

In His Image: Merciful & Gracious

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Preacher: Kent Dixon

[0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to our online service for Sunday, November 8th. It's good to see everyone this morning. I've been reflecting this week that it's still so odd for me to preach in person in a church and have interaction with people face-to-face in a congregation setting in a building and then also to preach online. Very different experiences, different for you at home, particularly if you're used to worshiping in a church and being present in a church building and now you're at home.

But also different for pastors around the world who are either only online or doing a combination as I am. So interesting times indeed and they continue to be but God is good and God is still with us in all of this. So we can we can take comfort in that.

Rest in the peace of knowing that God is in control and God remains in control. Well, it's good to have you here this morning and in whatever way that looks if you're joining me here live this morning or if you're tuning in later in the week as many people do.

My name is Kent Dixon and I'm the lead pastor of Raymar Baptist Church in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. Well, I don't know about you, but if you live in a part of the world where daylight saving is observed and you've set your clocks back a week ago, I am.

I always think that in the fall it'll be better because I'm actually gaining an hour of sleep, but it's not that way. Maybe I'm just getting old. But the reality is I'm finding I'm tired and so if you're if you're feeling tired, we're in it together this morning.

[1 : 40] So welcome and let's let's have some comfort and peace in in worshiping God together this morning. I'll be leading us in communion this morning.

So as we've done before, if you'll we'll be doing that a bit later. So if you'll go ahead and gather whatever you have handy, a glass of water, a glass of juice, something like that, and a cracker or a small piece of bread and have those items handy.

That'll be helpful when we celebrate communion together later. So now let's join together in singing three worship songs this morning. We're going to be singing Tis So Sweet and Grace Greater Than Our Sin and To God Be The Glory.

So again, Tis So Sweet, Grace Greater Than Our Sin and To God Be The Glory. And as always, we have the worship leader. You'll hear him singing and you'll also see the lyrics on the screen.

So God bless you as you worship God and as you hear the messages of these these great hymns, these great old hymns of our faith. God bless you as you worship.

[2 : 54] God bless you as you worship.

Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him. How I prove to him more and more.

Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus. Oh, for grace to trust him more.

Oh, how sweet to trust in Jesus, just to trust his cleansing blood.

And in simple faith to plunge me beneath the healing, cleansing flood.

[4 : 11] Jesus, Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him. Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him. How I prove to him more and more.

Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus. Oh, for grace to trust him more.

Jesus, precious Jesus. Jesus, precious Jesus. Jesus, precious Jesus. Jesus, precious Jesus.

Jesus, precious Jesus. Yes, tis sweet to trust in Jesus.

Just from sin and self to cease. Just from Jesus. Just from Jesus. Just from Jesus. Just from Jesus.

Simply taking life and rest and joy and peace.

Jesus, precious Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, how I trust him.

[5 : 20] How I prove to him more and more. Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus.

Oh, for grace to trust him more. Not from Jesus.

Jesus, precious Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus. Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus. Oh, for grace to trust him more.

Oh, for grace to trust him more. Oh, for ways to trust Him more All is grace of our loving Lord Grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured There where the blood of the Lamb was spilled Grace, grace, God's grace

Grace that will pardon and cleanse with Him Grace, grace, God's grace Grace that is greater than all our sin Dark is the stain that we cannot hide What can avail to wash it away Look, there is flowing a crimson tide Wider than snow you may be today Grace, grace, God's grace

[8 : 00] Grace that will pardon and cleanse with Him Grace, grace, God's grace Grace, grace, God's grace Grace that is greater than all our sin Grace, grace, grace, God's grace Grace, grace, God's grace Grace, grace, grace, God's grace Grace, grace, grace, God's grace Grace, grace, grace, God's grace Grace that will pardon and cleanse with Him Grace, grace, grace, God's grace

Grace, grace, grace, grace Grace, grace, grace, grace Grace that is greater than all our sin To God be the glory Great things He had done So loved He the world That He gave us His Son Who yielded His life Atonement for sin And opened the life gate

That all may go in Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the earth hear His voice Praise the Lord, praise the Lord Let the people rejoice O come to the Father Through Jesus His Son And give Him the glory Great things He had done O perfect redemption The purchase of blood To every believer The promise of God The promise of God The promise of God Who truly believes That moment from Jesus

A pardon and receive Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the earth hear His voice Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Praise the Lord Let the people rejoice O come to the Father Through Jesus His Son And give Him the glory Great things He had done Well, welcome back from singing.

I hope the words of those songs were powerful and meaningful and impacted you this morning. Let's pray. Father God, thank you for the opportunity to come together in this way to recognize you as our Father to recognize you as the creator of all things the creator of everything around us the provider of all that we have and all that we need.

[12 : 09] Father, we thank you that you are in control and you remain in control of our circumstances in our own lives as well as the circumstances in the world around us. Lord, you have a plan and we can take comfort in the fact that not only are you in control of that plan and it will play out but ultimately you're in control of the circumstances of our lives as well and we can trust in that and take comfort in that.

So, thank you Lord that you are with us this morning in this place in this way. We bring you all the glory and praise for who you are this morning and every morning Lord.

As we reflect this morning on some more of your qualities Lord we just look to look to learn more about you reveal yourself to us in new ways this morning.

I pray that we would learn more that we would deepen our understanding and that you would bless us as we do that. We pray these things in the name of your son Jesus Christ Amen.

Well, that's the thing about technical difficulties sometimes you can maybe hear a phone ringing in the background and that's just reality so let's continue. Well, if you tuned in last week I hope you enjoyed the presentation and sermon from Dennis Sherman and Dennis is the Western Canadian Regional Representative for Canadian Baptist Ministries that's the ministry arm of our denomination.

[13 : 38] It was good to have Dennis with us in that way in that video to share an update of the work that they're doing for the Kingdom of God through Canadian Baptist Ministries and the missions individuals who are working around the world so I hope you're encouraged by that and learn some new things.

Well, this morning we're picking up again in our sermon series called In His Image Reflecting God and so let's begin with a quick refresher because two weeks ago can feel like a month or a year depending on if it's 2020.

So we've been recognizing that as human beings we've been created in the image of God and as the Bible says we are in His image and an important aspect of this idea of being created in God's image is the fact that we exhibit many qualities and attributes that we can also see in God Himself.

Perhaps you remember that that's what we've been looking at. So here's that test again. Do you remember what these attributes or qualities are called? The characteristics, attributes, qualities of God that we can somehow reflect as well.

Anyone? Any guesses? Well these attributes or qualities are called God's communicable attributes. And in our most recent sermon in this series on October 25th we consider that God is good and God is just.

[15:06] And as we explored that idea of goodness we came to recognize that God's goodness scale do you remember that? we looked at we measure things on a scale of goodness in our lives and yet God's goodness scale is far more vast than a human one.

Far less fickle. Far less variable in terms of what God considers to be good and not good. And far less bland, right?

We looked at the fact that the word good in the English language is considered eh, it's average. Yeah, it was good. It wasn't bad. It wasn't great. But God's good God's sense of goodness is so much different than ours.

We also recognize that while goodness or choosing to do good can be a personal choice you know I'm going to do this or I'm not going to do this it's actually our calling as the people of God.

We're called to not be people who stand by. We're not we're called to step in for people who can't speak for themselves who can't care for themselves. We're called to be Jesus to others.

[16:15] We're called to be good to do good because our Father the one who created us is good. And while we also recognize that in his righteousness God is ultimately the only impartial judge who will bring justice.

justice. And God will only bring justice to the degree to which the offense requires. You may remember that we considered human justice. Human justice can often be punishment to the extreme.

Punishment above and beyond what is required. But in his sovereignty God is really the only one who truly has the right to judge humanity.

Remember his sovereignty means that God has rulership over creation. We bow to him as our creator and as our king. And you might also remember that we reflected on the words of Micah 6.8 and that passage identifies our calling as it relates to justice.

And that passage Micah 6.8 says He has showed you O man what is good and what does the Lord require of you to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.

[17:35] This verse I think provides the perfect transition into our sermon this morning because we're going to be looking at two new communicable qualities of God.

We're going to consider this morning that God is merciful and God is gracious. So last time we looked at justice and we talked about justice being about judgment, right?

That's our understanding of what justice means. And it inherently reflects an idea of paying for something, right? But more than that it reflects I believe a sense of somehow restoring balance, doesn't it?

Someone who has stolen something must give it back or compensate for the loss somehow. Someone whose lies have hurt or affected other people are called to take responsibility for what they have said and speak the truth.

Someone who has taken a life must serve a penalty that while likely never sufficient to those who have lost someone who are mourning the loss of a person, the penalty needs to suggest that accountability is at least being sought.

[18:52] There is a payment for the damage that was done. So I believe that when we seek justice in a situation as humans, particularly when it relates to us personally, we may be looking not just for retribution but perhaps for another R word, revenge.

Right? Does that seem fair? We're looking for revenge because we don't merely want the balance to be restored but perhaps we want the scale to be tipped in our favor.

As God's people we are called to act justly. So are we acting justly when we seek the most severe punishment possible for someone who has hurt us?

it's worth thinking about. We're also called to love mercy. Is that a tough concept for you?

Tough to wrap your head around? If we want someone to pay for what they've done, sometimes we may even want them to pay with interest, right?

[20 : 03] How does our calling to be merciful, our calling by God to be merciful, how does it fit into a perspective of retribution or revenge?

Friends, do you recognize that justice, true justice, God's justice, simply doesn't exist without mercy?

Mercy exists as a check on a sense of justice that is vengeful, justice that seeks primarily to punish. Mercy suggests love.

It suggests forgiveness. Mercy suggests that the price that may otherwise have been due by the one who committed the crime has been paid.

Have you ever thought about the connection between justice, mercy, and then grace? Well, if you take nothing else away this morning, hear these words, justice is getting what we deserve.

[21 : 14] Mercy is not getting what we deserve. And grace is getting what we do not deserve.

Justice is getting what we deserve. Mercy is not getting what we deserve. And grace takes it a step further in that we get what we do not deserve.

Friends, do you recognize the ways in which you've chosen your own paths and desires over God's desires and paths for you? Do you recognize the ways in which you've sought to fill the emptiness, the loneliness, selfishness, the selfishness that you might be experiencing in your life with things other than God?

Well, friends, that's sin. And as we have explored together many times over the past weeks and months, God hates sin.

Scripture talks about that over and over and over again. But we can take comfort in the fact that God is also faithful towards us. And as Lamentations 3, verses 22 and 23 remind us, because of the Lord's great love, we are not consumed, for his compassion will never fail.

[22 : 49] His compassions never fail. They are new every morning. Great is your faithfulness. And as that great hymn says, great is your faithfulness, great is thy faithfulness.

Oh God, my Father. It really personalizes that. Do you remember in our last series that we reflected on God's omniscience, those incommunicable characteristics of God, but God being omniscient, God knows everything.

So those things that your deepest, darkest things that you've never told anyone about, your secret guilt and shame, God knows those things.

Do you regularly recognize your sinful actions and behaviors and ask God to forgive them? Do you do that? I encourage you to start.

I encourage you to try. I encourage you to ask God for the strength to open your heart to him because as I said, he already knows. The Bible tells us in Proverbs 28 verse 13, he who conceals his sin does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.

[24 : 16] The Bible also says in Psalm 51 verse 1, Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love, according to your great compassion, blot out my transgressions.

So recognizing that a fundamental aspect of God's character is mercy, while we deserve judgment for our sin, there's no question, God offers us mercy.

But in that mercy, as we ask for forgiveness, we are called to be people who repent. We need to recognize our bad choices and make a conscious decision to do differently, to choose differently.

Zechariah 7, the book of Zechariah chapter 7 verses 8 to 10 states it for us plainly. Confession releases God's mercy, but refusing to repent invites his judgment.

Friends, our confession, our repentance, unlocks, leads directly into God's mercy.

[25 : 41] Do you remember what we recognized a moment ago? Getting what we deserve is called what? Justice.

Not getting what we deserve then is called mercy. And getting what we do not deserve, friends, is called grace.

In Psalm 119 verse 156, the Bible reminds us of the critical connection between the laws of God and his mercy.

As we read there, your compassion is great, O Lord. Preserve my life according to your laws. Throughout the Bible, God has laid out his laws for his people to lead us, to lead us into deeper relationship with him, to lead us to salvation, to lead us on the paths of righteousness for his namesake, as the saying says.

Psalm 148 verse, sorry, 145 verse 8 reminds us the Lord is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, and rich in love.

[27 : 05] friends, God hates your sin, he hates my sin, but he loves us more than we can ever imagine. He wants relationship with us more than we can ever comprehend.

God's mercy and forgiveness mean getting what we do not deserve by the grace of God. So knowing that we don't deserve God's mercy or God's grace, knowing that we could never afford those gifts, let's recognize some important things this morning.

God's mercy is something we so desperately need. May we recognize God's grace in our daily forgiveness. forgiveness.

God's mercy is something that we definitely don't deserve because we are guilty, but by grace we have been saved.

God's grace. God's mercy is a free gift that we could never afford, made possible only through the grace of the price paid by the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

[28 : 26] the words of the book of Titus chapter 2 verses 11 to 14 express this so powerfully for us. For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.

It teaches us to say no to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in this present age while we wait for the blessed hope, the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness, and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.

God. My friends, the mercy of God made possible through his grace is yours to receive when you confess your sin to God and repent of your old sinful habits.

And when you ask him, God will give you the strength to resist sinful temptation in your life. life. I promise you that. God will answer.

This morning, as we celebrate communion together, we remember this sacrifice of Jesus, this price that we could never pay, the price that was paid so that we can receive God's grace, we can receive God's mercy, mercy, and so that we can be forgiven and restored in relationship with our merciful and gracious God.

[30 : 23] When we remember the sacrifice of Jesus, broken and damaged and dismembered aspects of our past lives are put together again.

Mind, body, and soul in the present tense enjoy wholeness. and helplessness in the face of the unknown future gives way to resurrection hope.

As we prepare to celebrate communion together this morning, this is a good time for you to gather your water, your juice, your bread, or crackers to have those handy. And I'll begin with these words of approach.

We gather at this table to celebrate life, the life of God in the world. made flesh and blood in Jesus, embodied in us.

We come to remember the body that was broken, the hands that touched the untouchable, healed the hurting and did no violence, the feet that got dusty along city streets and at the lake's shore, the arms that welcomed the stranger and embraced the outcast, the legs that entered homes and synagogues and danced at celebrations, the eyes that blazed at injustice, knew how to cry and saw the potential in everyone, the belly that shared table with unexpected people and shook with laughter, the lips that wove stories and painted pictures of a new community and a better world, this blessed body that was broken, abused, and rejected.

[32 : 06] We come to remember, for we are called, friends, to be the body of Christ. As you, as you risen Christ, remember our lives, so we remember you.

And not only at this table, but in our lives together, may we embody your kingdom and remember your life in the world. Now I'll share some words of thanksgiving.

Let's pray. O God, we give thanks for this bread and cup, a timeless reminder of the flesh and blood life of Jesus, broken, rejected, yet unstoppable.

In Christ, we see a life that could not be ended by death, a purpose that could not be silenced by the forces of violence, a desire deep within you for the transformation of the world.

As we eat the bread and drink the cup, Father, we thank you for the acceptance and tenderness with which you have transformed our shame into dignity and loved us into life.

[33 : 21] We thank you for cherishing the potential in us and for calling us to be partners in your vision for this world. As we eat the bread and drink the cup, we call on your spirit to come alongside us so that together, in the company of your spirit, we may give ourselves afresh to the task of remembering you, of being the body of Christ, of living your life in this world.

Amen. Now, if you could please gather your bread or crackers. This broken bread that we share is the body of Christ.

Christ, it is the sign of all that we live and risk together as the community of Christ. Let all who seek Christ take and eat.

And if you could please gather your juice or water. This cup that we drink together is the wine of the kingdom of God, the sign of God's undertaking for the life of the world.

Let all who seek Christ take and drink. Let's pray. We've taken the bread and the cup into our bodies.

[34 : 43] Now, may these hands be the hands of Christ in the world. May they do no violence. May these eyes see those who are overlooked.

May these ears listen to those who are unheard. may these voices be raised for the voiceless, lest our songs of praise be empty.

May these feet take us where Christ leads, and may these hearts and minds be open to your spirit. Christ has remembered us.

May we remember Christ. Amen. Well, on Communion Sundays in our church, we receive a benevolent offering that's used to help folks in the community who need a helping hand.

And the reality of that looks different now, certainly as we meet online. But I encourage you to continue to send offerings to the church because we use those resources that God has given us to do good, to do his work in the world, and to make a difference.

[35 : 52] I also encourage you to look for other opportunities to show kindness, to show mercy, to show grace to other people, especially during this challenging time.

Friends, our benediction this morning comes from Hebrews 13, verses 20 and 21. May the God of peace, who through the blood of the eternal covenant brought back from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, may he equip you with everything good for doing his will, and may he work in us what is pleasing to him, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever.

Amen. my friends, go in peace and the knowledge of God's mercy and grace that are available to you through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

God bless you and have a great week.