

Call to Worship:

The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign forever and ever.

Invitation and welcome prayer:

Father, holy Father, thank you for rescuing us from our futile attempts to save ourselves. Thank you for healing our fretting minds with the strong peace of your gracious and forgiving intimacy with us. Looking deeply into our hearts you have embraced us with mercy, and we want to stay in your company to hear your words and, like Mary of old, to have the better thing you alone can give us.

In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen.

Song/Hymn: "Your grace finds me" by Matt Redman

It's there in the newborn cry, there in the light of every sunrise  
There in the shadows of this life: Your great grace.

It's there on the mountain top, there in the everyday and the mundane  
There in the sorrow and the dancing: Your great grace, oh such grace.

*From the creation to the cross*

*There from the cross into eternity Your grace finds me, yes Your grace finds me*

It's there on a wedding day, there in the weeping by the graveside  
There in the very breath we breathe: Your great grace.

The same for the rich and poor, the same for the saint and for the sinner  
Enough for this whole wide world: Your great grace, oh such grace.

*Refrain*

There in the darkest night of the soul, there in the sweetest songs of victory  
Your grace finds me, yes, your grace finds me: Your great grace, oh such grace.

*So I'm breathing in Your grace and breathing out Your praise*

*I'm breathing in Your grace, forever I'll be.*

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Scriptures:

- Isaiah 45.10-22  
A portion of prophetic Scripture declaring the Lord alone is God and He seeks us with unrelenting grace. So turn to Him
- John 6.61-69  
The wisdom of realising there is no one else to help and save but Jesus.

Prayer:

Father, your Name is holy. This Lord's Day we are privileged to remember our communion with all your saints around the globe and in heaven. We remember our many persecuted brethren in many countries and thank you for your pure testimony. Help us to hold the truths you have given us in treasured trust against the insults of the age, that we too might honour your Name in our families and in our land.

In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Hymn/Song: "Tell them about the banquet" *by Geoffrey Bingham*

1. Father, what wonder abundant in all that You've made and You've done!  
Mountains and oceans and deserts and moon and the stars and the sun,  
Teeming with life, and with goodness and mercy that never will stop,  
For Yours is a love that goes over the top!  
What can our mean little kingdoms be worth,  
When God in His glory fills heaven and earth?
2. Father, You've given Your Son, bringing more than we ever could wish—  
Wine by the bucket, and bread by the basketful, boatloads of fish!  
Bearing our sin in the Cross with the glory that shines from Your face,  
He rose up from death to pour grace upon grace!  
What could our mean little kingdoms be worth,  
When God has brought all of His heaven to earth?
3. Father, You've poured out Your Spirit upon us to bring us all in—  
Judging our foolishness, filling our emptiness, purging our sin!  
Living in freedom and fullness of love in the life of Your Son,  
Rejoicing in all that You've made and You've done!  
What will our mean little kingdoms be worth,  
When God has unveiled the new heaven and earth?

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Message: Jesus, first in my heart

The thought fashion today is identity. We have gone crazy with this. It seems to be overtaking the media and dominating what politicians (except for a few brave ones) are prepared to talk about, affirm and even legislate.

London Rabbi Jonathan Sachs said: "When individual feelings (negative self-image) become part of the self-definition of the group, and when groups call for remedial action by the state, then identity politics or the politics of recognition is born".

But the living God who knows the human condition inside out because He made us has offered a way for each of us to find his true self, yes for each and every human being. The secret now revealed is Jesus Christ.

When the original humans sought to have their own identity apart from God, they became morally and spiritually unhinged and were afraid to show themselves to their loving Maker and also to each other. They hid. And ever since this has plagued us all. We need a home of love to have any feeling of remedy for our lostness.

Yes, there is a body of people who are finding peace from all of this. They are not defined by gender, class or ethnicity. They are the saints. Ordinary folk who have put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ.

There is nothing special about them except for that one simple truth. They have trusted their souls to Jesus. You who read this know what I mean.

What is their future going to be like? Where are they heading? Well, a fascinating insight into this question is found in the Sacred Scriptures in the Letters to the Seven Churches in Revelation Chapters 2 and 3. The Seven churches stand for the church in all ages. They are guided by the Lord Jesus himself and protected by Him from false ideas and wayward paths that would rob them of their heritage of peace and joy.

Each one is saved from the perils of life. From lovelessness, soul death, ingrown addictions of sexual lust, greed, false trust in human cleverness and idolatry. It's all there. All the pitfalls of lost identity and craving to find significance and life itself in their human endeavour.

Then Jesus rescues them, and rescues us, through faith. Check out the rewards of trust in these letters. It is all to do with simply knowing and being known by Jesus. A new name given by God himself, *Upon him I will write the name of My God, and the name of the city of My God (the new Jerusalem that comes down out of heaven from My God), and My new name (3.12)*. From selfish complacency to reigning with Christ, seated next to Him on His throne. *To the one who overcomes, I will grant the right to sit with Me on My throne, just as I overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne (3.21)*.

This last entry is a climax and will evoke great peace and refreshed energy in our lives. Who is the overcomer referred to who was diagnosed as “wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked” by the all-piercing eyes of Lord Jesus – their Lord of glory who loves, rebukes and disciplines? It is the one who hears the knock, the faint yet persistent increasingly clear knock of the Saviour's presence desiring intimate fellowship with you. They simply do what others ignore. They receive Him afresh and suddenly know not only Him but their true selves with Him.

### Reflection:

*From Jamilu, a young courageous pastor working in Nigeria amongst Fulani herdsmen, some of whom have been responsible for the deaths of Christians...*

“God's servants are known for persecution, not popularity and fame. As we take the Gospel to the heathen in rural areas, we must also work to preserve and sustain the harvest in urban areas from rotting in the hands of false teachers. “Comfort Zone” Christianity has no legacy for its generation, for no man has ever won a battle in a comfort zone, it must be on the field. When we consistently build people's identity and images

## Theme: Jesus first in my heart

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around material possessions, we will create a society of depressed humanity, devalued of the true God. It is easier to preach Jesus than to live by his demand of holiness upon us. Men who seek visibility will soon be seduced by the table of the ungodly. Brethren, the Kingdom can't be advanced on the table of pleasure, we must make a commitment of sacrifice to salvage nations. ”

### Prayer:

Lord Jesus come into my life, eat with me, share your heavenly bread, and let me drink your wine of covenant grace. Please forgive me for wandering in the paths of the noisy wisdom of the world. Refresh the spirit you have breathed into me and hide this life of mine in Yours. In your Name, Lord Jesus, Amen.

### Hymn: *by Joseph Scriven*

1. What a friend we have in Jesus, all our sins and griefs to bear!  
What a privilege to carry everything to God in prayer!  
O what peace we often forfeit, O what needless pain we bear,  
all because we do not carry everything to God in prayer!
2. Have we trials and temptations? Is there trouble anywhere?  
We should never be discouraged; take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Can we find a friend so faithful who will all our sorrows share?  
Jesus knows our every weakness; take it to the Lord in prayer!
3. Are we weak and heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care?  
Precious Saviour, still our refuge – take it to the Lord in prayer!  
Do your friends despise, forsake you? Take it to the Lord in prayer!  
In his arms he'll take and shield you; you will find a solace there.

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### Benediction:

Grace and peace to you from Him who is and was and is to come, and from the seven Spirits before His throne, and from Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth.

To Him who loves us and has released us from our sins by His blood, who has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father—to Him be the glory and power forever and ever! Amen.

This service was prepared for HopeNet SA by Rev. Ian Clarkson