

Read Revelation 5:9-14

Prayer: Thank you, Lord, for the many hymns and songs written and sung to bring you glory! Music touches our hearts, and we know how the bible tells us over and over to sing!

Help us to be ever mindful of the Cross!

Help us to be ever thankful for your love!

Help us to always be appreciative of your AMAZING GRACE!

Amen

Words cannot describe adequately God’s amazing grace.

God softened my own hardened heart almost five years ago.

I am so thankful for this Amazing Grace in my own life.

But, it’s not all a bed of roses! Sometimes it’s hard to keep the love of Jesus in your heart.

We get tested daily!

The battle is real!

Evil is real and shows itself in so many ways.

But guess what?!?

The love of Jesus Christ is so very real!!!

Our opening song “Worthy is the Lamb” talks about the price paid for that love.

When we think about the lyrics, it should be easy for us to go out and share that love for our neighbor.

Recently, there have been three things going on with me:

1. The last few weeks, I have not been a good neighbor. I wasn’t keeping the love of Jesus in my heart. I let that old pride and ego influence me on things that really didn’t matter! I carried that burden home and lost sleep over it.
2. While all of this was going on, I was feeling a sense of urgency to fulfill the requirements for the Local Pastor License.
3. And then, as the stress was building, Pastor Jessie asked me if I wanted to preach. Of course, I said, “Yes.”

So here I was, feeling burdened with obligations and just not in the best frame of mind.... When God steps in! All of these pressures and struggles I was going through needed an intervention! God shows us the means of grace, but we have to do our part!!

WE MUST STUDY HIS WORD!
WE MUST PRAY!
WE MUST WORSHIP! (sing)
WE MUST SERVE! (neighbor)

I had not given my ALL to these disciplines. Preparing for this sermon was the intervention that made me realize that I was off track. I read the words of “Worthy is the Lord” over and over again:

“Thank you for the cross. Thank you for the price you paid. Bearing all my sin and shame, in love you came and gave Amazing Grace.”

Reading those words and preparing to give this message brought me back with love in my heart; Praise God!

Now, my circumstances have not changed, but with that love of Jesus in my heart, my response sure has!

The story of John Newton and Amazing Grace is a testimony to God’s mercy and love.

God uses flawed people for his purposes.

This is sometimes difficult to understand.

John Newton was a sailor. He left school at the age of 11 to sail on his father’s ship. He eventually became a captain of his own ship and was involved in the slave trade from Africa to England.

During his time as a sailor, John Newton was well known as an evil man. His use of profanity was so vile and extreme that he made even the most hardened sailor uncomfortable and embarrassed. He was well known for his gambling and drinking as well.

To make matters worse, he harrassed and persecuted anyone for showing or living their faith, as he had renounced his faith long before. Yet even worse than that, he wanted and demanded that everyone else followed his lead in this respect.

John Newton wrote later in life:

“How industrious is Satan served. I was one of his undertemptors, and had my influence been equal to my wishes, I would have carried all the human race with me.”

During a very stormy voyage back from Africa to England, as the storm raged and got worse, John Newton fell to his knees, begging for mercy. The ship made it safely to England, but something had changed John Newton. At a time in need, this horrible, self-proclaimed agent of Satan called out to God.

His life did not radically change on the spot, but he began to live differently. He tried to improve conditions on his slave ships and was empathetic towards his captive cargo. He began reading the Bible earnestly and avoided the activities of gambling, drinking, and using profanity. He even held worship services for his crew on Sundays. Eventually, he gave up the slave trade two years after the storm at sea, became a clerk and got married, and felt a call to ministry over the next nine years.

Interestingly enough, John and Charles Wesley had a big influence on John Newton as he discerned his call. But instead of following the Wesley’s, he became an Anglican minister and later would write Amazing Grace.

Amazing Grace might possibly be the best known and most recognized hymn worldwide. So, we see the progression of John Newton’s life under the influence of the Lord.

Like Newton, we are all works in progress. God’s word is there to guide and direct us. Throughout the Bible, God tells us what to do. The Lord gives us instructions through Isaiah to:

Seek the Lord,
Turn from our wickedness,
And the Lord will have mercy,
And our God will freely pardon.

Revelation 5 states, “The blood of the Lamb purchased for God every tribe and people and nation.” Jesus Christ is for everyone! Jesus paid the ultimate price for you and for me. We should love and serve Him with all of our hearts, minds, and souls. Amen and amen!

Let's pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

We thank you for sending Jesus to us.

We thank you for the cross and what it means to us.

We thank you for all of these hymns and songs and the people that you have inspired to write them.

We thank you for the example of how your grace and mercy worked through the life of John Newton.

Grant us the grace to seek your face and become closer to you through prayer, study, worship, and song.

Amen.

Our closing hymn is Charles Wesley's "Christ the Lord is Risen Today." The celebration of the risen Christ is for every day. Enjoy Pastor Jessie's beautiful singing!

Benediction:

May the Lord bless you and keep you and inspire you to continue to be a work in progress to serve our Lord Jesus Christ in a mighty and powerful way.

Go in peace.