

# Greater Friendship HERALD

Fall 2015



## LOOKING AHEAD...

- December 4 @ 6pm:  
Mother Mary McCrorey  
Christmas Fellowship-  
Marriott Airport MOA
- December 7 @ 7pm:  
Business Meeting
- December 18 @  
GFMBC: Christmas  
Play
- December 31 @ 9pm:  
Watch Night Service
- January 16: MSBC  
Skating Scholarship  
Fundraiser @ Roller  
Gardens
- January 17 @ GFMBC:  
MLK Service
- January 23: Leadership  
Training
- January 24:  
Installation of Officers

## Why It's Called Amazing Grace

### Psalm 121

Sr. Pastor, Rev. Dr. Billy G. Russell



The most recognizable Christian hymn of all time is, undoubtedly, **Amazing Grace**. It has been recorded countless times by hundreds of artist. Most people are familiar with the words of the song, but they would be hard pressed to tell you exactly what it is about grace that is so amazing. I truly hope that by the time you finish reading this today, you will have a firmer grasp on what grace is and how it works in our lives. The more we understand grace, the more we recognize how amazing it is.

There are a number of textbook definitions that I could read to you that include words such as "manifested favor" and "vouchsafement"—but for the purposes of this article, we'll define it in plain English. **Grace is God's undeserved kindness.** The doctrine of grace is that God treats us better than we deserve to be treated.

- Psalm 103: He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities (Psalm 103:10)
- For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

God's grace is extended to us not only in salvation—the fact that He lets us into heaven even though we are sinners—but it also is extended to us in everyday life.

We can benefit from His goodness to us in all that we do.

Today we will look at a Psalm that emphasizes this wonderful reality of the God-centered life. This is one of the few Psalms that probably wasn't written by King David; it might have been written by Hezekiah. It is a beautiful song of God's grace over us. Let's listen to it:

*I lift up my eyes to the hills—  
where does my help come from?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
the Maker of heaven and earth.  
He will not let your foot slip—  
he who watches over you will not  
slumber;*

*indeed, he who watches over Israel  
will neither slumber nor sleep.*

*The LORD watches over you—  
the LORD is your shade at your right  
hand;*

*the sun will not harm you by day,  
nor the moon by night.*

*The LORD will keep you from all harm—  
he will watch over your life;  
the LORD will watch over your coming  
and going  
both now and forevermore.  
(Psalm 121: 1-8)*

Did you notice that recurring phrase? Watch over. It appears 5 times in this Psalm. This is what God does: He watches over us. We live in His grace.

*Continued on next page...*

In our journey through life, God *is* watching over us and He promises to take care of us. As we look at the symbolism of these verses in Psalm 121, I want you to notice three crucial areas of life in which you can count on God's help.

First of all, He watches over you...

#### • When life is uncertain

This Psalm begins... (v. 1) ***I lift up my eyes to the hills—where does my help come from?*** In other versions, "hills" is translated as "mountains." The Psalmist is referring to the mountainous area of Jerusalem, the ultimate destination of his journey. These mountains, though beautiful from a distance, were anything but safe. Not only is the journey through them treacherous, but they had become hideouts for bandits who would attack travelers as they passed through. As the Psalmist began his journey toward the mountains, he said...(v. 2) My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth. In other words, he's saying "These mountains don't scare me, because the one who made these mountains is watching over me." Listen to his words... (v. 3) He will not let your foot slip—he who watches over you will not slumber; indeed, he who watches over Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.

#### • When the heat is on

The Psalmist wrote...(v. 5) ***The Lord watches over you—the Lord is your shade at your right hand; the sun will not harm you by day... Some people might say, It's not the uncertainties of the future that bother me; it's the certainties of right now that I'm worried about. I've got problems you wouldn't believe!***

There is a man in Houston whose business was adversely affected by the aftermath of the 9/11 tragedy, and was further threatened by the fallout of the Enron bankruptcy. Every day brought a new crisis it seemed, and he was struggling to keep his head above water.

Most people in his position would have been falling apart emotionally, but this man maintain an even perspective. When he spoke during that time he said these words, "If I have to start over, I'll start over. This isn't the worst thing in life that could happen. It's not like I've lost my salvation."

Someone asked him "But aren't you worried about the damage to your reputation if you lose your business? Are you worried about losing your credibility?" He said, "If I have to rebuild my reputation as I rebuild my business, then I'll rebuild them both. And God will help me every step of the way."

That's how God's grace is at work in your life. Even when we go through the heat, he makes it bearable by providing (as the Psalmist said) shade at your right hand.

#### • In your darkest hours

The Psalmist wrote...(v. 6) ***The sun will not harm you by day, nor the moon by night.***

Of course, he's speaking symbolically here—poetically, you might say. In reality, we have nothing to fear from the moon. He is referring to the darkness of our fears, our loneliness, the darkness of our pain. Perhaps the darkness we experience when we hear from our doctor the word "cancer", or from our spouse the word "divorce." Maybe even when a child admits to having a drug problem, or being pregnant or when someone close to you dies.

These events bring darkness into our lives—fear, panic, regret—and it is in those times that God's grace watches over us.

The pilgrim who wrote Psalm 121 made his journey with the assurance that even in the darkest hours of the night, God would be watching over him, guiding him safely. This is the grace of God at work in your life.

It's called Amazing Grace because God, in His infinite goodness, treats us far better than we deserve. And, in his infinite goodness, He takes care of us when we can't take care of ourselves; when life is uncertain, when the heat is on, in our darkest hours.

Do you want to experience His grace in your life?

Do you want to live with the assurance that he is watching over you?

Here's how:

- Ask. In your day-to-day "coming and going," ask for His help
- Ask for His strength
- Ask for His presence in your life

God is there. He's watching over you and He will take care of you!



Our Jr. Church and Pre-K classes offer biblical focused lessons helping our children grow to understand that God is real and relevant to their everyday lives, as well as learn to seek the truth through Scripture, and encourage them to apply those truths to their lives.

We are asking parents and church members to volunteer as a teacher's aide. If you are interested in signing-up, a volunteer sign-up sheet will be available upstairs. We are also asking parents to please fill out a child's registration form and turn it in to Sis. Chavon Stewart, Sis. Verlon Stevenson or one of the Jr. Church teachers.

Become a part of the Youth Ministry to encourage our youth's spiritual growth and inspire vision within them!

*Sis. Chavon Stewart*



**Ministers Justin and Nakeisha Lewis, Youth Pastors**



GREATER FRIENDSHIP MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH  
**13<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT**  
THE FUTURE OF GOMER; EXPERIENCING GOD; OPERATING IN THE DEPTH OF HIS POWER  
(BOOK OF HOSEA)

*Journey to Holiness*  
THUR. OCT. 29 - SAT. OCT. 31, 2015 | OAK RIDGE CONFERENCE CENTER | CHASKA, MN 55318

The fear of God is respecting him, obeying Him, submitting to His discipline and worshipping Him in awe!



1) To develop an AWE of God our Creator

2) That our lives will be changed forever

3) Seek to live our lives in such a way that pleases Him

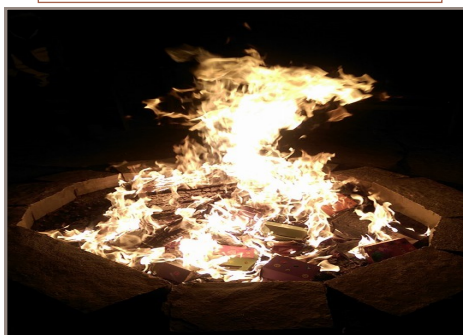


**Save the Date!**

**2016**

*Women's Retreat*

**October 27-29**



*"O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? For your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." ~Hosea 6:4*

## A Grieving Husband and His Grievous Wife

*"...And the LORD said to Hosea, Go, take unto thee a wife of whoredom and children of whoredoms: for the land hath committed whoredom, departing from the LORD. So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim..." ~Hosea 1:2-3*

### Dear Woman of Destiny,

Do you wonder how God could possibly want to walk your walk with you, be your God and claim you as "His people"? . . . For those who worry that God has a cutoff point or a line beyond which you'd best not cross if you ever want to come back and ask forgiveness, let's review the life and times of Hosea. God told his obedient and faithful prophet Hosea to go out and find a wife. God then added the peculiar instruction to Hosea that his wife was to be a prostitute. Hosea found a prostitute named Gomer with whom he fell madly in love, married, and had children. Gomer apparently found her life being a wife and mother stifling; she longed for the old days of excitement and unpredictability. There were no thrills in her present lifestyle so she returned to the old one.

Heartbroken, Hosea raised the children and desperately missed his wife. After a period of time God returned to Hosea with the message to go out in search of Gomer and to bring her home. Hosea found his wife in all her debauchery and brought her back where he continued to love her and tend to her needs. God uses this peculiar story to illustrate the unfailing love he has for his people. They, like Gomer, had turned their backs on God. They, like Gomer, proved themselves unfaithful to their commitment to God. With indifference and willful intention they resumed their old lifestyle which did not honor God or obey his laws. Hosea mirrors the constancy of God's love. He says in Hosea 14:4: "I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely." Did Gomer deserve that kind of forgiveness? Do we? God's love extends beyond the limits of our sinful humanity. He longs to draw us into a state of restoration with himself.

Isaiah 44:22 states, "I have blotted out, like a thick cloud, your transgressions, and like a cloud, your sins. Return to me for I have redeemed you." God's desire that we return to him, love him, and serve him faithfully has not only the reward of forgiveness, but the mind-boggling assurance that "I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be my people."

### Key Verses

*"Come, and let us return unto the LORD for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up."*

~Hosea 6:1

*"...And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God. Then shall the children of Judah and... Israel be gathered together, and... shall come out of the land: for great shall be the day of Jezreel."*

~Hosea 1:10-11

*"For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind." ~Hosea 8:7*

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**If the love of man can be so  
deep, how unfathomable  
must be the love of God**

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*~Marilyn Meberg Excerpted from Women of Faith® Devotional Bible copyright ©2003 by Thomas Nelson, Inc*

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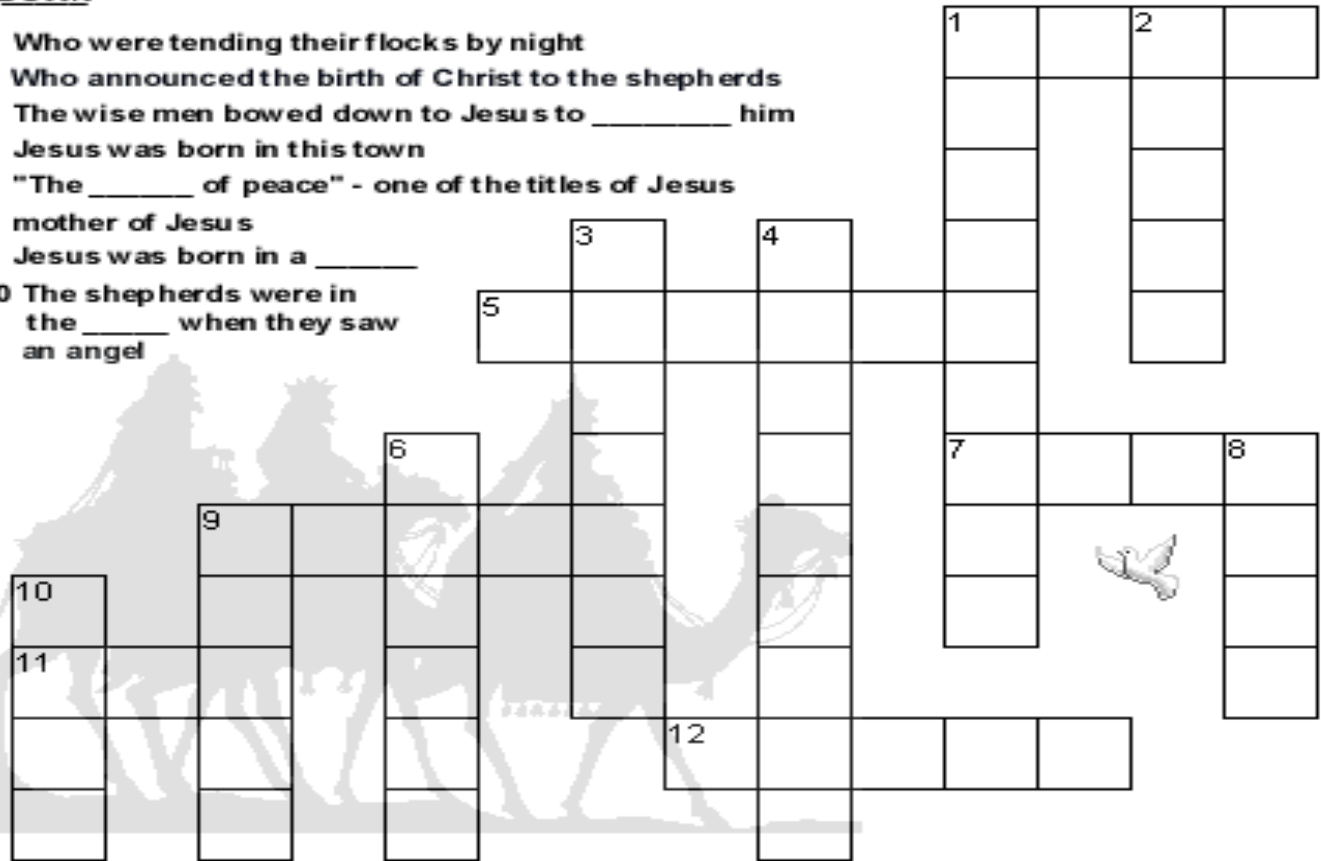




## Birth of Christ

### DOWN

- 1 Who were tending their flocks by night
- 2 Who announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds
- 3 The wise men bowed down to Jesus to \_\_\_\_\_ him
- 4 Jesus was born in this town
- 6 "The \_\_\_\_\_ of peace" - one of the titles of Jesus
- 8 mother of Jesus
- 9 Jesus was born in a \_\_\_\_\_
- 10 The shepherds were in the \_\_\_\_\_ when they saw an angel

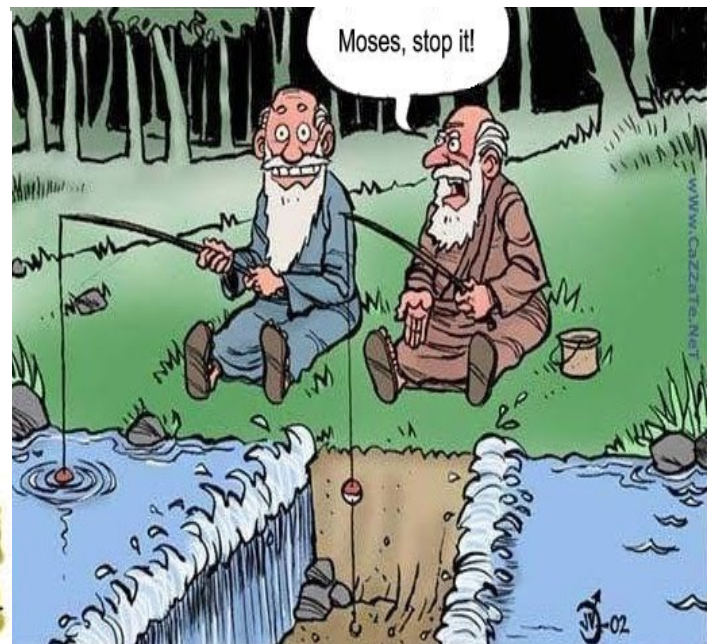


### ACROSS

- 1 The wise men followed a \_\_\_\_\_ that led them to Jesus
- 5 human father of Jesus
- 7 There was no \_\_\_\_\_ at the inn for Jesus
- 9 one of the gifts of the three wise men
- 11 Jesus could not stay at the \_\_\_\_\_ because it was full
- 12 and on earth \_\_\_\_\_, goodwill toward men (Luke 2:14)

MATT GLOVER

DEAR GOD, HOW  
COME I CAN NEVER  
HEAR YOUR VOICE?





# The Real Meaning Of Christmas



It's that time of year again. December has come and with it all the joys of Christmas. But what is the real meaning of Christmas? Is it the gifts under the tree, the lights in the windows, the cards in the mail, turkey dinners with family and friends, snow in the yard, stockings hanging in the living room, and shouts of "Merry Christmas" to those who pass us in the streets? Is this really Christmas?

For many people, Christmas is a time of sorrow. They don't have the extra money to buy presents for their children, family, and friends. Many are saddened at Christmastime when they think of their loved ones who will not be able to come home for various reasons. Turkey dinners may be only a wish and not a reality for some.

Yet, Christmas can be a season of great joy. It is a time of God showing His great love for us. It can be a time of healing and renewed strength. You see, Christmas is when we celebrate the birth of the Christ child. God sent His Son, Jesus, into the world to be born. His birth brought great joy to the world. Shepherds, wise men, and angels all shared in the excitement of knowing about this great event. They knew this was no ordinary baby. The prophets had told of His coming hundreds of years before. The star stopped over Bethlehem just to mark the way for those who were looking for this special child.

Luke 2: 4-19\* says:

"So Joseph also went up from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David. He went there to register with Mary, who was pledged to be married to him and was expecting a child. While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord.

This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Suddenly a great company of the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests."

When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let's go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about." So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them. But Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart."

Why did He come? Why did God send His son to this sometimes cruel and hard world? He sent Jesus to us so that one day, He would grow up to become a very important part of history. His story (history) is one of truth, love, and hope. It brought salvation to all of us. Without Jesus, we would all die in our sins.

Jesus was born so one day the price could be paid for the things we have done that are wrong. The Bible says that all have sinned. We are all born with a sin nature. We do things that do not please God. Through the sins of Adam and Eve, we have all inherited that sin nature. We need to have that removed. The only way is through Jesus. Jesus came so He could die on the cross for ALL of our sins. If we believe that Jesus died for our sins, we can ask Him to come into our hearts and forgive us. Then, we are clean and made whole. We can know that heaven is a place where we can go to when this life is over.

"But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong." [1 John 1:9\\*](#)

We can truly be happy at Christmas! No matter what may be happening, we can know that we are His children. We then become sons and daughters of God. Heaven will be our home one day.

Look at Christmas in a new way this year. This is the year to invite Jesus into your heart. You will then have a "Merry Christmas." The joy and peace you will receive will last all year as you look to God for all your needs to be met.

Jesus is the reason for the season