

## Series Love Like Jesus

### #3: Be Grace-full

11/9/2018

In the first two weeks of this current sermon series on Learning to Love Like Jesus loved we discovered the two important principles of

1. **Noticing others:** looking at the world through the eyes, mind and heart of Jesus instead of merely being caught up in your own busy world. To approach each day with the view that God has a calling on your life for that day and this will likely mean showing His love to others that you run across. And God knows what every single person you'll encounter each day is struggling with – the pain and the joys in their lives. So, learn to notice.
2. **The second point was to be available to others.** You see it's one thing to notice the needs of others, but if you don't reach out then you can't really be used by God to show His love to them. This step is a bit more intrusive into our all ready busy lives. But it's what allows you to live God's agenda for your life rather than your agenda. Being available and possibly taking risks was the point of Jesus' parable about the Good Samaritan. The two people who walked by the injured man lying on the side of the road "noticed" the beaten up and robbed man lying on the side of the road, but they didn't want to get unclean and they were way too important and busy to stop and help him. It was only the Samaritan man, the man who was used to being ignored, who took the time to show God's love to this man. It could have been a trap and he could have been robbed and beaten up as well, but his compassionate heart trumped his cautious brain and he was used by God to minister to this man.

That brings us to our third aspect of learning to Love Like Jesus.

### **3. Showing Grace to others.**

#### **a. Treasure the grace God has lavished on you.**

**Ephesians 1:7-8 (NIV)** *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.*

That means that God didn't just give us enough grace to just get us by. He didn't just spray us with grace out of a garden hose. He pulled up a fire truck and doused us with grace. So, let God's grace wash over you and swim in God's grace that changed the equation of everything in your life.

Whether you realized it or not, at one point prior to you accepting Jesus Christ, you were separated from God because of your sins. Now God could have looked at from heaven and deemed you not worthy of His love and attention but that's not what He did. He instead left His place of honor and power and came down to pay the penalty for our many sins. And as amazing as that is, God did more. He then invited us to come into a right relationship with Him and when we accepted that invitation, God continued to douse us in His grace by giving His indwelling presence in the person of the Holy Spirit to enable us to live the Spirit charged life He's planned for us to live. To live a life that makes a difference in this world.

The **parable of the Prodigal Son** is an excellent illustration of God dousing us in His grace. When the son disgraced his father by demanding his inheritance early and then going off to a foreign land and losing it all, he caused great cultural shame upon his father. No doubt, during this time, his father was scorned and mocked for allowing his son to mock his father like this. And in the Jewish culture there was a ceremony called kezazah where, after a Jewish son went and wasted all of his money among the Gentiles, the Jewish officials would meet the son at the gate to the city and pronounce judgment upon him and expel him from the city. The prodigal's son no doubt knew this law, so when he caught sight of his son returning he quickly ran to him and embraced him and told the servants to go prepare an extravagant party to celebrate the return of his son. That's God's lavish grace. The son was hoping to maybe be hired back as a servant but the father would have none of that. He was ecstatic that his son

had returned and gave him a party. That's called grace and that's what each of you has been given when you accepted Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Let me refresh your memory.

- **Mercy is not getting something you deserve.** The prodigal deserved the father's judgment and expulsion.
- **Grace is receiving something you didn't deserve** You can all receive salvation and a restored relationship with your Heavenly Father because of Jesus Christ. And since you can't earn God's grace it means that you can't ever be good enough to receive it. You can't earn God's grace, otherwise it's a reward and not grace. And if you can earn it then Christ didn't need to die on a cross for your sins.

Daily treasuring and reflecting on God's grace lavished on YOU is an essential foundational step prior to you showing grace to others. Jesus shared an essential principle during the encounter with the "sinful woman" who anointed his body with expensive oil. He said, "whoever who has been forgiven little loves little. But if you realize how great is your Heavenly Father's love for you and grace lavished on you, then it should compel you to generously give grace to others as well.

**We can't give grace to others when we aren't receiving it ourselves.** And I'm not just talking about a piece of truth that you tuck back into the recesses of your mind along with everything else you try to remember. I'm talking about thinking about and treasuring the grace God has given you each and every day. And as your heart is filled with joy to overflowing, then others will be the beneficiaries of the overflow of God's grace through you.

This term for grace is used over 100 times in the New Testament, so it's something God wants us to pay attention to and put into action in our lives.

Now when we talk about God's grace within Christian circles we usually think about God's act of saving us from our sins and bringing us into a right relationship with Himself. And that's precisely what **Ephesians 2:8-9** refers to.

*"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."*

But God's grace is more than that. It's also God's **motivating and empowering presence** in our lives to live a God glorifying life each and every day.

#### **Motivating presence:**

**Titus 2:11-12 (NIV)** *For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age,"* In this context the realization of what God saved us from motivates us to live God honoring lives.

#### **Empowering presence:**

**Acts 4:32-34 (NIV)** *All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them.*

## **b. Live in the grace God has given you**

God's grace empowered them to live differently. They didn't see their money and possessions as something to be hoarded but it created a generous spirit within them and empowered them to give their money and possessions away to help meet the needs of others. And this generous spirit continued to cause nonbelievers to sit up and take notice and God used that to draw many into a right relationship with Himself.

The Apostle Paul experienced this empowering grace to transform his life at one point as well. He had been privileged by God to go up into the "third heaven" and see things that very few have the privilege of seeing. But God didn't want him to get haughty and proud over this so He gave Paul a "thorn in the flesh". We're not exactly sure what this was, but it caused Paul a great deal of discomfort. So, Paul asked the Lord to remove it and 3 times God said to Paul, "Nope – my grace is enough for you." So eventually Paul came to the conclusion and commitment that he would live with this thorn and not be grumpy and disheartened and mad at God but instead he chose to be joyful in the midst of this thorn because when he was weak, God's empowering grace to live each day demonstrated itself even stronger. And the same thing can be true in each of your lives as well. That when you're weak and discouraged by circumstances in your life, you can rely upon God's empowering grace to get you through each day and people may well be amazed at your internal strength and ask you about it and then you have a wide open door to be able to tell them that it's God's empowering grace that has become your daily strength and gets you through each and every day.

## **c. Freely treat others with God's grace**

- **Love your enemies, do good to them and lend them stuff freely.** (Luke 6:35-36) And Jesus caps it off by saying, "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*" Don't you just hate that when Jesus or Paul instructs to treat others with the same amount of mercy and forgiveness and love that Christ treated us. When it's brought to that level most of us would have to say, "God I need your empowering grace to live like that." You at that point you're right on. You see our relationship with God isn't intended to be just about escaping Hell and living forever in Heaven. It's about living like Jesus down here and as a result, catching people off guard and drawing them into a right relationship with God.
- **Pray for your enemies** (Mt 5:44-45). It's hard to hate someone when daily you're praying for them. And I don't mean the David prayer where he prayed for God to destroy his enemies. This is praying for God's many blessings to be upon them. And notice at the end Jesus throws in: "*that you may be children of your Father in heaven.*" Jesus is telling us, that's how God's children behave, because their Heavenly Father behaves that way.
- **Be strong for the weak** (Romans 15:1-3) The purpose is to build them up – to provide encouragement when someone is discouraged. And notice once again the caveat at the end – "*For even Christ did not please himself.*" It's a not so subtle reminder that if Jesus had only wanted to please Himself he would have never left heaven to come down and die on a cross for your sins. So, the next time you see a neighbor or co-worker or family member struggling and you don't feel like you want to be inconvenienced by providing encouragement to them – thank Jesus that he didn't approach us that same way.
- **Restore those who are sinning** (Galatians 6:1-2) Sins matter to God and should matter to us. But we're not to sit in judgment and condemnation on others, but rather treat them with God's love, grace and forgiveness with the purpose of redirecting them back into a right relationship with God. It says to "restore them gently". We often mistakenly think treating others with God's grace means we never confront but just always love them. It's true that we always need to love others, because God does, but sometimes the most loving thing you can do is to confront them and point out an area in their life that you're concerned about. But make sure your motives are pure. A person being confronted can tell the difference between someone who's confronting you out of judgment and condemnation and someone who is confronting them out of love and

grace. To the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus shared that he knew she'd been married 5 times previously and was now living with her boyfriend, but she didn't leave feeling condemned but loved and encouraged and rushed back to her town to excitedly invite all of them to come meet Jesus. The woman caught in adultery was told by Jesus to go home and quit sinning, but this was after he graciously saved her life rather than encouraging stoning her. I guarantee she went home that day not feeling condemned but feeling loved and grateful to still be alive.

- **Let your speech be filled with grace** (Colossians 4:6). What does that look like? You express a genuine interest in them, by asking questions, rather than simply talking about yourself. You don't convey condemnation over their lifestyle but love. You seek God's wisdom on how to offer words of encouragement.

There are many more ways that we can be dispensers of God's grace through our words and actions and we'll be digging deeper into that tomorrow night during our Life Group from 7-8:30pm right here.

Close the service by reciting together this verse that talks about the empowering grace of God working in my life. I've changed the words slightly to make it more personal and as a declaration of what can and will do in and through each of our lives this week.

***And God is able to make all grace abound to ME, so that in all things at all times, having all that I need, I will abound in every good work*** (2 Corinthians 9:8 (NIV))

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2. Be available and approachable to others
3. Showing God's grace to others
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**Grace**= receiving something you didn't deserve

We can't give grace to others when we aren't receiving it ourselves.

God's grace saves us and it's also a motivating & empowering presence. (Titus 2:11-12 & Acts 4:32-34)

- b. **Live in the grace God has given you.** (2 Cor. 12:1-10)
- c. **Freely treat others with God's grace**
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  - Pray for your enemies (Mt 5:44-45)
  - Be strong for the weak (Romans 15:1-3)
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**Application:**

What aspects of God's amazing grace do you treasure the most?

Would your friends say you're a "grace-filled" person? Why?

What changes need to happen for you to be a reflection of God's grace?

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**Life Group Study**

**Sermon follow-up:** any questions?

- Are there limits to offering grace to our enemies?
- What does it exactly mean to offer forgiveness?

What is “*grace*”?

Why is grace important?

1. In our relationship with God?
2. In our relationships with others?

How does John describe Jesus in John 1:14-18?

Why is it important for Jesus to have both qualities?

What is the role of grace in Titus 2:11-14?

How have you experienced this dynamic in your life?

Peter closes his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter with both a warning and an instruction.  
What is the warning in 2 Peter 3:17?

What is the instruction to counter that in 2 Peter 3:18?

How do you go about following that instruction practically?

God’s grace motivated the early church to give generously of their possessions to meet other’s needs (Acts 4:33-35). What has God’s grace motivated you to do?

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