

Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church
BETHLEHEM TOOWOOMBA, OUR SAVIOUR LOWOOD, ST JOHN'S AUBIGNY,
ST PAUL'S GREENWOOD, TRINITY MARBURG, TRINITY OAKEY,

12 December 2021
The 3rd Sunday in Advent

HYMNS: 11 1 4 623

INTROIT: LORD, You have been favourable to Your land. You have brought Jacob back from captivity.

You have forgiven the iniquity of Your people. You have covered all their sin. You have taken back all Your fury. You have turned away from Your fierce anger. Restore us, O God, You who save us! Withhold Your indignation toward us! Will You be angry with us for ever? Will You prolong Your anger through all generations?

Will You not revive us again, that Your people may rejoice in You? Show us Your mercy, O LORD, and grant us Your salvation!

Let me hear what God, the LORD, will speak! For He will promise peace to His people, to His devout people. However, let them not become foolish again! Surely His salvation is near those who fear Him, that glory may dwell in our land. Mercy and truth have met together. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other.

Truth will sprout up from the earth, and righteousness will look down from heaven. The LORD will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its produce. Righteousness will go before Him, to prepare a way for His footsteps.

Psalm 85

COLLECT: Lord Jesus Christ, we implore You to hear our prayers and to lighten the darkness of our hearts by Your gracious visitation: for You live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.

READINGS: Zephaniah 3:14-20 Do not be afraid or lose courage.
Philippians 4:4-7 Keep your minds on all that is right.
Luke 7:18-35 Messengers from John the Baptist.

SERMON: Philippians 4:4-7 REJOICE!

Welcome to all worshipping with us today! Pastor Peter Ziebell, Phone 0407583922.
Email him at paziebell@gmail.com or to the church office at ddaelc@gmail.com.

Please notify pastor of anyone who is unwell or in need of a visit.

Words mean things: “GRACE”

“For by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not of yourselves. It is the gift of God, not of works, that no one may boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9).

These words of Holy Scripture, as we all know, triggered the Lutheran Reformation.

The Analytical Greek Lexicon tells us that grace (*charis*) is derived from the word that stands for joy. In the context of what Paul is writing, by inspiration, that joy produces a state of grace. Our version of an analytical lexicon, called a dictionary, tells us that our word, grace, comes from the French which means favour, and in English means (first definition) ‘*unmerited divine assistance given man for his regeneration or sanctification.*’ Webster, 1981, pg. 494. Wondering what the parents intended, it is sometimes also used in naming a female baby.

Biblical theology goes beyond that. According to the analogy of faith and the summation of biblical usage of the word, it means the unmerited gift. As we say, “*without any merit or worthiness in me.*”

The writer of Ephesians certainly knew what he was talking about. Paul had been a persecutor of the church, the bride of Christ, His people. While on a trip to Damascus to arrest any who were followers of Jesus, he got knocked off his high horse, literally and figuratively. There in the dust of the Damascus Road, certainly not by any work or worthiness of his own, Jesus came and transformed this man full of hate and anger, into a man and messenger of peace, love, and joy (note the connection with the original Greek, *charis*). His writings from Romans, Corinthians, and the Pastoral Letters, are all permeated with the unworthiness of man, and the overwhelming and unmerited grace and mercy of a God of grace.

Where Luther had learned by bitter experience that nothing – nothing that he could do or offer, was or would ever be enough, adequate, to satisfy a conscience permeated by guilt, shame, and fear, he found in the grace of God a peace which washed over him like a flood, and the joy and peace which surpass all understanding.

The key here is ‘undeserved.’ If we got what we ‘deserved,’ as Luther, and you and I well know, God might squash us like a bug on the sidewalk. Total depravity deserves total destruction, and we know it. Most religions, by far, have an emphasis on earning one’s way to heaven, or whatever else they may call it. But the practitioners (and leaders?) of these quasi-religious groups are confronted by a god who is always angry, and never satisfied.

Grace upon grace, our God is a God of grace, who has sent His Son to be the all-availing sacrifice in our place (it’s called substitutionary atonement) and ‘FOR US.’ Hear those words in the words of institution, “...*shed for us for the forgiveness of our sins.*”

What additional joy (*charis*) it is then, to begin our Sunday worship with Confession and Absolution! After an opening hymn we go directly to the Confession, in which we admit not only that we are sinners, but that we have really sinned by what we have said, done, and in our thoughts.

Then, from the very throne of heaven, God speaks (through the voice of our Pastor) and assures, reassures, and reassures again of the ABSOLUTE forgiveness of ALL our sins. That’s Absolute (we call it the ABSOLUTION), and it means we are ABSOLUTELY forgiven, NO MATTER WHAT, because it depends entirely upon the GRACE of God, without any merit or worthiness in me.

Now we are ready to worship. Now we are worthy to worship, and we break out into the glorious praise of this, our loving, GRACIOUS God and Father. “*By grace I’m saved, grace free and boundless...*”

This what grace in action, grace in practice, grace from God to me, unmerited as it is, looks like, acts like, feels like. When used as a girl’s name one hopes that the joy and unmerited kindness inherent to the name will follow. When used in my relationship to my Heavenly Father the implicit joy of knowing the unmerited forgiveness which flows from that grace, fills one with comfort, peace, and, yes, joy.

COMING SERVICES

19 December 4 Advent	25 December Christmas Day	26 December 1 Christmas
8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA HC 9.00am GRN LR 10.45am AUB HC 7.00pm MARBURG Children's Christmas Program	9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN HC 9.00am LOWOOD LR	8.30am OAK LR 9.00am TMBA LR 9.00am GRN LR 9.30am AUB LR 9.00am MARBURG HC
Sunday, 19 December		
READINGS: Micah 5:2-5a; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-56		
HYMNS: 7 21 17 (327 282) 452		
Saturday, 25 December		
READINGS: Isaiah 52:7-10; Hebrews 1:1-12; John 1:1-18		
HYMNS: 627 622 634 (26 23 part 1 & part 2 if needed) 625		
Sunday, 26 December		
READINGS: Exodus 13:1-3a, 11-15; Colossians 3:12-17; Luke 2:22-40		
HYMNS: 28 33 27 (628 30) 630		

The Lighting of the Third Advent Candle:

R: Today we light the third candle of Advent. This is the candle of JOY. As the coming of Jesus, our Saviour, draws nearer, our joy builds with our anticipation of His birth. From Isaiah 65:18 we read the words of our LORD: *“However, be glad and rejoice for ever in what I am creating! For look! I am creating Jerusalem to be a joy and its people to be a delight.”*

The Apostle Paul writes to the people of the church at Galatia: *“However, what the Spirit produces is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control... If we live by the Spirit, let us also follow the Spirit!”* (Galatians 5:22, 25).

Let us pray:

We joyfully praise you, O Lord, for the fulfillment of your promise of a Saviour and what that means in our lives. Thank you for the gift of salvation through the birth of your Son, Jesus. Create us anew as we wait and help us to see Your glory as You fill our lives with Your living Spirit. Amen.