

SERMON “The People of God’s Grace” Pastor Jenny Lee

We Respond to God’s Word

RESPONDING PRAYER Unison

Holy One of God, dwell among us, and guide us to grow in faith day by day. Lead us to notice God’s abundant grace in our journey toward salvation. Be to us the bread of life, a source of trust, a guard against misplaced loyalties and false assumptions, that we may live in harmony with all God’s creation and relate to our brothers and sisters in ways that are pleasing to our Creator. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

SHARING OUR JOYS AND CONCERNS

PASTORAL PRAYERS/BLESSINGS TO NEW COLLEGE STUDENTS

THE LORD’S PRAYER

PRESENTATION OF OUR TITHES AND OFFERINGS

*DOXOLOGY UMH 95

PRAYER OF DEDICATION Unison

O Lord, may our giving add strength to the witness of your church as we humbly seek your truth and lovingly share it. Ready us to proclaim the gospel of peace in our homes, in our places of work and leisure, throughout our community and the world. Keep your people in your grace. May we overcome all challenges of a self-centered mind, and unite one another in you to extend your kingdom. We pray in Jesus’ name. Amen.

We Go Forth to Love God and Serve One Another

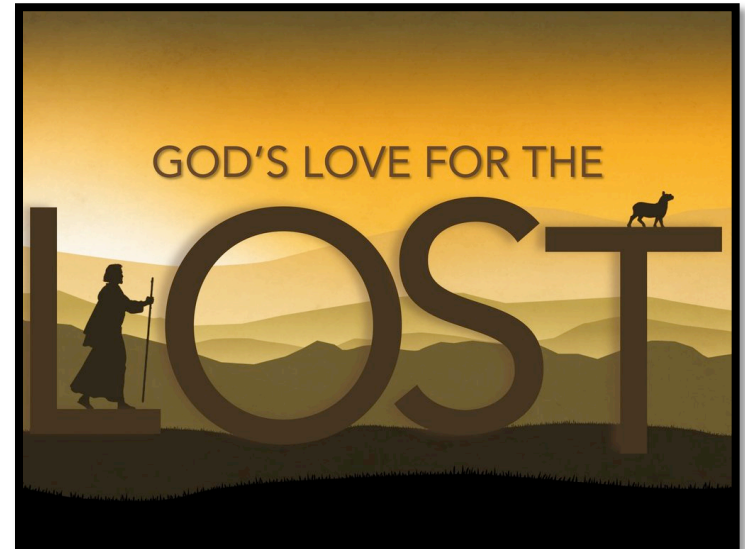
*CLOSING HYMN *Grace Greater than Our Sin*
UMH 365 (vs.1 & 4)

*BENEDICTION Pastor Jenny Lee

POSTLUDE

Upper St. Croix Parish

ONE Parish THREE Churches:
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
August 22nd, 2021
“Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost”



The United Methodist Church

8:30 AM at Central-Grantsburg with Online Zoom Service

9:45 AM at Atlas

11:15 AM at St. Croix Falls

CONTACT INFORMATION

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St. Croix Falls Office: 715-483-9494

www.upperstcroixparish.org

<https://www.facebook.com/UpperStCroixParishUMC>

Upper St. Croix Parish
Grantsburg: Central, Atlas, St. Croix Falls
August 22nd, 2021

“Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost”

* Please rise as you are able.

PRELUDE

WELCOME AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

PASSING OF THE GREETINGS

“Peace be with you!”

(Wave your hands!)

We Celebrate New Life in Christ

*CALL TO WORSHIP Responsive

With profound happiness, we welcome one another.

How good it is to approach the courts of our God!

Happy are those who live in God’s house!

Singing our praise to God fills us with joy.

Here we welcome both friends and strangers.

All peoples of the earth are God’s children.

We greet one another in Jesus’ name.

Together we extol the name of our God.

Open your hearts to receive new strength.

Open your lives to be renewed by God’s grace.

Surely God will equip us to face our world.

We will be witnesses of God’s grace wherever we go. Amen.

*OPENING HYMN *Amazing Grace* UMH 378 (vs. 1 & 2)

OPENING PRAYER Unison (John Wesley’s Covenant Prayer)

I am no longer my own, but thine.

Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.

Put me to doing, put me to suffering.

**Let me be employed by thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low by thee.**

Let me be full, let me be empty.

Let me have all things, let me have nothing.

I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.

And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, thou art mine, and I am thine. So be it. And the covenant which I have made on earth, let it be ratified in heaven. Amen.

CHILDREN’S TIME

UMH 191 (vs. 1)

Proclamation of God’s Word

*THE NEW TESTAMENTS

Luke 15:11-32

11 Then Jesus said, “There was a man who had two sons. 12 The younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of the property that will belong to me.’ So he divided his property between them. 13 A few days later the younger son gathered all he had and traveled to a distant country, and there he squandered his property in dissolute living. 14 When he had spent everything, a severe famine took place throughout that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed the pigs. 16 He would gladly have filled himself with the pods that the pigs were eating; and no one gave him anything. 17 But when he came to himself he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! 18 I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; treat me like one of your hired hands.”’ 20 So he set off and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. 21 Then the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’ 22 But the father said to his slaves, ‘Quickly, bring out a robe—the best one—and put it on him; put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. 23 And get the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; 24 for this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found!’ And they began to celebrate. 25 “Now his elder son was in the field; and when he came and approached the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 He called one of the slaves and asked what was going on. 27 He replied, ‘Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fatted calf, because he has got him back safe and sound.’ 28 Then he became angry and refused to go in. His father came out and began to plead with him. 29 But he answered his father, ‘Listen! For all these years I have been working like a slave for you, and I have never disobeyed your command; yet you have never given me even a young goat so that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came back, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him!’ 31 Then the father said to him, ‘Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 But we had to celebrate and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and has come to life; he was lost and has been found.’”

This is the word of God for the people of God.

Thanks be to God.

Announcements (Insert) August 22nd, 2021

1. Today is “Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecost.” May God bless you and your family members!
2. Sunday Service time: At 8:30 am in Grantsburg-Central, and 9:45 am in Atlas, and at 11:15 am in St. Croix falls. Zoom service will be at 8:30 am.
3. VOLUNTEERS NEEDED- You may find signup sheets for volunteers at the back of the sanctuary.
Grantsburg: Liturgist
This Sunday (8/22): Mark Nelson
Atlas: Liturgist
This Sunday (8/22): Sue Olson
St. Croix Falls: Liturgist
This Sunday (8/22):Kathy Gionis,

Joint Service (8/29) at Atlas Park
 - **Volunteers are needed: a liturgist and ushers, setting equipment up, and clean up.**
4. We have a Joint Service at 9:45 am at Atlas Park. This will be an outdoor service with diverse programs such as Blessing of the Backpacks, Blessing our Pets, and joyful games. After service, refreshments will be provided. You may bring your lawn chair for comfortable seating. Please notice that we cannot offer a zoom service at the outdoor service on August 29.
5. Missions in August:
Grantsburg: Collecting the school supplies
(Questions to Deb Hammer: 715-463-4309)
Atlas: Collecting the School supplies
(Questions to Sue Olson: 715-554-3126)
St. Croix Falls: Interfaith Care Center
(Questions to Karen Sciacca: 715-338-1865)
6. We have a Prayer Group gathering every Sunday: Central-Grantsburg will be at 8:10 am before service and St. Croix Falls will be at noon after service. We welcome everyone who wants to pray together.
7. New membership class will be held at 2 pm on August 24 in Central-Grantsburg.
8. Central-Grantsburg has their “Pie & Ice Cream Social” from 2pm to 5pm.
9. Pastor Jenny’s schedule in this week:

-Her office hours for Central-Grantsburg are from 9 am to 5 pm on Tuesday, and for St. Croix Falls are from 11 am to 4 pm.

- She will be gone on Wednesday on August 25th to have a meeting of the District New Ministry Strage Team in Elk Mound, WI.

10. An Online Zoom Service is scheduled for this Sunday at 8:30 am. Here is the Zoom service LINK. This link will be posted on our parish website and Facebook page. The link will be the same unless we give you the other notice.

Link to Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/84147808460?pwd=SDZlZFNumEvaDlBlcytTRzVxMFIIZz09>

Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460 Passcode: 568271

**Please note that it works only when the host opens it at service time on Sunday. When you check the other time, it doesn't work.*

Phone: +1 312 626 6799,

Meeting ID: 841 4780 8460, Passcode: 568271

Questions regarding the Zoom service, contact Pastor Jenny.

11. You can hear “the service (the scripture lesson, song, sermon and prayer about 30 minutes) by phone” whenever you are able by calling 1-715-298-0854. We will upload a new one every Sunday afternoon.
12. If you miss a Sunday service, you may view a video clip on Facebook or use materials (mailed, emailed or on the Parish website) for a home service. We have the link to our parish Facebook page on the homepage of our website. New clips will be uploaded every Sunday afternoon.
13. You may want to send your giving (offerings) to your church. If you have any questions regarding services or offerings, please email the church office at: centralumc2016@gmail.com.

You can send your giving (offering) to the church at the address listed below (Please make your check payable to your individual church's name.)

Atlas UMC: PO Box 254, Luck, WI 54853

Grantsburg-Central UMC: PO Box 128, Grantsburg, WI 54840

St. Croix Falls UMC: PO Box 458, St. Croix Falls, WI 54024

14. This Week's Birthdays and Anniversaries:

*If we miss your birthday, please let us know by email or phone call:
centralumc2016@gmail.com / 715-463-2624

Adeline Dauer 8/22

Jim & Fay Andrews 8/22

Roxane & Van Brock 8/22

Rachel Tooze 8/27



UPPER ST. CROIX PARISH

(Central UMC—Grantsburg, Atlas UMC & St. Croix Falls UMC)



JOINT WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday, August 29th at 9:45 am

This joint service will be outdoors at Atlas Park next door to Atlas UMC (weather permitting). It will be moved inside Atlas church if it rains.

Special Activities:

- Blessing of the Backpacks
- Blessing our Pets
- Joyful Games
- Refreshments Provided

**PRAISE
IN
THE PARK**
Faith • Love • Service

PLEASE JOIN US...ALL ARE WELCOME!

**Please feel free to bring your lawn chair for more comfortable seating.*

August 22nd, 2021
Luke 15:11-32

Pastor Jenny Lee, Ph.D.
Upper St. Croix Parish UMC



“The People of God’s Grace”

A couple of weeks ago, I talked about how, “United Methodists are the people of the Bible.” Methodists began with a small group reading the scriptures, and we not only read scripture regularly but also live by them in our everyday life. United Methodists also believe that the Bible is the final authority. And last Sunday, I talked about “United Methodists are the people of an inclusive mindset.” As the symbol of “openness and inclusiveness,” United Methodists open the communion table to everyone. I said, as God does, United Methodists have open hearts, open minds, and open doors to everyone.

Today, I would say United Methodists are the people of God’s grace. United Methodists are the people who cannot live without God’s grace. We believe that God’s grace is undeserved, unmerited, and the loving action of God and that the grace permeates our lives. Most Christians believe that we are saved through faith in Jesus Christ by God’s grace. United Methodists believe so as well. However, we sometimes wonder what it means to be saved? For some Christians, salvation depends on receiving the sacraments of the church. For other Christians, salvation comes when one makes a public profession of faith. For still other Christians, the way of salvation involves receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and speaking tongues (p. 59-60, *Living as United Methodist Christians*). What about you? What does it mean to be saved to you?

For United Methodist Christians, the word “salvation” means that “we are in an intimate relationship with God, who works throughout our lives to make us whole” (p.60, *Living a UM Christians*). John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, explained the journey of salvation. According to him, our salvation journey begins before we are even aware that God is seeking us. Even though we don’t know about God yet, God loves us and seeks us wanting everyone to know about Him and come closer to Him. Most people don’t know deeply about God’s grace because they live in a self-centered mindset. They live toward the value of the world, such as focusing on success, wealth, honor, and the power of the world. Nevertheless, God still loves them and is waiting for them to come to Him closer. We call it “prevenient grace.”

God loves us long before we ever love God. Even when we are too busy or distracted to hear, God keeps on speaking to us through the people around us. Like when I didn’t know about God, and God sent a pastor’s wife, who said to me, “read the Bible, and God may heal you.” Even though I didn’t accept her, God didn’t give up on me. And then God sent me another pastor, who said to me, “Please believe in Jesus Christ. He is the Healer. He is the Savior.” Sometimes God speaks to us through nature or animals. You might have “aha moments” about God’s grace when you worship God, pray to God, sing for God, or even play with your pets or walk on the street. Even though we don’t know about God yet, God still loves us. It is “prevenient grace.” Prevenient grace is open to everyone. The Letter of Romans 5:8 says, “But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us.” Christ died for all, and his love is for all. Therefore, United Methodists open hearts, open minds, and open doors to everyone who would be possibly God’s children. You might have met several people who spoke to you about God over the years. I believe that that’s why you are here to worship God. God’s action of loving us is endless.

The next journey of prevenient grace is to experience “justifying grace.” Justifying grace leads us to change our mindset from a self-centered mindset to a God-centered one. The Apostle Paul was the person who had everything that is valued in the world, such as wealth, honor, and power. He was born into a family of great honor, studied at the best academy, and was a Sanhedrin (Israelite’s congress and court) member. However, after he met Jesus, his mindset was totally changed. He said, “Whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. For his sake, I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, so that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God, based on faith” (Philippians 3:7-9).

In today’s scripture, the second son left his father with his inheritance and spent everything. He then faced

a life crisis with severe famine. He tried to survive by himself, getting a job feeding pigs and eating pig's food. He missed his father and father's house and regretted leaving his father. And, he came back to his father's house. His father was waiting for him every day. Even at a long distance, his father saw him, and ran to him and hugged him. Verses 20 and 21 say, "While he was still far off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion; he ran and put his arms around him and kissed him. Then the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy of being called your son.' As soon as his son repented his sins, the father has a party and gave his son the best robe, ring, and sandals which means he is the father's inheritor. Like the father, God waits for people to return to God. And as soon as the people repent their sins and come back to God, God justifies them as the children of God. Justifying grace continues in our lives because we repeat leaving God and coming back to God in mind, spirit, and even physically.

We can find "justifying grace" in the sacrament of baptism and Holy Communion. Baptism identifies we are children of God as God said, "he is my pleased Son" when Jesus was baptized. Holy Communion reminds us of the children of God, and renews our lives in Jesus Christ, receiving the bread and the wine of communion. Therefore, we repent before every sacrament to receive God's grace. Some people journey toward God from the moment of their baptism as an infant or a child, while other people become Christians through a significant experience in their youth or as an adult as so I did.

Justifying grace leads us to grow in faith as the disciples of Jesus Christ and guides us to transform the world. Of course, some people repeat leaving God and returning to God their whole life. In today's scripture, we don't know if the second son remains faithful or left his father again. But, we may guess the son lived a better life because of his father's steadfast love. I hope we are growing in faith day by day. The evidence of our growth in faith is that we can become adult children of God and live in God-centered minds continually. We may call the life of adult children of God "sanctifying grace." Sanctifying grace is God's ongoing work in our lives to make us whole and perfect in our love for God and our neighbor. John Wesley changed his life after his heart-warming experience at Aldersgate, seeking continually to become more holy in his piety and involvement in society. Like this, United Methodists do not stop their journey of salvation with any one-time experience. Through prayer, worship, Bible study, and mission work, we continue to grow closer to God. Through our mission outreach to people in need in our communities and worldwide, we continue to grow more loving. We are nurtured in the church and empowered by God throughout our lives to become the loving people God created us to be. Therefore, United Methodists are evangelical people who live out the witness of Jesus Christ in everyday life. Let us love God and love neighbor in acts. Thanks be to God. Amen.