

**2003-11-9**

**It's Free, Isn't It? On Grace**

**Mark Belletini**

**Opening Words**

We are here

*to be aware of all that we are*

and all that we are not

*so that we are clear in our journey together*

both about what we might do

*and what we might refrain from doing.*

Amid the bronze trees of autumn we come together

*to praise, remember, envision, sing, reach, thank,*

and to say for our heart's sake this prayer:

**May we live fully, love deeply, learn daily, and speak  
truly, that we might together leave the sacred legacy of  
a better world.**

**Naming Ceremony**

**Mark** We are here to celebrate this child and his new young life.

And we also now celebrate the dedication of his parents, Kim and Tj -99 -18 TD

gladly and freely bless you as you grow into the style of your own



be there to be by your side as you face all the wonders of life. Your name is David.

Your name is Aaron. We think it comes from an ancient Egyptian word, meaning “the oracle of peace.” Your parents were flying through a war-



Each of us in this room is part of a circle within a circle  
within a circle. Family and friends, longer or shorter relationships,  
warm memories, joy woven with sorrow...

Our experiences of everyday living vary quite a lot,  
but choose one of these, or make up one of your own,  
and we will trace the movement into mystery that we have been  
describing here:

someone dies

you wake up feeling sick

the sunrise is gorgeous

you realize that you're gay

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However, no matter what their theology, or lack of it, everyone in Germany got an extra day off that weekend, a most gracious arrangement as far as I was concerned.

On Reformation Day all over Germany, the English film *Luther* was opening, to modest critical acclaim. I saw the film here in the states about a month ago. And although I thought it really romanticized the great Reformer Martin Luther a bit too much,

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Universalists. I assure you, they do, and I will make a case for maintaining this.

The whole idea about grace began with Saint Augustine's interpretation of the letters of Saint Paul. In these letters, the legal word "charis" (from which we get our word "charity") was used by Paul to refer to the courtroom word for "clemency" or "pardon." *Charis* also gives us our word charismatic, because a charismatic person is a gifted person. *Charis* basically means "a gift given freely and without restraint."

The Latin word for charis

help us to fight our inborn weakness and stem the tide of evil in the world.





And I often tell this story of St. Christopher's demotion to people who feel desperate, who feel that they have to do good all the time, or else. They often exhaust themselves into burn out or depression because, despite their work, the world remains a terrible place for many, and there is more to do than any one person, or even one church can do. Set the world down, I say. Put it down. Exhausted, guilt-

Personally, I think that both the traditional Protestant and the

these are the ways in which fate turns to grace, and the mystery of divinity is revealed to those who are open to it. This is a relational

## **Amazing Grace: A Prayer for the Present Age**

For all that is our life,  
struggles and triumphs,  
joys and sorrows,  
and sorrows,