

**6<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

## **God's abundant grace**

### **Introduction**

Summer has finally begun! In our garden the leaves of the ash tree have unfurled; the flowers in their different array of colours and shapes are in bloom: golden irises, red salvias, magenta peonies, blue ceanothus; and the fragrances of orange blossom, lily-of-the-valley and roses waft in the air. It is a time of lush abundance and fecundity, a sign of the goodness of God's creation bringing hope and new life. Today we will be thinking about God's common grace in the natural world and God's special grace found in Christ Jesus, together giving us much to celebrate.

### **Prayer**

Eternal God

We praise you for the abundance of the natural world you have created.

We thank you for sending Jesus to live amongst us and for his sacrificial love.

We thank you for your Holy Spirit at work in our lives and in the world.

We praise you for calling us into your family even though we are imperfect – thank you for your overflowing grace.

May we sense your presence with us in our worship today.

And we say together the prayer Jesus taught his followers, saying:

Our Father ....

### **Bible Readings**    Genesis 3.3-15

*Towards evening they heard the Lord God walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. The Lord God called to Adam, 'Where are you?'*

*He replied, 'I heard you, so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked.'*

*'Who told you that you were naked?' the Lord asked. 'Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat?'*

*'Yes,' Adam admitted, 'but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit, and I ate it.'*

*Then the Lord God asked the woman, 'How could you do such a thing?'*

*'The serpent tricked me,' she replied. 'That's why I ate it.'*

*So, the Lord God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, you will be punished. You are singled out from all the domestic and wild animals of the whole earth to be cursed. You will grovel in the dust as long as you live, crawling along on your belly. From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.'*

2 Corinthians 4.13 – 5.1

*But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, 'I believed in God, and so I speak.' We know that the same God who*

*raised our Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself along with you. All of these things are for your benefit. And as God's grace brings more and more people to Christ, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.*

*That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day. For our present troubles are quite small and won't last very long. Yet they produce for us an immeasurably great glory that will last for ever! So, we don't look at the troubles we can see right now; rather, we look forward to what we have not yet seen. . . God himself has prepared us for this, and as a guarantee he has given us his Holy Spirit.*

### **Reflection**

So often in our society science and religion are held up as competing opposites, however Christians who are also scientists see the natural world as revealing God's glory and grace in its abundance and wealth of resources. It is as they use these resources wisely and fairly that the world's population of people and animals may be fed and flourish. They acknowledge too that in creation there is a harshness and scarcity: sometimes directly due to human abuse and misuse of resources and sometimes such as in natural disasters due to the limitations of the physical world.

Our Old Testament reading refers to the disruption of harmony and community between human beings, the pinnacle of God's creation, and God by the disobedience of the representative couple Adam and Eve. A separation has occurred between human beings and their Creator, so they enjoy abundant life no longer. This story well describes our human condition – sometime making bad decisions, inclined to blame one another for our mistakes, being physically weak and mortal, and at times feeling distant from God.

Although we live in a world created for abundant life and love, it is a world suffering the effects of sin and evil. Yet there is hope for future restoration of relationship in the final verse, often seen as the first intimation of the future coming of a Saviour who will reverse the effects of this 'fall from grace'. The serpent/Satan will wound the woman's distant offspring, but that offspring will in turn deal the serpent a fatal blow. God's grace and glory will be revealed in this victory and life in its fullness will be recovered.

The letter to the Corinthians speaks of God's special grace shown in Christ Jesus the Word made flesh and entered his creation. In Jesus' ministry and sacrificial death, he secured redemption from all that afflicts this world. God demonstrated his grace and power over evil and death by then raising Jesus to new life. As we turn to God and receive this gift of grace then we have a restored relationship with God now and new life into eternity. Paul has confidence in God's grace flowing to more and more people, gathering them into fellowship with God and with one another. Thus, God's common grace in creation and God's special grace in redemption work together to give us abundant life and hope for the future. Let it be so!

## **Prayer**

God of all majesty

You have given us a wonderful world and  
have also given us the ability to explore and understand it.  
We thank you for the beauty and complexity of creation,  
and for the opportunities which we have to enjoy  
and appreciate all that you give to us.

As stewards of creation,  
we have the responsibility to care for the world you have made.  
We can manipulate our environment- for good or for ill,  
to the benefit - or the detriment of our fellow creatures.  
We acknowledge afresh the huge impact that we humans as a species have on the  
planet—and repent of the ways in which this has been contrary to your will.

We pray that you will give guidance and wisdom  
to all who seek to discern between helpful and harmful applications of human  
advances and innovations.  
We pray about the impacts of technologies on society –  
on how we interact with our natural world and each other.

As Christ showed your love and mercy  
we pray that you will help us to be faithful to our calling to share your grace.

Loving Lord,  
as we seek to wrestle with significant issues in our society and world that your will  
give wisdom, appreciation and compassion for all.

We pray all these things in the name of Your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ  
Amen.