

What's your image of grace? Maybe you have a story or an experience or an anecdote that reveals to you the nature of grace. I know I've heard countless stories and heard various explanations on grace. One that really sticks out to me is Jean Valjean's experience with the priest in the novel "Les Miserables" (if you don't know that one, it's well worth Googling it). I also really enjoy the definition of grace (compared with mercy) in that grace is being given something we don't deserve while mercy is not receiving what we do deserve. Mercy is often associated with the lack of punishment or consequence when we've failed while grace goes beyond that and we receive something that we never deserved. And life is full of moments of grace. Most of us receive things regularly that we don't deserve, both from those around us in word or in deed, but certainly from God in the many blessings each of us receive daily (even the very breathes we take can be seen as grace). My personal experience of grace came while I was in seminary and failed to complete an assignment on time. Not completing this particular paper would mean I would fail the course and, very possibly, lose my scholarship. The professor was willing to take the time to talk with me and finally was willing to allow me to turn my paper in a few days late so that I would at least pass the course. I certainly didn't deserve that extension but he offered me grace in it. And so, what's your story? How do you define grace in your life? If someone asked you what grace was, how would you explain it? Hopefully you have a definition in mind and at least one or two stories of how you've seen grace in the world. I believe we all have some significant story of grace that we can share. This week we watched a video before the sermon that talked about grace. The gentleman

in the video got a little of both authentic, real-life consequences and a little bit of grace (if you missed the video, I hope to have it on our Facebook page). And though he certainly learned from the natural consequence (which we definitely should) he seemed to be more impacted by the grace that was shown to him. And that's true in our world, too. Often we look at our kids and we believe the only way they learn is through consequences and punishments. And all of us can learn through consequences to our actions. But there's also a time where grace can teach us a whole lot, too. It can impact our hearts in a different way than consequences do. In fact, they tend to stick with us longer because they hit a little deeper. And, often, when we need grace the most is when it impacts us the deepest. We have a world around us that needs grace. And probably not so much the type of grace that is a handout or a physical gift as it is the grace of relationship, patience and love. I read recently that there is a difference between talents and gifts. Most people have one or two talents to share with the world, but all of us have any number of gifts we can give: time, energy, patience, kindness, listening, joy, peace, etc. And so, this Christmas season, consider the gifts you're giving. Sure, those wrapped presents and gift cards are great, but even greater are the gifts of us and our time and our connections. But those gifts aren't usually as easy to give. But, honestly, that's what the world needs most. God gave us that kind of gift when he sent Jesus. Paul writes in Eph 2.8-9: *"For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast."* (ESV) So for every wrapped gift you give this year, consider giving a more relational gift, a gift or yourself. And, through that, the world will know

more grace. Serving Him and you, Matthew

Christmas Eve

Saturday, December 24th at 5:00pm we will be having our annual Christmas Eve service. This is a simple service to help keep our focus on Jesus.

Family Night Christmas

On **Wednesday, December 14th** we will be having a Christmas Celebration at Family Night. We will start with a Christmas potluck followed by some songs by the kids and a family craft for everyone to participate in. Everyone is invited to this joyful celebration. **We eat at 6:00pm.** *There will be no Family Night December 21st or 28th or January 4th.*

Ladies' Fellowship

The ladies will be meeting on Thursday, **December 8th at 7:00pm** for a time of devotion, snacks and fellowship. All ladies are encouraged to attend.

Baby Jesus is Missing!

The baby Jesus from our nativity set has been hidden (*check out the service from Nov 27th for why he's gone!*) He is somewhere hidden in the church and it is up to you to find him. The first clue for his whereabouts is from **Exodus 25.1-9**: "The Lord said to Moses, 'Tell the Israelites to choose something to give me as a special contribution. You must accept whatever contribution each person freely gives. This is the kind of contribution you will accept from them: gold, silver, and bronze, violet, purple, and bright red yarn, fine linen, goats' hair, rams' skins dyed red, fine leather, acacia wood, olive oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet-smelling incense, onyx stones, and other precious stones to be set in the chief priest's ephod and his breastplate.

Then have them make a holy place for me, and I will live among them. Make the tent and all its furnishings exactly like the plans I am showing you." (GW) **Let Matthew know if you find him!**

Prayer List

Dorothy Cleavinger – health issues
 Bill Danner – home, recovery
 Jody Dean – treatments
 Kyle Dean – accident, recovering at home
 Dennis Duckwiler - health
 Mike Grater – cancer
 Gary Hulett – heart failure
 Danny Jones – new treatment
 Rita Jones – nursing home
 Sue Lindsey – back at nursing home, needs strength
 Bob Mummert – kidney issues
 Glenna Perry - hospice
 Clyde Prater-cancer, experimental treatments
 Carol Riley - cancer
 Lori Rodriguez – stage 4 cirrhosis of liver
 Gale Roosa – cancer
 LeAnn Thiner – surgery recovery
 Diane Walters – heart issues
Condolences:
 Mike Thomas family
 Len Allen family
 Marsha Clements family

November Financials

Date	Weekly Actual	Yearly Actual	Yearly Budget
Nov 6th	\$544.00	\$44,869.62	\$45,908.55
Nov 13th	\$841.00	\$45,710.62	\$46,928.74
Nov 20th	\$688.00	\$46,398.62	\$47,948.93
Nov 27th	\$787.00	\$47,185.62	\$48,969.12

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You Are Welcome At
Our Services!

Sunday

Morning Worship.....9 a.m.

Sunday School.....10:30 a.m.

Wednesday

Family Night.....6:00 p.m.

Events:

Wed, Dec. 7th-Family night 6-7:30 pm

Thurs, Dec. 8th-Ladies Fellowship @ 7 pm

Sun, Dec. 11th- Board Meeting @ 6 pm

Wed, Dec. 14th- Family Night Christmas Celebration 6 pm

Sun, Dec. 18th-Caroling @ 4 pm
(more info to come)

Sat, Dec. 24th-Christmas Eve Service @ 5 pm

Sun, Dec 25th - Christmas Service at 9am (no Sunday School)

All events are subject to change. Please keep up to date by checking the bulletin, Facebook page or website.



Astoria Christian Church



Oh
holy night
The stars are brightly shining
it is the night of our dear
savior's birth

