

## “God’s Grace in Us”

Psalm 107:1-3, 17-22, Ephesians 2:1-10

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Christianity is all about the relationship between God and us. Our individual spiritual practices, public worship participations, intentional faith development opportunities and all outreach ministries are just ways to pursue our deep spiritual relationship with God. Christ Jesus came and died to restore our broken relationship. By His sacrificial act of love on the cross, that enabled us to make a fresh start with God. It was the way for our salvation. We call this “God’s Grace”. John Wesley and early Methodists asked their believers to live out the life of grace until we fulfill wholesome godly maturity. They called this process the way of salvation. It was a lifelong process. Grace is essential, basic to our Christian faith, but sometimes, very difficult to understand and apply to our daily living. *How can we live out the life of grace?* This morning, I invite us all to learn more about God’s Grace.

Let’s begin with important parts of today’s Scripture readings. From Psalms: they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He sent out his word and healed them; he rescued them from the grave. From Ephesians 2: for it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—<sup>9</sup> not by works, so that no one can boast. Both Scripture readings commonly describe God’s compassionate and loving act for His people. Apostle Paul interprets God’s compassion and His mercy as grace. We Christian people experience God in His grace. Then what is grace? The essential foundation of Christian faith is the assertion that we are saved by grace. Grace is something you can never get but can only be given. There’s nothing *you* have to do. There’s nothing you *have* to do. There’s nothing you have to *do*.<sup>1</sup>

When Billy Graham was driving through a small southern town, he was stopped by a policeman and charged with speeding. Graham admitted his guilt, but was told by the officer that he would have to appear in court. The judge asked, "Guilty, or not guilty?" When Graham pleaded guilty, the judge replied, "That'll be ten dollars -- a dollar for every mile you went over the limit." Suddenly the judge recognized the famous minister. "You have violated

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<sup>1</sup> An Excerpt from *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith* by Frederick Buechner

the law," he said. "The fine must be paid--but I am going to pay it for you." He took a ten dollar bill from his own wallet, attached it to the ticket, and then took Graham out and bought him a steak dinner! "That," said Billy Graham, "is how God treats repentant sinners!"<sup>2</sup>

I want to share my own personal reflection on grace. Last Friday, I led our Little Methodist School chapel. The lesson was that God is joy. I brought a balloon which had a smiley face on it and asked the children some questions: When we are happy, we smile. Then, where does that smile come from? The children shared their thoughts, saying a smile comes from the face. Others just pondered. And then I pulled down a smiley balloon that I was hiding from the sanctuary ceiling and showed it to our children. (Demonstration) Children laughed at it, smiled and we had such a fun time together. I wrapped up our time saying that all that God created comes from this joy. The thousands of beautiful sights on the earth, the millions of living creatures, and the beautiful stars in the night sky are echoes of God's joy. And when our hearts celebrate, we share in God's laughter and joy. After chapel, some questions still lingered in my mind: Was this too silly to imagine that when we smile, God smiles at us? Where *really* does my smile come from? Where does warm sunshine *really* come from? I reflected these questions seriously. All that we enjoy and celebrate, big and small things, in our life, we cannot claim as ours. I humbly realized that my smile, laughter, even the blessings of my family and church are wonderful gifts from God. Isn't this God's grace?

How can we find God's grace in us and around us? Frederick Buechner, a writer and theologian shares his wisdom, in his book, *Now and Then and Listening to Your Life*. He reminds us that if you really keep your eye peeled to stay aware of the power of grace, what will you see or feel? If you really pay attention to daily life such as taking your children to school and kissing your wife goodbye, eating lunch with a friend, trying to do a decent day's work and hearing the rain patter against the window. There is no event so commonplace but that God is present within it, always hidden, always leaving you room to recognize him or not to recognize him, but all the more fascinating, compelling and haunting. Listen to your life. See it for its mystery that it is. Touch, taste, smell your way to the holy and hidden heart of life because in the last analysis all moments are key moments, and life itself is grace.

Now I invite all of us to rethink Grace not merely as your faith statement, but as a sign of God's ongoing presence in your daily living. God is everywhere you are, and in the midst of our gatherings. Christian faith helps us to discover

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<sup>2</sup> *Progress Magazine*, December 14, 1992.

moments of God's grace in life together. Fredrick Buechner says, grace is God in his givenness. Faith is as in French words, *sui generis*, meaning it is hard to pin down. It is a response to the givenness of grace. Faith is given a glimpse of something, however, dimly. By grace we see what we see. To have faith is to respond to what we see by longing for it the rest of our days; by trying to live up to it and toward it through all the wonderful and terrible things; by breathing it in like air and growing strong on it; by looking to see it again and see it better. To lose faith is to stop looking.<sup>3</sup>

While we are continuing our Lenten journey in this special and holy season, why don't we try to find some signs of God's grace in our daily routines. I believe that a good sleep is grace and so are good dreams. Most tears are grace. The smell of rain is grace. Somebody loving you is grace.<sup>4</sup> Loving somebody is grace, too. However, have you ever *tried* to love somebody? I hope and pray that you will find more great opportunities to get closer to God during Lent discovering moments of God's grace that God has blessed in your life. Amen.

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<sup>3</sup> published in *Secrets in the Dark*

<sup>4</sup> An Excerpt from *Beyond Words: Daily Readings in the ABC's of Faith* by Frederick Buechner