



CELEBRATION OF GRACE SUNDAY

April 24, 2022



This material is designed for pastors and teachers as an introduction to the Adams Christian Prison Ministries and to provide materials and topical suggestions for Celebration of Grace Sunday.

ABOUT ADAMS CHRISTIAN PRISON MINISTRIES

ACPM is a non-profit organization that offers a variety of ministries and programs to those incarcerated at the Adams County Adult Correctional Complex. Having established a working memorandum with Adams Prison Board, ACPM provides a full time Chaplain (Reverend Angel Perez) who helps serve and support ACACC staff, inmates and pre COVID-19, oversaw nearly 100 volunteers offering counseling, Bible studies and support to inmates.

ACPM is a ministry of “renewal, reconciliation and restoration” on behalf of and in collaboration with all the churches of Adams County. This truly is a ministry that belongs to all our Christian churches in the county. For this reason, the ACPM Leadership is designating Sunday, April 24, 2022, as a “Celebration of Grace Sunday,” celebrating God’s love and mercy that is freely available to all.

The primary emphasis of this campaign is that God loves and values every one of us and that His mercy in Christ is greater than all our sin. Adams County Churches are invited to observe this “Celebration of Grace Sunday” by setting aside time in their worship services on April 24th to pray specifically for those incarcerated; to come to the Lord’s Table in Communion in honor of inmates; and to consider a special offering to support the ongoing ministry at the correctional complex.

The global COVID-19 pandemic of the past year has created financial hardship for many businesses and nonprofits, ACPM included. Therefore, ACPM has established a \$25,000.00 financial goal for “Celebration of Grace” Sunday. Gifts may be forwarded to: ACPM, P.O. Box 4122, Gettysburg, Pa 17325. Donations may also be given securely online at the ACPM website: www.AdamsCPM.org.

MATERIALS

We have provided the following materials to be incorporated during the Celebration of Grace time. We suggest the use of these materials, please incorporate them as you see fit without hindering your faith group liturgy, sacraments, or traditions,

LITANY OF PRAYER FOR THE INCARCERATED

Leader: Heavenly Father, you are Sovereign overall, giving justice and proclaiming liberty to the captive. You were with Joseph when he was imprisoned in the king’s jail. Your spirit visited Paul during his incarceration. And you sent your Son, Jesus, to proclaim good news and freedom. God, we ask you to be with all those who are incarcerated today, for those living out sentences, and those awaiting trial or bail. Let your spirit of peace and comfort be upon them as they are some of your most vulnerable children.

Response: Gracious God, we pray for those who are incarcerated.

Leader: Father, we pray for the families of those who are incarcerated, that they would receive the care and attention they need, and have their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs met by other family members,

friends, church members, or someone else in our community. Lord, allow them to keep their hope alive that a family member behind bars is not forsaken or forgotten by God.

Response: Gracious God, we pray for those who are incarcerated and for their families.

Leader: Father, we pray that you will grant those behind bars your peace. Help them to know your presence in their lives and in the lives of their families, through faith in your Son, Jesus Christ, who is our peace.

Response: Gracious God, we pray for those incarcerated. Grant them peace.

Leader: Father, only You know the feelings and emotions of those who are incarcerated. We cannot know exactly what they are living through. Our world can be very dangerous, and perhaps this is true for these men and women who might be living in fear. Help them see that they can run to You, Father, for You are a Rock and a Shield for those who trust in You.

Response: Gracious God, we pray for those incarcerated. Protect them from danger.

Leader: Father, thank you for those who have trusted Jesus Christ for eternal life. Enable them to look to the future in the hope that is found in Him. Give them a desire to seek Him and help them live in the knowledge of your eternal home where all evil and suffering will be no more.

Response: Gracious God, we pray for those incarcerated. Give them hope.

Leader: Father, you determine the future and know that which is not yet. Help those men and women see that you have a purpose for where they are now, and to know that you can use anyone for your glory and for your purposes, including them. Help them know your grace – that they are valued, loved unconditionally, and pardoned without parole – through the redemption that you offer in Jesus. Help them fix their eyes on Him during their difficult journey behind bars.

Response: Gracious God, we pray for those incarcerated. May they know your purpose for their lives.

Leader: Finally, Father, we thank you for all those who work in our correctional facilities. Grant them peace and safety in their challenging work. Give them a genuine empathy for and sensitivity to the needs of the incarcerated entrusted to their care. We pray that they may carry out their important roles as a high calling, rather than a mere duty or obligation.

Response: Gracious God, we pray for the incarcerated and for those entrusted with their care.

Leader: Hear our prayer this day, as we celebrate your amazing grace available to all!

Response: Amen.

PRAYER REQUESTS

- Request 1
 - Pray for all new Christians in our prison, the wrongfully accused, and for a positive change towards God.

- Request 2
 - Pray for mother’s post-surgery recovery, sister’s family, home church, and for continual spiritual growth.
- Request 3
 - Pray for the family and upcoming court date.
- Request 4
 - Pray for the fire of the Holy Spirit would burn a little brighter every single day as I grow in my faith in Jesus Christ, that God will become the central focus of my family so that we may find the strength and grace to endure as an intact family during imprisonment.
- Request 5
 - Pray for my father and my siblings.
- Request 6
 - Pray for my children, grandson, ACPM, inmates and their families of Adams County.
- Request 7
 - Pray for my nephew, for my son to be safe and surrounded by believers, and for everyone in prison.
- Request 8
 - Pray for my baby’s health, my sister’s safety, and my father who has lung cancer again.

TESTIMONIALS

- Testimony #1
 - Many months ago, I was given a spiritual experience which left me with the absolute knowledge that “heaven is real.” Since this experience I began feverously studying my Bible and openly testifying to anyone that God puts in front of me. God has given me spiritual gifts and allowed me to begin using them. James 5:20 sums up what my work is for the rest of my life. The chaplain has answered many requests from supplying me with a prison Bible to arranging a confessional with Father Lyons. There have been several break throughs in our prison home. Without knowing, the chaplain has had a part in each and everyone of them. Please pray for each and everyone of us. God bless you all.
- Testimony #2
 - I loved going to Chaplain Perez for Bible study and worship. I hope it starts up again in the library. We got socks and a candy bar, a card at Christmas. Also, I filled out prayer requests for myself and my son because we were both in jail together.
- Testimony #3
 - I arrived in February. I was able to write requests slips to get books from the chaplain’s library. To date, I have been blessed to complete 3 books from this list. Having the books available when actually going to a church service is vital for me to stay and keep close to God, especially during these difficult times. I was also blessed with an awesome Bible from the library as well. Because of these resources I have been able to share God’s word with other inmates – many who are “just looking,” but know they have emptiness that drugs, alcohol, etc. can’t fill. I pray they realize only God and his word can fill that space with the Holy Spirit.
- Testimony #4
 - During a time of COVID restrictions, our chaplain and those who support him, have been a tremendous blessing to myself and other believers on my housing unit. Without church services, he has provided us with the devotional material to start and continue a successful

daily inmate fellowship. And because of him, we have still been able to access faith-based literature. Please know that all of you that provide so many blessings to us during this time of adversity are thought of fondly and are kept in our prayers. I extend our love to you in Christ Jesus our Lord and wish His many blessings upon you. Thank you.

SERMON TOPIC SUGGESTIONS

Topic 1: God's throne is one of grace and mercy

Key Scripture:

¹⁶ *Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need. Hebrews 4:16 (NIV)*

Mercy – Ελεος (Eleos) Compassion or forgiveness shown toward someone who is within one's power to punish or harm.

Grace – χάρις (charin) Free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinners and the bestowal of blessings.

The Gospel is good news of mercy to the undeserving. The symbol of the religion of Jesus is the cross, not the scales. - John Stott

"Through many dangers, toils and snares, I have already come; 'Tis grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home."- John Newton

The difference between mercy and grace? Mercy gave the prodigal son a second chance. Grace gave him a feast. - Max Lucado

The context of Heb 4:16 is that we all must give an account of our life. Nothing will be hidden from God in this account. Every choice, thought, and attitude of our heart will "be laid bare" (vs 13) before him. And all of us would be given a guilty verdict except for the atoning work of grace and mercy through Jesus Christ.

We will never begin to appreciate or grasp God's grace and mercy unless we are able to grasp how great our sin is. Even our righteousness is as filthy rags in light of the holiness designed for by God (Isaiah 64:6).

⁸ *For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God--⁹ not by works, so that no one can boast." Ephesians 2:8-9 (NIV)*

How may we know that we are rightly thankful? When we are careful to register God's mercy. Physicians say the memory is the first thing that decays; it is true in spirituals. - Thomas Watson

Topic 2: Being recipients of God's Mercy and Grace transforms us and bids us to do likewise

Key Scriptures:

³⁵ But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked. ³⁶ Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Luke 6:35-36 (NIV)

⁹ For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰ But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 1 Corinthians 15:9-10 (NIV)

Before his conversion (Acts 9:1-19), Paul was a persecutor of Christians. After his conversion, he was a transformed man who clearly understood the magnitude of the grace and mercy he had received. This understanding was met with determination (with God's help) to give much in return.

As God has freely (although it cost him dearly) extended grace and mercy to us, as his followers he bids us to go and do likewise (John 20:21), which includes offering this to inmates.

The most miserable prison in the world is the prison we make for ourselves when we refuse to show mercy. - Warren Wiersbe

Each day let us receive our daily "bread" of mercy and grace from above and let us give it out as generously and abundantly as the Lord has given to us! At His return, Jesus will recognize those who visited and had compassion on those incarcerated. Read Matthew 25:31-46. **Matthew 25:36 (NIV)** ³⁶ *I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'*

"Your worst days are never so bad that you are beyond the reach of God's grace. And your best days are never so good that you are beyond the need of God's grace."- Jerry Bridges

God's mercy to us is the motivation for showing mercy to others. Remember, you will never be asked to forgive someone else more than God has forgiven you. Rick Warren

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Hebrews 13:3 ESV

Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

Psalms 69:33 ESV

For the Lord hears the needy and does not despise his own people who are prisoners.

Matthew 25:35-46 ESV

For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' ...

Isaiah 61:1 ESV

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

Isaiah 42:7 ESV

To open the eyes that are blind, to bring out the prisoners from the dungeon, from the prison those who sit in darkness.

Psalms 146:7 ESV

Who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry. The Lord sets the prisoners free;

Psalms 102:20 ESV

To hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die,

Matthew 25:36 ESV

I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Luke 4:18 ESV

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,

Psalms 79:11 ESV

Let the groans of the prisoners come before you; according to your great power, preserve those doomed to die!

Genesis 39:20-23 ESV

And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison. But the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison. And the keeper of the prison put Joseph in charge of all the prisoners who were in the prison. Whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. The keeper of the prison paid no attention to anything that was in Joseph's charge, because the Lord was with him. And whatever he did, the Lord made it succeed.