# **PREVENIENT GRACE**

Prayer to the Holy Spirit

Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love. Send forth your Spirit and we shall be created. And you shall renew the face of the earth. O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations. Through Christ our Lord. Amen.

INTRODUCTION (#1)

We have a problem. Human kind has a problem. We are separated from God. What separates us? Sin. If an artist were to paint a picture of sin, it might portray a person hopelessly lost at sea. The picture would show the utter despair of the situation. The painting would carry this unwritten message: “There is absolutely nothing this person can do to save him/her self. Outside help is the only hope.”

At this point the artist would have a problem. She would be faced with the task of adding another dimension to the work. She would have to find a way of including the presence and reality of that “outside help”. She would have to show that God has broken through the hopelessness. In theological terms she would have to portray the idea of PREVENIENT GRACE!

The title of this talk is Prevenient Grace and my name is Greg Inboden

# Define Prevenient grace

## The root meaning of the word grace (from the Greek charis) is “gift”. God, in Christ, offers us the gift of a relationship that includes salvation, reconciliation, and eternal life. (Eph. 2:4-9; 2 Cor. 5:18) (#3)

## God’s grace is one grace with many facets.

### We describe the experience of grace with different word—prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying—that relate to the various stages of our spiritual journey.

### The nature of grace (one grace experience in many ways) is similar to the mystery of the Trinity (one God in 3 persons). Within God’s grace are both unity and diversity.

## Prevenient grace means God is present with us throughout our lives. This grace is most clearly at work from our conception to conversion—from the moment we begin to be until the time we accept for ourselves the relationship God offers us in Christ. (#4)

### The term prevenient comes from the Latin with means “to come before”. In Christian theology it means the grace that comes before any human decision or endeavor. Prevenient grace is at work before we are even aware of it. (#4a)

### It is the love of God wooing us—like a bridegroom courting his bride. (Rev. 22:17) (#4b)

### It is the will of God drawing us. (John 6:44-47) (#4c)

### Prevenient grace is the desire of God pursuing us throughout our lives to bring us into friendship with God—a love that will never let us go. The poem “Hound of Heaven” by Francis Thompson powerfully conveys God’s pursuit of us.

### It is the gift of God freeing us so that we might have the opportunity to respond to God’s offer of a relationship and place our trust in Jesus Christ (Rom. 8:31-39, 1 John 4:10, 19)

### It is the activity of God empowering us, giving us spiritual strength (Rom. 5:6)

# The biblical message is clear: Human beings are created in God’s likeness for a relationship with the divine. (#5)

## In the beginning God created the cosmos, the world, and all things in it—“and God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:1-25) (#5a, 5b, 5c, 5d)

## God created humankind, male and female, in God’s own image and likeness –and declared that they were good (Gen. 1:26-31, 2:4-22). The divine-human relationship was deep and meaningful. (#6, 6a, 6b)

### Like Adam and Eve, each of us is a unique and beloved child of God.

### Because God is love (1 John 4:16) each of us has the capacity to love and be loved.

### Because God is Spirit (John 4:24) and we are created in the image and likeness of God, each of us is a spiritual being—one could say that we are “wired for God” from the very beginning.

### Because we are created in the image and likeness of God, the deepest and most essential part of us longs for a relationship with God. As Augustine said in his Confessions, “Our hears will net find rest until they find rest in Thee [God],”

## The bad news of human sin is preceded by the good news of our origin in God. (#7)

### Adam and Eve made wrong choices that cost them their place in the Garden and brought disorder to all of creations (Gen. 3; 6:1-11), yet God provided for them.

### Each of us has made wrong choices that separate us from God and diminish our spiritual lives, yet God provides for us.

### God’s love and grace are greater than all our wrong choices.

# God continues to offer us a relationship (#8)

## God desires a relationship with us even more than we want a relationship with God (Jer. 31:3)

## The nature of this relationship is that of covenant love.

### A covenant is the strongest form of relationship identified in the Bible. See the covenants with Noah (Gen. 9:8-17) (#9) Abraham (Gen.15:18-21 (#10) Moses and the Israelites (Ex. 19:3-6) (#11) and David (2 Sam. 7:5-16) (#12)

### The prophets repeatedly called the Hebrew people back to a genuine relationship of love and obedience to God (Ezek. 12:1-6; Hos. 3:1-5). They proclaimed God’s promise to make a new covenant with the people (Jer. 31:31-34) (#13)

### Jesus offers us a new covenant and a new relationship with God (Luke 22:14-20; Mt. 28:18-20). It is a relationship of love and grace (John 13:34-35; Eph. 2:4-10) (#14)

1. Divine love (John 1:14; 3:16) **(#15)**
2. Seeking love (Ezek. 34:11-16; Luke 19:2-10) **(#16)**
3. Everlasting love (13:34-35, Ps. 136) **(#17)**
4. A gift of love (john 3:16) **(#18)**

## God takes the initiative to seek us; it is not up to us to seek God (Gen. 3:8-9) (#19)

### We experience this divine initiative as grace.

### Prevenient grace helps us overcome our brokenness and alienation (Rom. 5:6-11; Luke 15:20-32).

# How do we experience God’s prevenient grace? My Story -- Bottom of a beer mug (#20)

## Through events, both positive and negative. (#21) The Spirit can speak to us through music art and beauty (#21a, 21b). The Holy Spirit can speak to our minds and hearts through the struggles, frustrations, difficulties, and pain of unemployment, divorce, or the loss of a loved one. (#21c, 21d)

## Through the care and sacrifice of other who embody God’s love toward us, for example, parents, relatives (#22, 22a) and friends (#22b)

## Through the body of believers, the church (#22c) The church helps us experience God’s grace and presence through corporate worship, prayer, sacraments, and small groups. (Eph. 4:11-16).

## Through the Holy Spirit awakening our conscience and convincing us that we can never reform ourselves or earn a place in God’s family (2 Cor. 7:9-11) (#22d)

## Through the Holy Spirit courting us, not forcing us. (#23) Prevenient grace is the work of the Holly Spirit wooing us to repent of our sins and receive eternal life. (#24)

## Through us to others. (#25) God can work through our words, attitudes, and actions to help others open their hearts and lives to the prevenient grace of God.

# Closing (#26)

## The critical question for each of us this weekend is, will we open our hearts to God and accept the relationship God offers us in Jesus Christ?

***Decolores! (#27)***