

*Based on Psalm 98:1  
Pentecost 23; Proper 28*

*Sing to the Lord a new song, \*  
for he has done marvelous things.*

**Psalm 98:1**

One of my favorite hymns is Amazing Grace, which as many may already know, was written by a man, John Newton, who had been involved in the Atlantic Slave trade and who later became an ardent advocate against the slave trade and in favor of abolition. After his conversion, Newton became a minister in England and wrote the words that we know as Amazing Grace as part of a sermon.

I have loved Amazing Grace, partly because it is just a beautiful song and partly because of Newton's story, but mostly because its words have always resonated with me. I have always felt them to be, in some way, *mine*. I've never been involved in anything as evil as slavery, but that doesn't mean I've never felt like a wretch or as someone who is without direction or purpose.

Like many who have encountered Jesus, that encounter shifted my whole life. Repent literally means to turn around, and in meeting Jesus, I repented, I turned away from one way of life and began another. And I what I find

most remarkable about Newton's story and in my own, is that it is utterly and completely UN-remarkable. It happens all the time! People are continually bumping into Jesus and being changed.

I can't imagine anything more marvelous than that God never gives up on us, that Jesus is always ready to meet us where we are and show us the path to abundant life. And what I've really come to appreciate since is that God's invitation to us not a "limited time" offer and nor is it a "once in a lifetime" offer. No matter how many times we stumble, stray, or fall short, Jesus' hand will still be outstretched to us offering a sure grip to hang on.

No matter how far we have strayed, no matter how deep we have fallen, no matter how wide the chasm between us and God; God will make every effort to rescue us and bring us home, safe, again.