

Enjoy God's Kindness

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0:00] Our sermon passage for today, Ephesians chapter 2, verses 4 through 7. Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

The word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God. Please be seated. The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of the Lord stands forever.

Let's pray. Amen. O loving God, God of rich mercy and kindness, please blow the Holy Spirit on your people, on all that you will give an ear to hear.

And your word as it goes forth does not return to you void, but it brings forth the fruit that you ordain. We trust that you will do this, Lord.

We pray that your Holy Spirit will cause us to behold even now in our midst through the ministry of the word, Jesus Christ lifted up, exalted, glorified.

[1:51] Putting on display the kindness of God to us. We ask this for your glory alone, Lord. Amen. Amen. Amen. One of the joys of belonging to a family, and I'm thinking of you all, a spiritual family, a church, is being able to express the love that God has put in us one to another.

It's the kindness of God put into his people that we get to express in a lot of different ways. Some of you express this kindness by serving one another. Many times I'll look around after a fellowship meal and there's this servants wiping down the tables, throwing away trash from one another. Others of you will spend maybe more than 24 hours preparing a piece of meat just right in order to bring it in and share it with everyone. And that's an expression of your kindness or bread that you prepared from every step of the way.

And just to watch one another enjoy that together. Isn't that just such a blessing? Well, our chief end as human beings is to glorify and enjoy God.

To enjoy God is what we're created for. Let that simple truth sink in for just a moment. And really, as we walk through this passage, my sermon is an invitation for the moments ahead to enjoy God together.

[3:31] And specifically, enjoy the kindness of God. Would you look at our sermon passage? This is how verse 7 tells us.

It's all headed to this. Look at verse 7. That in the ages to come, God might show the exceeding riches of his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For the ages to come. This is God's delight. It's that you as people would enjoy his kindness. So let's start that now. Let's practice it.

The sermon title is that invitation, that encouragement, that exhortation. Enjoy God's kindness. As we walk through this passage, there are three areas of focus for us to appreciate the kindness of God and enjoy him together.

The first one is this. Number one. Marvel at God's kindness above the darkness of your sins. Marvel at God's kindness above the darkness of your sins.

[4:39] The other day, one of my children pointed out to me as we were about to just go in and, you know, keep kind of get through the evening and do everything we need to do. Just how that night for a few different reasons, the stars seem to really sparkle.

And if you think about those nights where you've been able to look up in the sky, when is it that the stars shine the brightest? It's when the contrast is most great. It's when there aren't clouds that are capturing some light that's reflected off the moon into the clouds to blur it and decrease the contrast.

And it's when the moon is is dark and it's hidden away. And then in the darkness of the night, you can just see that star piercing through. And this is what our glorious passage here does for us, isn't

it?

It's the darkness of death. Against which as a backdrop, now the light of the gospel shines in Jesus Christ.

Marvel at God's kindness above the darkness of your sins. Chapter two, verse one. Put your finger there. I'll remind you that you and I.

[5:52] We're dead in our trespasses in sins. And now look at verse four, our sermon passage for today. It starts with these exact words.

But God, God didn't leave you and me dead in our sins. We should have stayed dead toward God forever, lost in utter darkness without any knowledge of God's kindness.

But God sent Christ who joyfully took God's justice. The punishment we deserve in our place.

God made us alive together with Christ. And Jesus Christ put on his people his righteousness. Look at verse two, chapter two, verse two.

You and I once walked according to the course of this world. Well, now our passage tells us, but God didn't leave you and me to float to hell on that lazy river.

[6:53] We would have drifted like like that dead fish to our own perdition. But God saved us by his amazing grace. Chapter two, verse two says you and I were slaves to disobedience by the evil power of Satan, the prince of the air that was working in us.

We deserve to stay abandoned there as sons of disobedience under the dominion of the devil on earth. But God, our passage tells us, God raised us up above all of this together with Christ.

Chapter two, verse three told us that you and I were addicted to the lusts of our bodies, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. But God didn't leave us wallowing in that filth, eating that pig slop.

That's what we deserve. But God made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, cleaned by his very own precious blood.

Chapter two, verse three tells us that you and I were by nature children of wrath. A tiger can't change its stripes. You and I can't change our nature.

[8:12] And we were by nature children of God's wrath because we are in our sin and trespasses. We deserve misery in this life and God's eternal judgment in the life to come.

But God instead shows us the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Some of our favorite, most cherished hymns and songs and spiritual songs capture these truths and sing them back, don't they? What riches of kindness God lavished on us?

His blood was the payment. His life was the cost. We stood neath a debt we could never afford. Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more.

Praise the Lord. His mercy is more. Stronger than darkness. New every morn. Our sins, they are many. But God's mercy is more.

[9:18] Amen. Now look back at chapter 1, verse 18. This is what Paul is praying for the church. He prays that you may know what is the hope of Christ's calling.

What is the hope of Christ's calling? Dear Christian, he's praying for you. And as we pray through the scripture, we're praying for one another, for those who already belong to God, who are alive in him.

Jesus calls the dead to rise. And for you who have heard the shepherd's voice, he prays that you may know the hope of this calling.

This calling of the shepherd doesn't stop. He keeps calling you. And that same powerful call that quickened us to receive Christ, to follow him, continues to call us forward in Christ.

Here's what our confession of faith says about this calling. This effectual call. And we define that term real quickly. So the call is the shepherd calling you by name.

[10:28] Follow me. And effectual means what he commands, it happens. He calls you and you come. This effectual call flows from God's free and special grace alone, not from anything at all foreseen in those called.

Neither does the call arise from any power or action on their part. They are totally passive in it. They are dead in sins and trespasses until they are made alive and renewed by the Holy Spirit.

That's exactly what this passage teaches. The confession goes on to say, by this they are enabled to answer this call and to embrace the grace offered and conveyed in it.

This response is enabled by a power also from this passage that is no less than that which raised Christ from the dead.

This is the power of the effectual call that brought you from death to life, from being abandoned and far away to belonging to him, from being a lamb that has wandered away and drifted into the thorns and is about to be devoured to now being at the feet of the shepherd following him.

[11:49] Dear friends that are here today. If you have not repented and trusted in Jesus Christ. Then this glorious promise is not yours yet.

This is not your present reality. You are still currently by nature a child deserving God's justice. God's wrath against your sin and mine outside of Christ. But the same God offers you abundant mercy today. If you go to him.

You will only go to him if he calls you and if he calls you, you will go to him. Why is that? Why is it that God calls children of wrath, slaves to disobedience, to himself and love?

Why does he do this? Look at the rest of verse four. Because God is rich in mercy. Because of his great love with which he loved us.

[12:57] See, this is all from God. This is God's nature. I'm reminded of how this glorious truth is reinforced throughout all of the scriptures.

But it's not put on its fullest display until we have Jesus Christ. But rich in mercy. This is God. Full of loving kindness toward his people.

To pour out grace to undeserving sinners. It's who God is. This is our God. He is loving kindness. God is steadfast love.

God is covenant faithfulness. He is rich in mercy. This is our God. Just he says, look to Christ for proof.

This is what all the scriptures prove. In Jesus, you will see this richness of God. That word rich means abundant, overflowing, full of, plentiful.

[14:03] He's rich in mercy. That word mercy is compassion, loving kindness or faithful care. That's God.

Rich in this. God is an infinite storehouse of mercy. This word mercy is likely Paul's Greek version of that more ancient Hebrew word, hesed.

Which is God's unfailing covenant keeping kindness or loyal love. Think of the Old Testament reinforcing this attribute of God.

God is full of this type of compassion. It's what we read in Exodus 34, 6. The Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abounding in goodness and truth.

God's mercy is overflowing. Psalm 103, 8 and 11 tell us that the Lord is merciful and gracious. The Lord is slow to anger and abounding in mercy.

[15:10] For as the heavens are high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward those who fear him. God's faithful care abounds. Lamentations 3, 22 and 23.

I love when we sing this scripture. The steadfast love of the Lord never fails. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning.

Great is his faithfulness. God never runs out of loving kindness. This is our God. What patience would wait as we constantly roam.

What father so tender is calling us home. He welcomes the weakest, the vilest, the poor. Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more.

Hear his call. Walk to him. Follow him. Praise the Lord. His mercy is more. Stronger than darkness. New every morn.

[16:17] Our sins, they are many. His mercy is more. Marvel at God's kindness above the darkness of your sin and enjoy God's kindness.

Here's the second focus for us to enjoy God's kindness together. Number two, rest in God's kindness secured entirely by Christ.

You can rest in God's kindness because it doesn't depend on you. It's secured completely already in Christ Jesus. Look at verse five.

The passage continues. Ephesians 2, 5. Even when we were dead in trespasses. See, the verses up to this point have emphasized how dead we were.

Nothing has changed. When we were that dead, God acted. We were acted upon.

[17:18] The three verbs that follow are God's action. Upon dead, perished, condemned sinners. Now, to describe what God does, to describe his great kindness in these three verbs, Paul uses

words that are not found anywhere else.

Most likely, he had to put some Greek roots and prefixes or suffixes together to convey a meaning. It's like the existing words weren't enough.

This glorious truth is too much for any normal words to carry them forward. And the three verbs are these. Enlivened together with.

Raised together with. And enthroned together with. That's all one word. Each of those verbs is one word. To describe God's kindness.

Number one, God made us alive together with Christ. That's what God did. He quickened the dead along with Christ.

[18 : 30] He brought to life. Those who were necros along with Christ. He gave life. To those who had no life in themselves.

Along with Christ. He imparted this to us. And then he has a small note that he'll come back to in a moment. He says, by grace, you have been saved.

The way that God. Regenerated the way that God breathed life into safe centers to lost. Sinners to make them saved in Christ was purely of his kindness.

His grace. It was his favor to those who are ill deserving. And the tense of the verbs is interesting. He says, by grace, you have been saved.

God has already done this. He's already made you whole. You're already rescued. You have already been delivered. Secured. And these three verbs to make us alive together with Christ.

[19 : 35] And next he says, to raise us up together with Christ. All of these, they convey the meaning that this is something that has happened in the past tense. But it has ongoing and permanent results.

That's why you can rest in God's kindness. Because this is already true. It's already secured for you. Not because of anything in you, but entirely by your union to Jesus Christ.

He made you alive together with Christ. Verse 6 goes on. He raised us up together with Christ.

Word for word, it's he resurrected us or raised us up with Christ.

He brought us up. It's a word that's used when you're going to wake someone up from their sleep. Or to lift up a thing and put it where you want it to be. It means being pulled completely out of the graveyard of your old life.

Raised up out of that. With Christ. To be made alive. To be raised up.

[20 : 42] It takes us back to the promise we read in the Gospel of John. How Lazarus didn't just stay sick. He truly died.

Was buried. And he stinketh. And our Lord Jesus Christ wept. He's full of kindness, compassion, favor to the ill-deserving.

And our Lord Jesus Christ calls in to that tomb. Where there's a corpse decaying. To the point that the flesh is literally rotting off the bones and smelling bad.

The gases are bloating inside. The ears, the brain. Nothing works for this corpse to hear the voice. And Jesus Christ says, Lazarus, you dead man.

Come forth. It's the effectual call of the Savior. Over a dead corpse. And Jesus already told them why this was happening. It's so that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, may be glorified.

[21 : 52] It's so that churches like ours, over 2,000 years later, can read this passage in John. And think about your own experience of this. I was Lazarus.

And Jesus called me. And said, come to me. Lazarus wanted to come to God. He wanted to come to Christ to that most beautiful, most sweet, most compassionate voice.

That a moment ago was weeping. Out of love. And Lazarus came forth. It's the same voice of the Creator that spoke over darkness and said, let there be light.

And there was light. Rise from the dead. And the dead rise. Live.

And we live. Follow me. Jesus calls to you. And we follow. In God's appointed and accepted time, our confession celebrates.

[23 : 02] God is pleased to call effectually by his word and spirit those he has predestined to life. He calls them out of their natural state of sin and death to grace and salvation by Jesus Christ.

He enlightens their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the things of God. He takes away their heart of stone and gives them a heart of flesh.

He renews their wills and by his almighty power turns them to good and effectually draws them to Jesus Christ. Yet he does all this in such a way that they come completely freely since they are

made willing by his grace.

Lazarus actually stood up and Lazarus actually walked to Jesus with his own legs because God did it all. When you and I are saved, it's for the same reason.

God did it all. Yet I actually walked to him. Yet not I, but Christ in me together with Christ. And verse six goes on.

[24 : 13] Here's the third verb. He made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. It's all one word in the original. Enthroned us together with.

That's a verb. Paul just made it up. He enthroned us together with Christ in the heavenly places. Seated us. Granted us seats of honor.

Caused us to be there spiritually. In union with Jesus Christ in the realm of the holy God himself. Look back at chapter one, verse 20.

These three verbs. Made alive. Raised. Seated. Christ is the forerunner. Look at chapter one, verse 20.

It's what Christ has already done. Says which God worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

[25 : 14] The same language echoed now back as a promise to the church. We have to pause and remind ourselves again. How could I be joined with Christ in that way?

Have you looked at my life in the last 24 hours? How can a holy God seat a former child of wrath next to him in glory?

It's because Jesus Christ took your place in mine on the cross. He bore the punishment we deserve so that you might be united to him.

In his resurrection and ascension and session at the right hand of God. Our spiritual life is bound up in his life.

You and I are not in God's presence by our own standing whatsoever and never apart from Christ. We are only there because Jesus Christ is our our head, our covenant.

[26 : 16] Remember, he gave Christ to be head over all things to the church. We belong to him. We're his body. So how could we not be with him? Our spiritual life and all of our spiritual privileges in Christ are legal realities now already because of our union to Jesus Christ, our federal representative head.

Romans 6 5 takes takes the first truth. Who someone in Bible study pointed out, it's like dominoes all lined up. When Adam fell, every other domino can't get itself out of the way.

We all fell. Now, the glorious truth in Romans 6 is that in Adam, we all die. And if you're in Christ, you live. The same principle cuts both both ways.

Remember, he gave Christ as head. And what's true of Christ, the head will be true for his body. We belong to him. So we are truly seated with Christ.

We have a standing that's a union with him that's more than just legal or positional. It's an organic spiritual bond that we share by the Holy Spirit dwelling in us.

[27 : 36] And this word for being seated with Christ as Christians, this has to change the way we think about ourselves. It has to increase our enjoyment of God's kindness.

The word here is cathizo. Cathizo. It's the root for the word cathedral, which in the Roman system was the seat of authority. So it means we are co-seated or jointly enthroned, ruling with authority with Christ spiritually already.

In this Ephesian city, a Roman ruled city, it would be the emperor or the civil magistrate that would sit in this chair like their imperial throne on behalf of the Roman Empire.

And from there, they would sign laws, exercise their exercise, the sovereignty of the Roman Empire over every area that they conquered and declare their judgments. So these Roman elites would be sitting on these thrones ruling and the wealthy people of each city they conquered would try to buy a seat closer to that ruler.

And Paul is taking that imagery and that practice and he's saying, look, church. You are penniless. You are ill deserving.

[28 : 54] But you can bypass that whole system of this world. Christ has done it all for you. And you are already seated, enthroned in the place of honor.

He is ruling over all. All things are under his feet and you are with him. He's saying, Christian, look where you sit with Christ already. Why would you chase after any of these other seats in this world?

Your identity is not defined by anything other than your place before God with Christ. It's not defined by our past failures.

It's not defined by our present fears. You are seated with Christ, enthroned with him. And as we learn to enjoy his kindness and how secure we are in Christ, it will change our lives.

We sing this as well. Oh, how great thy loving kindness, vaster, broader than the sea. Oh, how marvelous thy goodness lavished all on me.

[30:06] Yes, I rest in thee, beloved. Know what wealth of grace is thine. Know thy certainty of promise and have made it mine. Jesus, I am resting, resting.

In the joy of what thou art, I am finding out the greatness of thy loving heart. So rest in God's kindness secured entirely by Christ.

Well, the third and final focus for our appreciation of God's kindness today is this. Number three. Anticipate God's kindness displayed for all eternity.

Anticipate. Look forward to God's kindness that will be displayed, showcased, demonstrated for all eternity.

Look at verse seven. God has done this to us as church that in the ages to come, he might show.

[31:10] That he might display. That he might exhibit. That he might make known the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

I love how he started talking about the riches of God's mercy. And now in verse seven, he talks about the exceeding riches of God's grace in his kindness toward us in Christ.

And that word exceeding, the exceeding riches of his grace. It means to throw something beyond the target.

It means to surpass all measurement. See, you can't measure the riches of God's grace. If you thought you were the target of God's grace, it's it hits you, but it washes way beyond you.

God's grace, his loving kindness. It's like a tsunami. It's going to bury his people way exceedingly beyond. What we could ever put to words.

[32:19] Surpassing, immeasurable, extraordinary, boundless kindness. And he talks about God's kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.

Oh, this word has been a joy to discover. It means goodness, gentleness, benevolence, favor and charity. And this is what God wants to display and demonstrate for the ages to come.

For the approaching time and all future epochs for all eternity. He wants to show the exceeding riches of his grace.

There's going to be a commentator put it. There will be an ongoing sequence of ages where God will continuously display the exceeding wealth of his grace.

For ages and ages to come for all eternity. God's kindness will be the thing we focus on and celebrate. And this is why we focus now.

[33:24] We start by practicing for all eternity. The word kindness, it comes from a root that means useful, beneficial or wholesome.

This type of kindness is active. It's tender and it's a gracious disposition that bends toward others to meet genuine needs.

It signifies benevolence in motion. A tangible goodness that seeks the ultimate well-being of the recipient. It's the kindness of God that woos, that keeps calling you to him, that preserves you in him.

And that heals you as you stay close to him. This is the kindness of God that washes over his people now and will be on display for all eternity. Now listen to this.

That root of this word kindness in the original Greek by God's providence is *krestos*. It sounds like the word Christ, the Messiah sent to all the nations through the Jewish people.

[34:32] The Messiah, the anointed one. And I believe that's what Paul is emphasizing, almost like a play on words. It's to put on display the *krestos* of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

I think he says the same theme. Listen for the common words, making it very clear in Titus 3, 4.

The love of God, our Savior, toward man appeared. God saved us in Christ. This is our God. He is loving kindness. He is steadfast love. He is covenant faithfulness. And God never runs out of his kindness.

In this world, we get empty quick, don't we? We get parched. We get dry. Many of you in these months that we haven't had too much snow on the ground yet.

[36:03] We find ourselves outdoors, you know, maybe walking or some of you hiking. Some of you doing even dangerous things on the mountains. But you know that here in Colorado, you have to bring water along with you.

You have to have water. And then you have to ration yourself so you don't run out of water. What if something goes wrong? What if you're two hours longer than you expected and everybody's very thirsty?

Then your muscles start cramping. So you only can drink the water that you carry. And you only want to carry as much as you'll drink. So you're always going to have barely enough water. Your lips are chapped. We're always thirsty here in Colorado. Now imagine that same experience, but there's an endless supply of spring water.

Maybe that's the hike you're taking. It's along this beautiful, pristine, perfectly pure. You don't even need a life straw. It's just pure spring water. You can drink. And it's just the right temperature.

[37:01] You have as much of it as you could ever want. You can enjoy drinking from it again and again and again and again. You don't live in scarcity. You live in the overabundance of it.

So often my thoughts to confess my sin to you, my thoughts of God are thoughts of God being scarce toward me. And thoughts of God's kindness toward me running out.

And this passage has had to correct me. I need to rest in the abundance, the overabundance of God's kindness toward me, toward his people in Jesus Christ.

And trust his kindness will never run out. We drink of it now. And we anticipate his kindness being on display, fully available.

Come and drink. If you don't have any money to buy it, come and drink of Christ for all eternity. So, church, that's the simple encouragement for right now, for the rest of today and this week.

[38:09] Enjoy it. Enjoy God's kindness toward you in Christ. Drink up his kindness. It will never run out for you.

Enjoy his rich, loving, overflowing, steadfast love and covenant faithfulness. His abundance kindness for you in Jesus Christ. Drink it up.

Enjoy it today in preparation for the ages to come. As we sing, even once we've been there 10,000 years, bright, shining as the stars or the sun.

We've no less days to sing God's praise than when we first begun. Amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

I once was lost, but now am found. Was blind, but now I see. Let's pray. Lord, we praise you for your great kindness.

[39:15] I pray that your people can know your kindness, Father, like never before and grow into it. Rest in it. And that you'll stir us up, Lord, to long for more and more of your kindness in Christ.

Now and for ages to come. For your glory we ask. Amen.