

# Receiving Grace

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Date: 23 August 2020

Preacher: Kent Dixon

[ 0 : 00 ] Welcome to our online service for Sunday, August 23rd, 2020. My name is Kent Dixon. I'm the lead pastor of Braemar Baptist Church here in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada.

Welcome this morning to people from our church who are tuning in online, as well as others who may not know us yet, or who have maybe been watching over the past week. So welcome to everyone this morning who's joining us.

I also want to welcome people who are watching or listening down the road. Maybe not watching or listening live this morning, but checking it out on our Facebook page or elsewhere later on.

And so if you're tuning in this morning, or if you happen to be listening later, I encourage you to check us out on Facebook, Braemar Baptist Church, and like us and follow us to make sure that you're always up to date on new things that we post and when we go live with new sermons and messages and things like that.

So God bless you as you join us this morning. I'm so glad that you're with us. I'm glad that you're here. And I'm glad that we're in this environment together, that we're able to worship together in a virtual way.

[ 1 : 08 ] And so let's open in prayer this morning. Father God, you are with us this morning in whatever way we worship you, in whatever way we come before you, wherever we're at in our lives.

Lord, you love us just the way we are. You are always constant. You never change, Lord. And so in a time of constant change, we can rely on you to be constantly the same.

You are unchanging. You are eternal. And you are our Father. We love you for everything that you have given us, all the blessings and the ways that you grace us throughout our lives, with kindness and mercy and love and abundant, abundant provision.

And so, Lord, I pray that you bless each one that's tuning in this morning or listening. And I pray that you'd meet us all with our needs where we're at. And that the words of my mouth would be a blessing this morning as we preach and as we sing together as well.

Lord, I pray that all the words would be a blessing and the messages would be the ones that you have specifically for us today. And we pray all of these things in the name of your Son, Jesus Christ.

[ 2 : 18 ] Amen. Well, now we're going to sing two worship songs back to back. And we're going to be singing Holy, Holy, Holy, which will be familiar to many of you.

And Grace that is greater than our sin. Grace greater than our sin. And you'll be able to follow the lyrics on the screen and listen as well as the song leader performs that for us.

So, please enjoy this. Spend time in worshipping God through your voice. And so, may this be a blessing to you.

Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty.

God in three persons. Blessed Trinity. Early in the morning our song shall rise to thee.

[ 3 : 25 ] Holy, Holy, Holy, Holy. I will ■ such righteousness. Mercy forever, yes. Lord, HOA, have you absolutely speak to you.

And that when among you worship, amen. God in three persons. Blessed Trinity. This tune and truly is sure that I can sing.

Holy, holy, holy, though the darkness hide, though the eye of sinful man thy glory may not see, only thou art holy, there is none beside thee, perfect in power, love and purity.

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, all thy works shall praise thy name in earth and sky and sea.

Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty, God in three persons, blessed Trinity.

[ 5 : 36 ] Amen. All is grace of our loving Lord, grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt.

Yonder on Calvary's mount outpour, there where the blood of the Lamb was spilled.

Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that will pardon and cleanse within.

Grace, grace, God's grace, grace that is greater than all our sin.

Grace, grace, God's grace, grace, grace, grace, grace that is greater than all our sin.

[ 8 : 01 ] Grace, grace, grace, God's grace, marvelous, infinite, matchless grace, grace, freely bestowed on all who believe, you that are longing to see His face.

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Grace, grace, grace, God's grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace, grace that is greater than all our sin.

Grace, grace, grace, God's grace, Can you imagine that we've gotten all of that out of just two songs singing this morning?

And as we are continuing to explore the idea, the concept of God's grace in our sermon series, we've sung this morning about the grace of God. We've gotten a sense of what it means for those who recognize God, accept Jesus as the Lord of their lives and receive the gift of grace, because it truly is a gift.

[ 10 : 02 ] We started a new series last week and we're exploring the idea of grace. And do you remember we puzzled a bit over how to define that word, how to do it?

And we came up with a few ideas, I think. We talked about saying grace before meals. We talked about John Newton's well-known hymn, Amazing Grace.

And we also looked at some other ideas for understanding the concept of grace. We recognize that whether people see God or not, whether they acknowledge the existence of God or not, whether they've given their lives in service to him, in a way that's only made possible through the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we've recognized that grace is something that fundamentally resonates with people of every race and place around the world.

As I was reading and studying this week, I also recognized many other ways which the concept of grace or even the word itself pervades our language and many aspects of our daily lives.

The Spanish word gratia and the English word grace have the same origin in the Latin word gratus.

[ 11 : 25 ] Gratus has meanings such as pleasing or beloved or agreeable, favorable. Those are all meanings of the Latin word gratus.

And English words share the same root. They include agree, congratulate, disgrace, gratify.

Gratus is a word which we often use to mean free. Gratitude, gratiate, ingratiate, gratuitous.

Gratuitous, these are all words with grace as their root. And not all of these are positive words either we'd recognize. For example, to disgrace yourself isn't ideal.

And gratuitous has also come to mean excessive or unnecessary, such as when we might say that a movie or TV show has gratuitous violence, right?

[ 12 : 26 ] Excessive violence. So when you go out to eat, when you go out for a meal and you receive good service from someone, whether you are a non-tipper, shame on you, a medium tipper, or someone who gives generously, you are still giving what is considered a gratuity.

Do you recognize that? The concept of grace, see, pervades our language and it pervades our culture as well. But the concept of grace in its original form, in its purest form, in its most uncomplicated by humans form, is the grace of God.

That's where grace originates. The grace of God to us is a gift, as I said earlier. And we need to begin by recognizing that the act of gift giving really is a transaction.

Have you ever thought of that before? A gift requires someone to give, someone to give it, and someone else to receive it, right?

With that in mind, our sermon this morning is titled, Receiving Grace. God's grace is fundamentally different from any concept of human grace that we can imagine.

[ 13 : 49 ] And I hope that doesn't surprise you. The definition of God's grace that we considered last week told us that grace is about God's uncoerced initiative.

Do you remember that? Meaning that no one can force God's grace. It's about his uncoerced initiative and God's pervasive and extravagant demonstrations of care and favor towards us.

And as we also considered last week, God's grace to us includes a whole host of concepts. The provision and redemption through birth, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The only sacrifice that could restore us into relationship with God. That's part of his grace. God's amazing love and kindness towards us, beyond all measure.

That is grace. God's protection and provision for us in our daily lives. That's grace. And as I suggested, I believe we can settle on this simple definition for God's grace.

[15:01] Grace is God's favor and kindness towards us. Grace is God's favor and kindness towards us.

Grace is God's favor and kindness towards us. I have a question for you this morning. What is your perspective on life in terms of what you believe you deserve?

Is your perspective maybe one that sounds like, I'm a good person. I deserve to be treated well. I deserve to receive whatever I want, whatever I ask for.

Do you feel this morning, or have you felt in your life, that you deserve God's grace because you have somehow followed the rules?

Been a good person? We hear that often, whatever that means. Because you've gone to church semi-regularly. Because you've prayed when you remembered to do it.

[16:07] Or maybe you find yourself in a place right now where you don't believe, you don't feel in your heart that you deserve perhaps anything at all.

If you feel unlovable, irredeemable, like you've done more than God could ever possibly forgive, that you've turned away and don't deserve the right to come back home to God.

Maybe for the third or fourth time even. Or perhaps even for more times than you can count, you've turned away from God.

If that's you this morning, do you feel judged? Do you somehow feel accused? Or unworthy? Or perhaps even condemned?

Let me tell you a story this morning. It's found in the Bible in the book of John, chapter 8, verses 1 to 11. And I'll read that for us. Then each went to his own home.

[17:12] But Jesus went to the Mount of Olives. At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts where all the people gathered around him. And he sat down to teach them.

The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the law, Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now, what do you say? They were asking this question as a trap in order to have a basis for accusing him.

But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to cast, throw a stone at her.

Again, he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time. The older ones first until only Jesus was left with the woman still standing there.

[18:28] Jesus straightened up and asked her, Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you? No one, sir, she replied.

Then neither do I condemn you, Jesus declared. Go now and leave your life of sin. If you know this story, have you ever thought to yourself, What did Jesus write in the sand?

It's a question lots of people ask. And personally, I've always imagined that he surveyed those men who had brought the accusation, who brought the woman before him.

He surveyed them. He knew them intimately. And as he stooped down, I believe he wrote each of their names in the sand.

Along with a list of their most secret sins. That's what I believe. My friends, other people may judge you.

[19:36] And you may even judge yourself. But Jesus will always be the last one standing. And if you've committed your life to him, if you seek to follow him in your choices and in your life, Jesus will be the last one standing with you.

Let's turn to that idea of what we deserve. Or what we believe we deserve. What we think we may deserve. Do you really want to know what we actually deserve?

It's an honest question for you. Are you familiar with the concept of karma? Some people may say, Oh, my karma ran over your dogma.

Little philosophy joke. But for followers of Buddhism or Hinduism, karma suggests that ultimately we get what we deserve.

That over the course of multiple lives, lived through reincarnation, we accumulate the debt of the wrong things that we've done. And if your life is going wrong, or you're experiencing diversity or challenge, it's essentially your fault.

[ 20 : 58 ] But I suppose, thankfully, for those who believe in these ideas, karma and reincarnation suggest that you have the opportunity over future reincarnated lives to do good.

To get another chance. With the hope that eventually, hopefully, your good deeds will outweigh the bad ones. And in the end, you'll eventually reach your final reward.

It's an interesting philosophy, right? Reflecting back on your life so far this morning, then, if you were to pay your bill right now, solely based on your own merit, how would that work out for you? Do you imagine to yourself, well, I've probably done okay. I'm pretty sure I've checked enough boxes and God will give me a pass. Or perhaps do you even think that based on the forgiveness you've received when you accepted Jesus as the Lord of your life, even if you went on sinning from now until the day you die, even if you did that intentionally, things will still probably turn out okay in the end just by the law of averages?

The Apostle Paul addresses this very idea in his letter to the Romans. As he quotes from Psalm 14, verses 1 to 3, I'll read this for us again.

[ 22 : 33 ] There is no one righteous, not even one. There's no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away.

They have together been worthless. There's no one who does good, not even one. Their throats are, this is such powerful language, their throats are open graves.

Their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.

Ruin and misery mark their ways. And the way of peace, they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes.

Friends, Paul is emphasizing here that none of us are innocent. So that argument that, yeah, I'm a good person, it doesn't really hold up. None of us are innocent and we all deserve judgment for what we've done.

[ 23 : 42 ] For the selfish and deceitful choices we make. For the things that we do and say that hurt other people. And make no mistake, every person is valuable in God's eyes.

Because God created us in His image. And He deeply loves us. But as Paul says, as he quotes from the Psalms, no one is righteous.

That is, no one can stand before God on their own merit. It's just not possible. And though we're valuable, we have, without question, fallen into sin as humans.

And you know what? We've talked about this before in past series and sermons. That's our nature. We are sinful creatures. But we have a loving God.

God, through Jesus His Son, has redeemed us. And He offers to forgive us. If we turn to and return to Him in faith.

[ 24 : 50 ] So, friends, while we deserve judgment, we deserve death for our sin. Instead, through God's grace, when we turn or return to Him and confess our sin, we receive love.

We receive acceptance. And we receive eternal forgiveness. happiness. We get what we don't deserve through God's amazing grace.

Grace is not merit. Grace is mercy. Does that make sense? Grace is not merit.

It is mercy. Grace is the opposite of karma, which is all about getting what you deserve. Grace is getting what you don't deserve and not getting what you do deserve.

Does that make sense? Let me say that again. Grace is getting what you don't deserve and not getting what you do deserve.

[ 26 : 09 ] Christianity teaches us that what we deserve is death with no hope of resurrection.

And yet, God offers us grace that is greater than all our sin. All our sin could ever be. Grace is powerfully reflected in one of the names that we learn for God in the Bible.

Emmanuel. Emmanuel. Which means, I can't hear you say it, but I hope you are. Emmanuel. God with us.

Our God is not removed or aloof or disinterested. He's not angry and vengeful towards us as we might deserve.

But God is loving, forgiving, eternally patient, and fully engaged.

[ 27 : 15 ] As writer John Stott says, grace is God loving, God stooping, God coming to the rescue, God giving himself generously in and through Jesus Christ, his son.

God's grace and all that it means for us is freely given to us. It's a gift. And true grace, my friends, is only given by God.

And it's manifested, as we've touched on, so dramatically in the death, resurrection, and living example of Jesus Christ.

One of the concepts that we began with this morning is that idea of giving and receiving of a gift being a transaction. So I want us to recognize a few things as we close this morning.

God wants to give his grace to us. He wants to do that. But are we willing? Are we prepared to receive it?

[ 28 : 31 ] And you may be thinking at this point, but Pastor Kent, didn't you say that grace is free? That there's nothing that we can do to earn it or even begin to be worthy of it?

Well, yes, that is true. But can you also recognize that to receive a gift, we need to have open hands?

The posture of receiving a gift means that we need to come without an existing arm load of expectations, of baggage, entitlement, or bitterness.

forgiveness. I need to confess something to you this morning. I can be a difficult person to get a gift for.

And Michelle will agree. Over my life, I can recognize that that's, that has been because I've come with expectations. There's stuff that I want.

[ 29 : 33 ] and conversely, there's stuff that I really don't want. But the older I get, the more I become even more challenging, I believe, as a gift E.

Because I'm more content. I'm finding that as I get older, I'm not so much striving for things and stuff. More and more, I find that relationship and shared experiences, those are the greatest gifts, the most moving gifts that I can receive.

Can you relate to that? Memories and love are great gifts. And over time, I recognize in myself that I've been seeking to develop what I've called an attitude of gratitude.

An attitude of gratitude. And I believe that that's what God is calling each of us to develop in our lives. Particularly as we reflect on the fact that He has called us to be His children.

And that through the sacrifice of Jesus, our sins are forgiven. So as you reflect on God's grace towards you, look for it.

[ 30 : 57 ] Recognize it in the many wonderful and often unexpected ways it shows up. And thank Him for it. Friends, God's grace truly is amazing.

so I encourage us to step into it. Trust in the God who gives that grace freely. And share the good news of that grace giving God with everyone you meet.

With everyone you say you care for in your life. as we close our service this morning, we're going to listen to the doxology and you can certainly sing along with it at home.

The words and music will be playing. So we're going to do that now. So please just reflect on these words and the singing of the doxology now.

praise God from him all blessings flow praise him all creatures here below praise him above ye heavenly host praise father son that's holy gold praise god from him blessings flow praise him all creatures here below praise him above the heavenly host praise father son man that's holy gold praise god from whom blessings flow praise him all creatures here below praise him all creatures here below praise him above ye heavenly host praise father son that's holy ghost i hope that was a blessing to you as you reflect on what it means to be blessed by god what it means to be a recipient of his grace my friends look for god's grace this week and humbly and gratefully receive it go in peace and have a great week God bless you