

# Blinded By Your Grace - 20th November 2022

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Preacher: Dave Moss

[ 0 : 00 ] Good morning. We're looking at Grace this morning. We've got Advent coming up next week and we've finished another series, so this is just a little stopgap in the middle sort of thing.

So thank you Ian and also thank you to Cathy for our Cantonese wording this morning because there's rather a lot of it. Um goi Cathy, um goi. She's out there is she? It'll be on the recording. I'll tell her personally afterwards. We have quite a few videos too, so you'll be pleased to know there's less from me this morning. So I hope you've got your popcorn ready because we've got three little videos, so there you go. Right. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen. We say this very often, don't we? And it's usually at the end of things, so that's it. Okay. Actually this verse is really special and we do say it often and it's usually a blessing as I say that we send, say at the end of a gathering either as church service or any gathering of Christians or a prayer meeting. But what do we really mean when we say grace be with you all? Here's our Bible passage from Matthew.

For the kingdom of heaven is like a landowner who went out early in the morning to hire workers for his vineyard. He agreed to pay them a denarius for the day and sent them into his vineyard.

[ 1 : 44 ] About nine in the morning, he went out and saw others standing in the marketplace doing nothing.

He told them, you also go and work in my vineyard and I will pay you whatever is right. So they went. He went out again about noon and about three in the afternoon and did the same thing. About five in the afternoon, he went out and found still others standing around. He asked them, why have you been standing here all day long doing nothing?

Because no one has hired us, they answered. He said to them, you also go and work in my vineyard. When evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, call the workers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last ones hired and going on to the first.

The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more.

[ 3 : 05 ] But each one of them also received a denarius. When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. These who were hired last worked only one hour, they said, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.

But he answered one of them, I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn't you agree to work for a denarius? Take your pay and go.

I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. Don't I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?

So the last will be first, and the first will be last. For years, I've understood this parable, this story from Jesus, on one level only.

Namely, that God is very generous and welcomes all who call on his name to heaven. It doesn't matter if you made that decision when you were young, or indeed if it was last minute, like the people do here, when you're old, perhaps even on your deathbed.

[ 4 : 26 ] Because whenever you make this commitment, God forgives you and lets you in. So all's good. The reward is the same for everyone.

There are no favourites. We're all treated the same and are valued the same no matter what we've done. We can't earn our way into God's kingdom for he's generous to all of us.

And while all of this is true, there's a lot more to it than that. There's a lot more to it than that. So in verse 16, Jesus teaches, the last shall be first, and the first will be last.

Jesus went out of his way to spend time with who he would regard to be, you know, not any good at all.

Went out of his way to spend his time to be with tax collectors, prostitutes, rough fishermen, and the general dregs of society. The no-hopers and the don't-stand-a-chance mate people.

[ 5 : 40 ] What on earth was he doing hanging out with such people? What on earth was he doing? This is our God, the God of compassion, who forgives all who turn to him.

He calls everyone, no matter what they've done or where they come from, and he calls them all to belong and to be part of his kingdom. He is lavish and over-generous in giving out his rewards and sharing his kingdom.

I'm going to repeat that. He's lavish and over-generous in giving out his rewards and sharing his kingdom. No matter who we are, we always make a mess of our lives somewhere along the line. And no matter how hard we try, we can't earn brownie points to work our way into God's kingdom. Many people, many, many people base their lives on earning points to gain status. That's how our society works. Earn points, gain status. Status is everything, they believe. But we, we are invited by God, justified by God through his love, compassion, forgiveness, to belong to his kingdom.

[ 7 : 15 ] This is God's lavish, foolish, unfathomable grace. It is by his grace alone that we can live any kind of worthwhile life.

He calls us from the mess we're in to be the person he has created us to be. See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God.

See to it that no one misses out. That's what we're asked to do on God's grace. Well, how do we do this? Grace is a word rarely heard of outside Christian circles.

We may describe someone as being gracious, but even that's rare, to be honest. And we may say grace at mealtimes. And again, that's quite rare too these days.

But why? Why? Is it that our society has lost its understanding of grace? Do we not know what it really means anymore?

[ 8 : 24 ] Is it just sort of put there on the sidelines? Have we become immune to the idea that grace even exists? Perhaps that is why our understanding of a loving God is so limited.

Because we don't truly understand the idea of grace, let alone experience it for ourselves. We fail to see how it is applied to others too.

Does God really accept that person? Warts and all? How can God be that lavish? How can God be that loving?

How can God be that compassionate? I've had some good news this week. Here it is. Five things actually.

Dave, you have won a one-hour supermarket trolley dash at Marks & Spencer's to collect all those Christmas treats for free. It's going to be good, isn't it?

[ 9 : 24 ] You've won a two-week Mediterranean cruise with unlimited meals, drinks, champagne and chocolate. You've also won a car courtesy of Rolls-Royce.

You've won a holiday home on the Greek island of Crete. And you've won the 10 million lottery prize. Yay! In these scenarios, there's no need for God's grace.

We see these things as real blessings, don't we? Because they're going to provide for our many needs. We don't see anything wrong with them. We think they're great. And this is what we often look for.

If only I had that prize. If only I had that car, that cruise or whatever it is. If only. This is the underlying message in our society of what life is all about.

But as you know, these things are frequently empty and not always what they seem. So, that supermarket dash.

[ 10 : 33 ] Well, there's no free groceries here. If the stores close down. And I think the only drink really you're going to get here on the Costa Concordia is seawater.

Okay. And we didn't say what condition the Rolls-Royce was in, did we? We didn't really say what condition it's in.

And there's your holiday home. I hope you're good at DIY. It is a house in Crete, honestly. And, yeah.

10 million. What? Zimbabwe dollars. 20p a dollar. It's not. We're heading that way, aren't we, here? Inflation or whatever you are will certainly be worth that.

So, money's not what it used to be, is it? And we rapidly seem to be going, as I say, the same way. But let's suppose all this was phrased a little differently.

[ 11 : 40 ] Just imagine that this good news wasn't just for me. Right? Just imagine that. I know it's difficult, you know. But just imagine that this good news was for everyone.

Yeah? I know it sounds outrageous. But supposing the good news was for everyone. Yes, everyone. Everyone here this morning. Everyone outside this building. Everyone out there. Just imagine good news for everyone. So, good news, everyone. You are forgiven. Everything you have ever messed up on is now forgotten. God offers so much more through his grace. But do we believe it? Good news, everyone. God listens to you. Jesus loves you. And the Holy Spirit prays for you. God offers so much more through his grace.

[ 12 : 44 ] But do you believe it? Good news, everyone. You already have a place especially made for you in God's kingdom. It's already there.

It belongs to you and no one else. God offers so much more through his grace. But do you believe it?

Good news, everyone. God will help and guide you always. Because God offers so much more through his grace.

But do you believe it? Good news, everyone. God will give you all his love unconditionally. Unconditionally. Unconditionally. Because God offers so much more through his grace. But do you believe it? I think we must be bonkers.

[ 13 : 44 ] Because we very often just gloss over these things. Fortunately, God is patient and waits for us to realize what his grace really is.

Today, God is continually calling all sorts of people from different places and backgrounds to work out his purposes.

Continually doing this. And we can often be amazed at whom God has called. And we think, what, him? Huh? Are they really Christian?

We're often amazed at who he calls. What does she think she's doing? Yeah? That kind of thing. But he answered one of them, I'm not being unfair to you, friend.

Don't you agree to work for a denarius? God gives us what he promises. He doesn't let us down at the end of the day.

[ 14 : 50 ] He gives us what he promises. Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who has hired the last the same as I gave you.

Don't you have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous? Others often get upset at God's generosity.

Why is God forgiving them? How can they be in his kingdom? And some people, because of that, get really upset and actually reject him because of it. Well, you know, obviously I'm better than they are.

So they don't want to know. So the last will be first. And the first will be last. The grateful are always better off than the grumblers.

The grateful are always better off than the grumblers. I don't know if you've seen it, but this year's John Lewis Christmas advert is not really an advert at all.

[ 15 : 57 ] It's rather a campaign, a tug at the heart, a call for compassion, an example of grace at work.

See what you think. Yeah, we can't wait.

We got in peace. We're really excited. Merry Christmas. You're okay.

Yeah, I'm fine. You're right. Best trip. Always. I know. You'll be at my show.

Watching. Waiting. How did it go? Yep. Nailed it. Nailed it. Say it ain't so. I will not go.

[ 17 : 05 ] Turn the lights off. Carry me home. Hey, Ellie.

Hi. Oh, yeah. I'd skate a bit too. You want to come in?

Wow, it's cool. It's not as good as yours, I don't think. Oh, well, I just had a few stickers, that's all. I'm going to get some stickers for you.

God just wants to hear from you, to be your best friend, to spend time with you. To spend time with you so that you can enjoy and understand more of his abundant grace.

By being here together, by belonging together, by acknowledging together that we're flawed and imperfect, that we can't make it on our own, then we too as a community will learn more of his grace as we're restored and forgiven.

[ 18 : 24 ] Not because we deserve it. Not because we deserve it, but precisely because we know we don't. If we look carefully and more carefully again, we find ourselves blinded by his grace.

God just wants to hear from you, to be your best friend, to spend time with you so that you can enjoy and understand more of his abundant grace.

And again, by being here together, by belonging together, by acknowledging together that we're flawed and imperfect, that we can't make it on our own, then we too as a community will learn more of his grace as we're restored and forgiven.

Not because we deserve it, but precisely because we know we don't. And if we do take the time to look carefully and more carefully again, we find ourselves blinded by his grace.

May our prayer be that each day we continue to be blinded by his grace. To finish, I thought I'd get trendy.

[ 19 : 55 ] So if you don't know who Stormzy is, you need to get with it. Okay. This is a beautiful clip. And see what you think. All right, you're going to roll with me today.

You've got lovely hair, isn't it? Big hair. You got big hair. Kara front and center. Is that your little sister over there? You've got sisters over there? Oh, my God.

You can roll with me. You can roll with me. Go, go, go. Woo! Oh, nice. Nice, yeah. Good touch. It's the one time for the Lord, one time for the cause, one time for Fraser T. Smith for the cord.

Woo! There we go. Should we destroy it? Good. I believe you. Okay. We're good to go. All right, Kara, I'll catch up in a bit, yeah? I'm going to get you back and I'm going to do this shot.

Yeah, I'll see you in a bit, yeah? Lay back! I heard a vocal coming from there, you know?

[ 21 : 05 ] I heard a sweet little vocal, you know? Ready? Vocal warm up. All right, this time we're gone for it.

Yeah! Yes! I'm blinded by your grace.

I'm blinded by your grace, by your grace. I'm blinded by your grace. I'm blinded by your... Lord, I've been broken.

Lord, oh, I'm not worthy. You fixed me. I'm blinded by your grace. You came and saved me.

Lord, I've been broken. Although I'm not worthy. You fixed me. Now I'm blinded by your grace.

[ 22 : 07 ] Now I'm blinded by your grace. You came and saved me. 1-4V-1. 1-8V-1. All right. He's divided me now. One time. 1-5V-1. See how you made control? Amen.

Merry-bye. Merry-bye. For your grace, by your grace. Word, ourymie. I know it's you but I'm God son But I'm up now looking at what God's done Now I'm real tall looking at what God did On the main stage running around topless I phone flips and I tell him that we got this This is God's plan that can never stop this Like wait right there could you stop my verse You saved this kid and I'm not your first It's not by blood and it's not by birth But oh my God what God I serve No I've been broken Although I'm not worthy If it's me, I'm blinded by your grace, you came and saved me Lord, it broke out, you broke out, you broke out If it's me, I'm blinded by your grace, you came and saved me I said a prayer this morning, I prayed I would find a way

To another day, I was so afraid, till you came and saved, you came and saved me And the rain was boring, cause the sun faded away Now I'm in a better place, no longer afraid, blinded by your grace You came and saved me I said a prayer this morning, I prayed I would find a way To another day, I was so afraid, till you came and saved, you came and saved me I said a prayer this morning, I was so afraid, till you came and saved, you came and saved, you came and saved me You came and saved me Lord, it broke out

All the body, if it's me, I'm blinded by your grace, you came and saved me You came and saved me He came down to me I've been broken Although I'm not worthy You fixed me I'm blinded By your grace You came and saved me Oh Lord, I've been broken Although I'm not worthy You fixed me I'm blinded By your grace You came and saved me Oh Lord, I've been broken