

We are called to worship God.

Welcome & Announcements.

Good morning and welcome to worship in Portstewart this morning. If you're visiting with us we hope you have already been made to feel welcome and that each of us know God's blessing and presence as we worship together today.

All of the announcements are in your diary, please make sure you have one to take home with you. Remember the holiday bible club is this coming week, pass the word, encourage friends, family and neighbours to come. If you can help, please, please speak to Michelle.

Call to worship. Psalm 103: 1-14

This morning, we are continuing to think about God's grace, and how we know that grace through his patience. We see the patience of God as read Psalm 103, so let's do that now, together, I will read the words in white, we are respond with the words in yellow.

Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name.

²Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits— ³who forgives all your sins and heals all your diseases, ⁴who redeems your life from the pit and crowns you with love and compassion, ⁵who satisfies your desires with good things so that your youth is renewed like the eagle's.

⁶The Lord works righteousness and justice for all the oppressed.

⁷He made known his ways to Moses, his deeds to the people of Israel:

⁸The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love.

⁹He will not always accuse, nor will he harbour his anger forever; ¹⁰he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

¹¹For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him;

¹²as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.

¹³As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him; **¹⁴for he knows how we are formed, he remembers that we are dust.**

Our opening praise reminds us of the wonder and the incredible grace that is God's patience with us. Our opening hymn reminds us that we are who God says we are, not what we have done and so we can sing this is amazing grace. We stand to sing, **who you say I am** and **this is amazing grace**.

Opening Praise.

**Who you say I am
This is amazing Grace**

Opening Prayer.

Gracious God, we come to declare your goodness – to celebrate again the awesomeness of your love and the wonder of your grace. Though we fail you, you never fail us: receive our thanks.

Undeserving though we are, you have shown us mercy – accepting our feeble faith and hesitant discipleship, understanding our weakness, putting our faults behind us and helping us to start again. Though we fail you, you never fail us: receive our thanks.

However much we fail you, however far we wander from your side, you continue to seek us out and lead us forward, your patience never exhausted, your love refusing to be denied. Though we fail you, you never fail us: receive our thanks.

We offer so little, yet you give us so much, our love is so weak, yet you respond so richly, our faith so small, yet you bless us so constantly – your generosity towards us far beyond our deserving. Though we fail you, you never fail us: receive our thanks.

Gracious God, your grace defies expression, too wonderful for us ever to understand, and yet it goes on being real, day after day. Gratefully we praise you and joyfully we celebrate your astonishing love. Though we fail you, you never fail us: receive our thanks. In Jesus name, amen.

Global Mission Slot (Including prayers)

We hear from God's Word.

Scripture Reading. Psalm 51: 10-19

¹⁰ Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. ¹¹ Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. ¹² Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

¹³ Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you. ¹⁴ Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Saviour, and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.

¹⁵ Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise. ¹⁶ You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. ¹⁷ My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.

¹⁸ May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem. ¹⁹ Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar. Psalm 51: 10-19

Praise. **Praise my soul the king of heaven.**

Sermon: **Words of Grace: Patience**

The story is told about a lady who called American Airlines and asked the reservation clerk, “How long does it take to get from Dallas-Fort Worth to Frankfurt, Germany?” The clerk had to wait a moment for the information to come up on her computer screen, so she said, “Just a minute.” The caller responded, “Thanks very much,” and hung up!

Most of the things that really matter in life do not happen in “just a minute.”

I’m sure you’ve heard that popular piece of wisdom that teaches, **patience is a virtue, rarely in a woman but never in a man**. Our capacity to show patience as we work for change, be that in church or anywhere else isn’t great. It’s also true that when we do make changes and are faced with all kinds of teething problems, we can struggle to have the patience to let things settle – all too often we give up and want to go back to how things used to be. We’re not terribly patient.

In our series **words of grace**, we’re thinking about **patience**. Grace is God being patient with us, understanding that when it comes to our righteousness, us learning to do the right things, the God honouring things – we rarely grasp these things in **just a minute**.

When I looked up the dictionary definition of patience it gave the impression that patience was almost turning a blind eye to something. *The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, problems, or suffering without becoming annoyed or anxious*. I’m not sure this is the definition I would use to describe God’s patience towards us. God most certainly does not accept or tolerate the sin in our life, or the problems that sin causes for us, the people around us and most certainly he does not simply accept the dishonour it brings to his name: the wrath of God is a very real thing and he in no way can be described as not being annoyed or anxious about our sin.

This is why we talked last week about the importance of confronting and owning our sin through honest confession so as we can know the mercy of God.

So, if this laid-back attitude to life isn't God's patience, what is. In David's great prayer of confession in Psalm 51 after his affair with Bathsheba and murder of her husband Uriah he appealed for God's mercy. (verse 1-9)

In the second half the psalm, which we read today, David turns his attention to appealing for God's patience. ***Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.*** (Psalm 51: 10-12)

David is asking that God would change him. We've said before when scripture talks about the heart, '***Create in me a pure heart,***' it's talking about something more than our emotions. David is not just asking for a new love for God, which was certainly part of what he is saying, but he's asking for so much more. The heart is our nature, our DNA, our identity.

In the wake of his fall from grace, the way in which Nathan the prophet accused and judged him because of that fall from grace; David is asking that he would be changed. That he wouldn't be constantly seeking his own desires, pleasures: that he wouldn't continually put himself first, but that he would seek after God and his ways.

Crucially David grasped the reality that he couldn't bring this change in thinking or identity about by himself – he'd already proven to himself that he couldn't resist the temptation of a beautiful woman, nor had he the courage to confess to her husband, and so he needed God to do something for him.

This is where John Calvin developed his thinking that we all are totally depraved, we talked about this last week (you can go online to catch up on what we were saying about this by visiting our website or YouTube channel.) John Calvin by saying we are all totally depraved was trying to get us to understand there is nothing we can do for ourselves to change who we are, to stop our natural inclination towards sin or even to make amends for the sin we have already committed. We need God to do something in us. This is exactly what David is asking in Psalm 51.

The grace of God is seen in the way he is patient towards us because he understands that the change we need in our lives doesn't come overnight, it doesn't come in **just a minute** but is something that he continually works in our lives, patiently and faithfully over time.

We don't come to faith in Jesus Christ on a Sunday and by the Monday we live a perfect sinless life, rather God teaches us obedience, he develops in us that willing spirit that submits to him, he draws us closer into his presence and continually fills us with his Spirit – the Christian life,

Christian discipleship, Christian growth is something we live and God patiently works in us over a life time.

It's important we understand the patience of God because part of our nature is that we want change, and we want it now and when we don't see that immediate change, we become disillusioned and wonder if God is at work in us at all.

(True Story – Changed Name) Albert came to faith in the Lord after getting more involved in church life. He started coming to bible studies and prayer meetings – although he found it almost impossible to pray aloud. Albert had a number of what he might call false starts to his journey of faith. Times when he professed Christ, but would fall away, a bit like the seed falling among the thorns or rocks. Something was different this time with Albert.

Yet one frustration remained, when Albert gazed on the holiness of God all he could see were the things in his own life that were unholy and no matter how much he tried to change them himself he couldn't. He would stop getting angry for a while, but then something would happen, and he would explode and as a result feel a failure, question if his conversion were real, wonder if God was really at work in his life at all.

Albert failed to see just how God was at work in his life in so many other ways, he failed to see how those explosions of anger were fewer and further apart than they once were – but above all he failed to see how God was patiently changing him, and so he failed to grasp how God's grace was at work in his life.

Folks, the patience of God is not something that tolerates our sin but is something that means he changes how we live very often little by little. This is incredibly important for us to understand because if we are like Albert and are struggling with one besetting sin or other that for a while we seem to have mastered but then something happens... be that the websites we visit, the way in which we think of other people, look at members of the opposite sex, or the same sex for that matter, if it is the way in which we control our gossip for a short time, but then we're at it again... whatever it is, while our failures need to be confronted, the patience of God means we can be assured that those failures do not mean God has finished with us, or abandoned us.

It just means he hasn't finished creating that new identity in us, that we are still a work in progress, but crucially we do still have the wonderful promise that he will complete that work, he won't leave it unfinished. The Apostle Paul put it this way: **...being confident of this, that he**

who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

(Philippians 1:6)

The Grace of God is knowing the patience of God, a patience understands such is the nature of who we are that we are not transformed in just a minute, but rather we become this work in progress in which God creates in us a new heart, a new identity, a new way of living and once this work has begun it is brought to completion. This is patience, this is the grace of God who never stops working in our lives, never gives up on us, even when we have given up on ourselves.

We respond to God's Word.

Praise.

He will hold me fast

(Children return from treasure hunters – play some appropriate music)

We worship as a family.

Family reading & Talk.

Find Psalm 51:10

Find 1 Samuel 16:7

Praise & offering.

Jesus strong and kind / Jesus loves me

Family prayers (including Lord's Prayer)

We live in obedience to God's word.

Closing Praise.

Not I but Christ in me.

Charge to the people.

2 Peter 3: 8-10

Benediction.

And now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, both now and forevermore, amen.