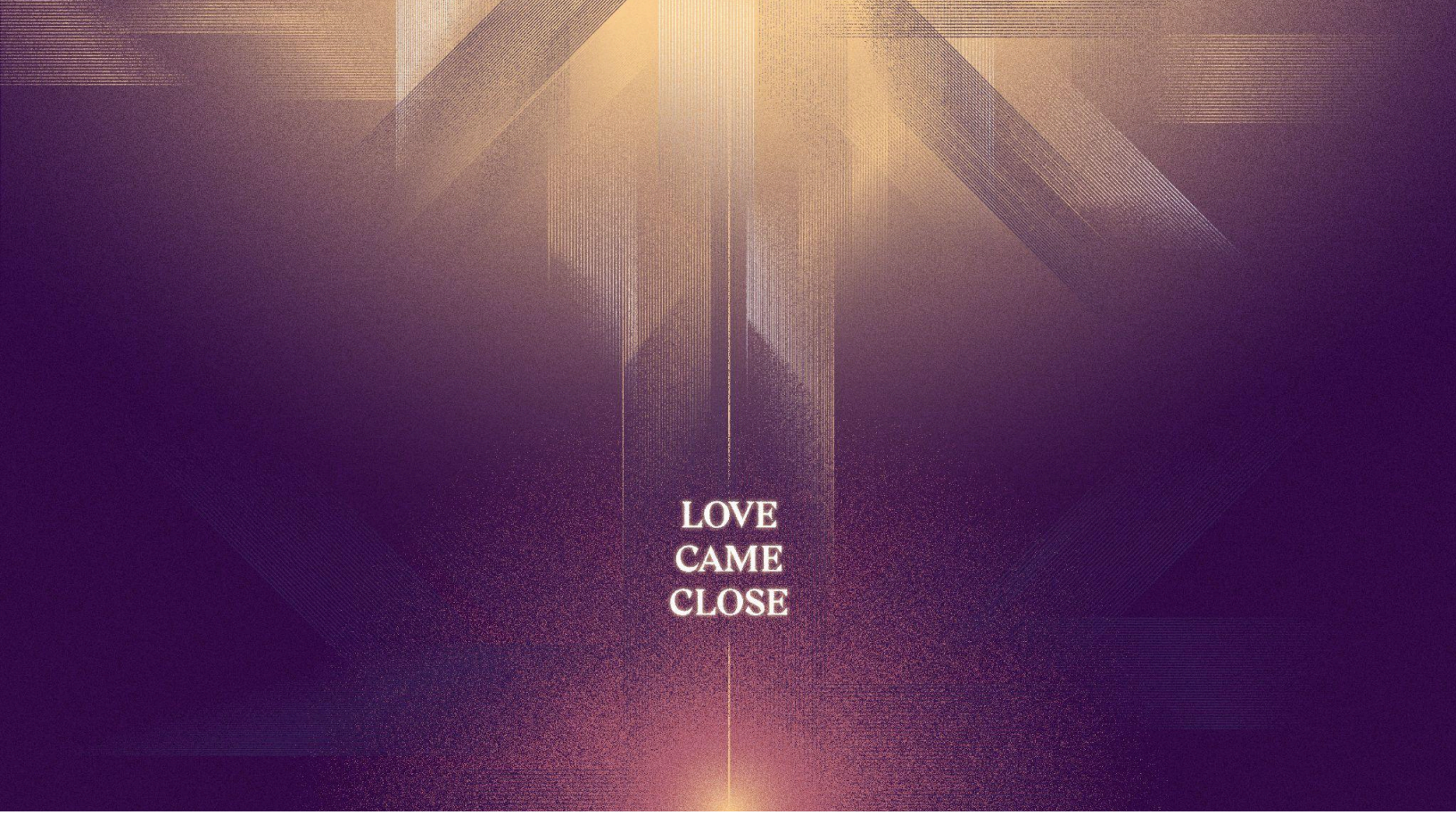


When Grace Draws Near
12.15.2024
Matthew 9:9-13 & Matthew 1:21
Dave Lomas

Matthew 9:9-13
As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' he told him, and Matthew got up and followed him. While Jesus was having dinner at Matthew's house, many tax collectors and sinners came and ate with him and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they asked his disciples, "Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" On hearing this, Jesus said, "It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Matthew 1:21
"She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

“The face in the sky. The child born in the night among beasts. The sweet breath and steaming dung of beasts. And nothing is ever the same again. Those who believe in God can never in a way be sure of him again. Once they have seen him in a stable, they can never be sure where he will appear or to what lengths he will go or to what ludicrous depths of self-humiliation he will descend in his wild pursuit of humankind. If holiness and the awful power and majesty of God were present in this least auspicious of all events, this birth of a peasant’s child, then there is no place or time so lowly and earthbound but that holiness can be present there too. And this means that we are never safe, that there is no place where we can hide from God, no place where we are safe from his power to break into and recreate the human heart, because it is just where he seems most helpless that he is most strong, and just where we least expect him that he comes most fully.”

- Frederick Buechner

Jesus reveals the only God humanity has ever heard of, who loves sinners.

Matthew 1:21
“…you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Luke 15:1
Now the tax collectors and sinners were all gathering around to hear Jesus. But the Pharisees and the teachers of the law muttered, “This man welcomes sinners and eats with them.”

“When it is a question of a sinner He does not merely stand still, open His arms and say, “Come hither”; no, He stands there and waits, as the father of the lost son waited, rather He does not stand and wait, He goes forth to seek, as the shepherd sought the lost sheep, as the woman sought the lost coin. He goes— yet no, He has gone, but infinitely farther than any shepherd or any woman, He went, in [truth], the infinitely long way from being God to becoming man, and that way He went in search of sinners.”

- Soren Kierkegaard, *Training in Christianity*

“Grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us more—no amount of spiritual calisthenics and renunciations, no amount of knowledge gained from seminaries and divinity schools, no amount of crusading on behalf of righteous causes. And grace means there is nothing we can do to make God love us less—no amount of racism or pride or pornography or adultery or even murder. Grace means that God already loves us as much as an infinite God can possibly love.”

- Philip Yancey, *What's So Amazing About Grace?*

Titus 3:3-7

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.