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God on the Ground BY PASTOR JAY POUND

"He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature." (Hebrews 1:3)

During the Exodus, when the descendants of Jacob were brought out of Egypt, out of captivity and slavery, their God went with them and led them. As a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night, and God was with them. God's people witnessed His glory and power, a power that bent kings to His purposes and held back the waters of the sea. The Egyptians too saw His glory, saw that the combined powers of their Pharaoh, their armies and even their gods were nothing before the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Surely all who watched, all who journeyed, and even all those who pursued must have been filled with awe of the glory and power of God.

But whatever they saw, Moses saw more. Whatever glory was revealed to them, greater glory was shown to Moses. Deuteronomy 24 tells us that Moses was the greatest of the prophets, a man whom the Lord knew face to face, as a friend. He was unequalled in the many mighty deeds and acts of terrifying power that the Lord performed through him in the sight of all Israel and Egypt. Moses asked to see God's glory, and God granted his request, passing by Moses as he hid in the cleft of a rock. But even Moses, greatest of the prophets, friend of God, was only permitted to look upon the back of God's glory (Ex. 33:23). Still, for a very long time, it was more than anyone else could claim.

Until Christmas.

In some ways, I think we still find it hard to believe. When we think of God's glory, we still think of great pillars of fire, stretching into the star-strewn night. We still try to imagine the awe of those who watched a sea pull back before them to leave dry ground. We conjure images of a God with thunder in his footsteps and lightning in his fists. And surely all of this belongs to our God, all of it is a tributary to His glory. But impressive as it all is, as majestic and awesome as it is, as far as it is above and beyond any human ability, it is at best still only the "back" of God's glory.

Sometimes, we forget that by God's grace, we have seen more than Israel, more than the Pharaoh, more even than Moses. In Jesus, we have seen His glory unveiled, the glory as of a Father's only son (Jn. 1:14). In Jesus we have seen the clearest reflection of God's glory, "and the exact imprint of God's very being" (Hb. 1:3). Sometimes, we envy what Moses has seen and heard, but the truth is that Moses would have envied us. Moses saw the back of God's glory, which alone is more than enough for anyone, but we have seen the exact imprint of his being.

Our Christmas series this year is titled, "God on the Ground," and through this series we will be exploring the many ways that God has revealed *himself* in Jesus. Through Jesus we not only hear and learn, but see that God is life, God is Light, God is love and God is salvation. Join us this advent season as we look again at the glory of God revealed in the Son.



CALLING ALL K-6TH GRADERS!

We're looking for YOU to join in on our upcoming musical, "God of this City." Come find out how to "Live Out Loud"

and serve others in your city! We are looking to start rehearsals Wednesday, January 6th at 5:00 pm in the sanctuary with a performance in early March. Parents/Guardians are encouraged to come on January 6th. Rehearsals will take place on Wednesdays at 5:00 pm before clubs. Dinner will be provided for the first rehearsal on January 6th. We are also looking for a few youth to serve as leaders! Contact Kari Taylor for more details.

Operation Christmas Child



99 kids each packed a shoebox!

Thank you to all who donated items, money, and all who prayed for Operation Christmas Child.

We appreciate all those who sorted items and set up before the event and all the parents and grandparents who served at the packing party!

We had a fun time packing boxes and praying for the boys and girls around the world who will receive these gifts!



CURRENT SERMON SERIES: GOD ON THE GROUND

November 29
December 6
December 13
December 20
Christmas Eve
December 27

Jesus is God's Glory – John 1:14
Jesus is God's Love – 1 John 4:7-21
Jesus is God's Light – John 8:12; 1:4-8
Jesus is God's Life – 1 John 5:11-12
Jesus is Our Salvation – John 3:16-18
Grace on the Ground – 2 Corinthians 12:8-10; Hebrews 4:16

**OUR MISSION:
TO HELP
INDIVIDUALS
BECOME
CHRIST-CENTERED
& CHRIST-SENT
TOGETHER**

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SEE MORE INFO AT:
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We had the opportunity to catch up with Marlene Maloney, who headed up the Community Emergency Services Food Drive this Fall. Here is our conversation about living in community at First Free and talking about what the Food Drive looked like this year.



Steve, Marlene, & Kara Maloney

1. What made you want to head up the food drive?

The name of our small group is S.A.L.T., which stands for Serving And Learning Together. This sounded like a great service opportunity for our group. Steve and I had attended an outreach brunch last year at First Free, where we learned about CES and knew it was an important local ministry serving in South Minneapolis.

2. What have been the biggest challenges and the most exciting parts about heading up the CES food drive?

The only challenge was to learn how to publicize it and then follow through. Kowalski's generously donated bags, the congregation generously filled the bags and we just had to pack them into our van and deliver them.

3. Do you think the food drive reflects our values and our mission? If so, how?

Yes. FEFC's mission is to help individuals become Christ-centered and Christ-sent together. We are to live by faith and make the world a better place. Individuals are important to us and we are to love them and be a blessing. The food drive was a way for the church to show action and bless those less fortunate. This whole process was done together—in community—as His church.

4. How do you envision this growing or changing in the future?

I think that there are many other organizations that could benefit from a collaborative effort and that many of FEFC members would be again be willing to participate. I could also envision some of us would be willing to help sort food at CES on a regular basis.

5. How did your small group find each other/come together?

Our group came together through the Connections group that Pete and Erica Lehner hosted last fall. We enjoyed getting together and so we continued to meet twice a month for bible study. At the beginning of summer we decided to spend our time in the community looking for opportunities to serve together. We did a few activities and hope to continue to serve. We believe that we won't grow unless we live like Jesus lived and try to do what He did with people.

Community Emergency Services Thanksgiving Food Drive

Thank you all who donated goods for the Community Emergency Services Thanksgiving Food Drive! Overall, First Free gave a total of 1,063 pounds of food! Thank you all for your heart to serve those in the community and give to those who are in need!



This Month @ FIRST FREE

Last Night of Creekside Clubs & Student Ministry before Christmas Break — Wednesday, December 16 @ 6:30 pm

Wednesday, December 16 will be Creekside Clubs and Student Ministry's last night of meeting before the Christmas holiday and school break. There will be no Creekside Clubs or Student Ministry Wednesday, December 23 or December 30. Clubs and Student Ministry will resume on Wednesday, January 6.

Christmas Eve Gathering — Thursday, December 24 @ 3 & 4:30 pm

Join us in celebrating God coming to earth and dwelling among us at our annual Christmas Eve Gathering on Thursday, December 24th at 3:00 and 4:30 pm. Childcare will be provided.

Merry Christmas from First Free!

The church office will be closed Thursday, December 24 and Friday, December 25 in observance of the Christmas holiday. Normal office hours will resume on Monday, December 28th.

Office Closed — @ 12 pm December 31 & January 1 Due to the New Years Holiday

The church office will be closed at 12:00 pm on Thursday, December 31 and the entirety of Friday, January 1 due to the New Years holiday. Normal office hours will resume on Monday, January 4.

Upcoming in January: Connected Families @ First Free on Friday, January 29

Connected Families Workshop - coming Friday, January 29th from 6:30-8 pm - save the date! Come join us for an insightful and practical workshop on "Discipline that Connects." This workshop provides training in wise and biblical approaches to discipline that will help parents use discipline more effectively.

The cost will be \$10/person, or \$15 per couple. Watch the website for more information. See you there!

Dominican Republic Missions Trip This Coming April!

Do you have a heart to serve widows and orphans? A burning desire to serve with a team on a missions trip? If so, save the dates April 9-17 2016 to join a team returning to Constanza in the Dominican Republic! The opportunities to serve are great. Interact with kids in projects or sports, use Spanish to help translate, exercise your construction skills, or most importantly, bring a teachable spirit and a servant heart! Be thinking and praying now as commitments are needed as early as January 2016. Questions? Contact Julie Danielson at wjdaniels@usfamily.net or John Symington at jsymington@earthlink.net.

Church Family News

Congratulations to the families who had children dedicated on Sunday, November 8:

Jerome & Amy Borden dedicating Eva Grace Borden
David & Emily McCoy dedicating Rory Ann McCoy
Aaron & Olga Popkes dedicating Miles Popkes

Congratulations to Tchochovi Amavi and Pascal Dablaka on the birth of their daughter, Uriella Dablaka, who was born on Sunday, November 8th at 10:22 p.m.!

Our deepest condolences go out to Ralph Roberts and the family of Estella Roberts. Estella Roberts passed away on Saturday, November 14. Her funeral was held at First Free on Tuesday, November 17 and was buried at Fort Snelling.

Our deepest condolences go out to the family of Harry Whitehead. Harry Whitehead passed away on Tuesday, November 10th. His funeral was held at First Free on Thursday, November 19.