshua, Chapter 7, the first part of the Bible, the Old Testament, the Jewish Scripture: a Jewish man named Aiken had brought great trouble upon the Jews, and so the great leader at the time, Joshua, spoke up, similar to what the Pharisees say here:

"Then Joshua said to Aiken, 'My son, give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and give praise to him, and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me. And Aiken answered Joshua, 'Truly, I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and this is what I did.'"

But the difference between what we see here with Aiken and what we see with the man who was born blind but was healed by Jesus, is that the man who was born blind, standing before the Pharisees, who tell him to give glory to God, *wasn't lying*. And he didn't have to talk about Jesus' sin or his sin because their sin wasn't the issue. No, they were saying, "Give glory to God" to manipulate the man, in order to get him to say that Jesus was a sinner. That was the only way he could give glory to God in their minds. They were pawning him, they were pimping him in order to get some kind of outside testimony from him, that Jesus is a sinner. These guys, these Pharisees, are acting like spin doctors. They're playing manipulative word games for their own foolish gain.

His reply to them is dangerous, but it's true. "I don't know if he's a sinner. You guys can figure that out. Here's what I do know: I was blind, *born* blind, and now I see." Unlike his parents, he's not driven by fear. He's not hiding Jesus' amazing grace, which we will sing about in just a moment. He's not *hiding* Jesus' grace. No, he's *free* to testify about it, to *celebrate* it.

And this is how the good news of Jesus works. It's intended, not just to forgive us of our sins and heal us in our relationship with God, but then *embolden us* to go tell others about it, even those who don't want to hear about it and those who might cast us out and want nothing to do with us in light of it. It emboldens us to share what has been graciously shared with us.

Again, not even his parents are celebrating Jesus' amazing grace to him, but he remains firm. He didn't feel sorry for himself. So he spoke truth that he was blind, but he could now see, all because of Jesus. Hallelujah.

Do you see, like in your heart of hearts, do you see Jesus as your rescuing savior, the one who has brought to you ultimate healing in your relationship with God, by dying for the forgiveness of your sins and then offering you a free pardon, if you will trust in his lifeblood that was shed on a Roman cross to cover you and all of your transgressions before the holy God, both now and forever? Do you see Jesus as the rescuing healing savior of your soul?

So, the Pharisees asked this man again, "What did he do? What did Jesus do? How did he open your eyes?" as if there'd be a different answer from what he gave before. Maybe they thought there'd be a change of mind because his parents were afraid of the Jews and so maybe now he'd wise up. But he says, "Look, I already told you. I told you before, and you wouldn't listen. You wouldn't accept it. Do you want to hear it again, you want me to testify again so that you, too, can become followers, disciples of Jesus?" which of course, he's acknowledging his allegiance, testifying to his allegiance to Jesus by saying, "Do you want to become his disciples, too." He's almost inviting the Pharisees "alright, come on, come on, come on board. Let's follow Jesus together." Of course, their answer is no, and he knows that, but he's not playing their game, to try to get him to denounce Jesus by throwing Jesus under the bus.

And so, they vilify him as soon as he says, "Do you want to be his disciple, as well?" "Look, you follow this impostor Jesus, but we're true Jews. We follow Moses." Much like we saw Jews talking about Abraham in John, chapter 8. The great pillars of the Hebrew Jewish faith, Abraham and Moses. "Moses, we are of Moses, we follow him. God spoke to Moses. He gave him the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai." And in Exodus chapter 33, other words that these Pharisees might have in mind when they say that God spoke to Moses:

Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend.

Yes, God indeed spoke to Moses. The man born blind wouldn't deny that, but neither does he pin Jesus as against Moses, or Moses against Jesus, as these Jews are doing here. You see, the Pharisees rested in claiming Abraham, they rested in claiming Moses, and they didn't want to rest in this Jesus, whom, presumably, God did not speak to. Of course, Jesus has been saying over and over again that he and the Father are one. When he speaks, he's literally speaking the words of God.

And they say, “Well look, we don't even know where this Jesus is from.” They knew his geographic home, but what they're getting at is, we don't know how in the world or why this man could claim to have such authority to heal. What was going on here is they were forgetting, or maybe deliberately neglecting, what Jesus had already said to Jews back in John, chapter 5: “‘You search the scriptures,’ Jesus says, ‘because you think that in them you have eternal life. And it is the Scriptures, the Old Testament, your Hebrew Scriptures, that bear witness about me. Yet you refused to come to me that you may have life. For if you believed Moses, you would believe me. For he, Moses, wrote of me.’”

To truly belong to Moses would mean to also belong to Jesus, but these Pharisees could not take that step. What about you? Will you renounce, will you deny anything else that you might trust in, except for Jesus? Because anything else is not a sufficient substitute for trusting in Jesus, and it won't gain you forgiveness of sins or a right healed relationship with God or eternal life. Only Jesus and his good news of grace can give this to you.

Well, that's a little bit of a **testimony of frustration** from the man. Lastly, we see a **testimony of faith** in verses 30 through 34

The man answered, “Why, this is an amazing thing. You do not know where he comes from, and yet he opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners, but if anyone is a worshipper of God and does his will, God listens to him. Never since the world began has it been heard that anyone opened the eyes of a man born blind. If this man were not from God, he could do nothing.” They answered him, “You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?” And they cast him out.

Now the man, the student as it were, has become the teacher as he speaks to the Pharisees with a profound confidence. He's digging his heels in with his testimony of faith as he says, “Wow, this is truly an amazing thing. You don't know where he comes from, that is, you don't know where he gets his authority and yet he still exercises the very authority which you don't know where it's from. He opened my eyes, and we all know, listen Pharisees, we all know that God doesn't listen to a sinner. He's not going to, to heal through a sinner.” And they're thinking he's not going to heal through Jesus because he is a sinner.

Again, something that the man might have in mind when he's saying, “Look, we know that God's not going to listen to a sinner,” Proverbs 28:

If one turns away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer is an abomination.

Listen, if someone isn't in a right relationship with God, God's not going to listen to him because he has no mediation with him. But if one, the man says, if one worships God, who seeks to do his will by loving him and trusting him and obeying him, well, God will listen to him. And of course, this was absolutely and perfectly true of Jesus, perfectly loved and trusted and obeyed God, so of course the Father listens to Jesus. They are one. There's nothing in the way of their relationship, unlike us. But God *will* listen to us through Jesus. It is *only* through Jesus that God will listen to us. That's why believers don't pray in their own names. They pray in Jesus' name, covered in his blood with his righteousness as their robe before God. God *will* listen to the believer in Jesus and *only* the believer in Jesus.

And then the man gives the Pharisees a history lesson here. He says, "Look, people who have been blind have certainly been healed, but no one's ever been born blind and been healed. Go ahead search the Scriptures, search the Jewish Scriptures," as if he knew it better than them. "If Jesus is not from God," the man says, "he can do nothing. He can't heal me if he's really not from God." And you can feel their enraged reply, which doesn't engage the substance of his words or his testimony. It seeks to discredit the source, him. "Man, you were born in utter sin. Sin's the reason why you were born blind! So you have no valid testimony with us. You are nothing! How could you, a sinner, seek to teach us, the teachers and leaders?" And you can feel the profound pride and anger that unbelief often induces. It's good for us to ask how might we pridefully resent or even reject others who are seeking to speak truth to us, just as this man was doing to the Pharisees?

So the Pharisees cast him out. They cast him out of the synagogue. His membership had been revoked. He was declared an unbelieving pagan. They were so caught up in wanting to trap Jesus, they wouldn't listen to their man, this man, and they were forgetting their own Bible, which said that the healing of the blind was a sign of the Age of the Messiah. That's what this miracle was all about. It wasn't just about this man gaining his sight. It was about pointing to the one who would do it as being the Messiah, the Anointed One, the Christ. And the, the Pharisees were completely blind to it.

Now this man was cast out, and you know, ultimately him being cast out of the synagogue, it was honoring to the Lord because he was willing to testify to the truth of Jesus. Jesus would care for him. We'll see this next week, as Jesus comes back on the scene And for this man, you know, it was also for his own honor because to truly know the Lord is also to know and persevere through persecution. In 2nd Timothy 3, we read, excuse me 2nd Timothy 5 we read

"Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted, all who desire to live godly, a godly life in Christ Jesus," 2nd Timothy 3, excuse me, "will be persecuted."

Scorned, isolated, rejected, and even manipulations are part of suffering for the sake of knowing Jesus. You know, Jesus was cast out he was scorned and isolated and rejected the victim of manipulations, all for the ultimate healing of spiritual blindness that each of us needs, which is what he accomplished through the cross in the empty tomb. How are you willing to confess that this Jesus is the Christ, he is the Anointed One, even to others who might reject you? Jesus was rejected for you to bring you back to God and to testify to others, *who might reject you*, to testify to others of his amazing grace to you and for them if they will believe. Be bold. Be bold to testify, just as this man. Why? Because Jesus is worth it.

Let's pray: *Oh God beyond all praising, we worship you with gratitude and joy for the living hope of the gospel of your grace in Jesus. Would you please forgive us for the times we've been ashamed of the gospel, afraid to boldly testify because of the fear of man. In light of your word to us today, would you please refresh us with a renewed sense of knowing you and the honor of making you known. Thank you for the grace of your healing of our souls back to yourself because of the completed work of Jesus. And as we offer our financial worship to you this week, would you multiply it 100 fold so that we might more greatly prosper in making you and your gospel grace known. And we pray in Jesus' name, amen.*