

The Family of Grace

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Date: 31 October 2021

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[0 : 00] All right. Well, as for the rest of us adults, we're going to also have an opportunity to hear God's word for us this morning. And this is going to be, this feels a little bit different for me.

I had a really difficult time putting this sermon together this week. And the reason I had a difficult time is because I've actually had what I'm going to be talking about this morning. I've had this conversation just over and over and over again over the last month, I think, with all sorts of different people. And I've had it at the level of a heart-to-heart talk, a heart-to-heart conversation about our relationships with God and with one another. And then trying to take that and to put it in sort of a sermon, sort of a monologue format, I found extremely difficult. So this is going to be maybe a little bit of a sermon with a heart-to-heart feel. I'm not quite sure how to put it. And so I want to start by turning to the Lord God to ask his guidance and his help as we examine our lives carefully. Our God and Father, I sense how difficult it is to communicate when we don't always have eyes to see, ears to hear, a heart to understand. And I am asking God that regardless of my, how clearly I communicate, regardless of how clearly I hit on the points that you want me to, Lord God, may you still, your spirit still be at work. Help us to remember and to hold on to what little piece of this that we need, that you know that we need. We confess, Lord God, that we ourselves don't always know what we need. But you do. And I'm counting on you, Lord, this morning, that your spirit will work powerfully and do more than all that we could ever ask or imagine.

Would you do that? Speak clearly to us, we pray. Amen. Well, I want to start with a little bit of an excerpt from an article I was reading this week. It was written by a seminary professor named Nate Brooks. And the guy seems like a good dad because he reads books to his little children. And he describes a misunderstanding that occurred when he read books to a book to his sons. And he writes, a few weeks ago, I started reading a favorite book from my childhood to my five and three year old sons. Days on the Farm with Annette and Samuel is their first chapter book. And each evening, my oldest son patiently waits for me to finish a section.

So he can study the simple line drawing that accompanies each story. The first night, he looked up from the picture of Annette and Samuel playing house and asked, but daddy, where's the net? I was stumped for a moment until I realized that he heard the title of the book as Days on the Farm with Annette and Samuel. And this simple mistake changed the entire story.

[3 : 30] My child had visions of a little boy romping around the farm, accompanied not by his older sister, but by his trusty net, ready for all occasions of challenge or trouble.

Missing a point of emphasis can dramatically change a story. In the same way, missing a critical point within a biblical text can send us careening in a direction not supported by God's word. Our conclusions may seem biblical to us, but they only seem biblical because we've misunderstood or overlooked something within the text.

And so that really grabbed me because that has been something that I have perceived both in my own life and in the lives of many people that I've been talking to. And it's something that I think, you know, I've been at this church for six and a half years. Some of you I've known for that entire time, known and loved for that entire time. Sometimes some of you for less.

And this strikes me as something that we need. Something that we need to hear. And what we probably need to hear right now is this question. We need to consider this.

What if you've been reading the Bible all your life and you have no idea what it says? What if you have been coming to church all your life and you haven't understood at all what's being said?

[5 : 08] What if your relationship with God, you think you know who he is, but he actually isn't like that at all? What if your relationships with other people, you are convinced you know what's going on in those relationships and you're badly mistaken? And what if all of those things are true and you have absolutely no idea?

And I actually have encountered many people over my life who are stuck there. That's actually entirely true. And they're stuck there.

And the thing that keeps them stuck there is they don't even recognize this. Many of these people are genuine Christians. Many of these people are long-time churchgoers.

Many of these people know their Bible backwards and forwards. Many of these people are serving and active in their church. And they have no idea that they are stuck as baby Christians and have been sometimes for decades.

And here's what gets people stuck probably more than anything else in the Christian life. They don't know the heart of God. They do not know the heart of God.

[6 : 24] They don't know what he's actually like. They have some sort of warped view of what God is like. And in particular, what I find is people don't see God as gracious.

They don't see his grace. And here's how that plays out. First of all, their relationship with God, they look at him, they don't see his grace, and they don't receive his kindness as grace.

I'll talk about that in a little bit. But then that spills over into the rest of their lives. And all their relationships, the way they look at them, they see no grace there.

They don't give grace and they don't receive grace. And let me tell you something here. The second hardest thing in the world is to give grace. To just give mercy, kindness, compassion, undeserved, unmerited favor to other people.

That's the second hardest thing in the world. You know what the hardest thing in the world is? To receive grace. To receive unmerited favor and kindness and mercy.

[7 : 30] It's hard because a lot of times we think we're receiving it, but we're not receiving it as grace. We're receiving it as something that we deserve. And I'll talk about that in a bit too.

Underlying this is we have sort of this thinking that's programmed into us.

And maybe we've learned it in childhood. Maybe we... I think it's something that's sort of programmed into us, baked into us in our sinful nature. It sort of gets inculcated into us from childhood.

It gets picked up over the course of our life and refined. And what happens is we develop a mindset of what I've called in the past here transactional relationships.

And I believe it was a couple of years ago in 2019, I preached from the book of Job about how our relationships with God sometimes look transactional. And what I mean by that is that a transactional relationship, whether it's with God or with other people, what it is is your relationship deep down underneath all the words, underneath all the feelings, underneath all the behaviors.

Deep down your relationship is a... There's a hidden deal going on. There's an unspoken bargain in your relationship. There are certain expectations that you have of others, certain expectations that you have of yourself in this relationship.

[8 : 51] Those expectations must be met or else the relationship will be enforced. It's a relationship that's characterized by secret needs.

There are all these felt needs that govern and control and determine the relationship. There are hidden demands in the relationship. Sometimes the demands, if you're married, you know what that's like to marry someone and discover there's all these little landmines, all these little hidden demands that you bring in with you.

Here's the funny thing about transactional relationships. We've all got our own versions of them. And sometimes I come into a relationship with other people and I think they expect certain things of me.

And I think I have to behave certain ways towards them. And it's all in my mind. And the other person isn't thinking the same way at all. They're not demanding the way that I think they are. But in a transactional relationship, you're obsessed with questions like, what's my job here? What am I supposed to be doing? Am I doing a good enough job? Am I doing well enough? And then you're looking at the other people and you're thinking, are they doing a good enough job?

[9 : 59] Are they doing well enough? What's in this relationship for me? Now, when I describe it like that, you might think that, oh, wow, you know, those sound like awful relationships.

Those sound like awful situations to be in. Here's the funny thing. When you, in my experience, when I look out at people's lives, their marriages, their relationships with their parents and their kids, with their coworkers, their relationships in church, with their neighbors and so on and so forth, here's what I find.

You can actually have relationships that seem to be long and happy relationships. But underneath it all, there's actually still a transaction going on.

As long as both of you fill your end of the deal, the relationship is happy. But then, life happens. Changes happen. A marriage that was happy, then there's kids. Families that were happy, then dad loses his job.

[11 : 03] A church that was happy, then a key person dies. We get unsettled by life changes. We get shaken up by life's pressures.

We can't handle them. And all of a sudden, someone can't fulfill their end of the deal. And what I want to say is that if we want to have at our church a family of grace, not just a country club where we all just come together, say hi, sing some songs, and go home.

If we really want to have a family of grace here with God as our father and us as real brothers and sisters in Christ, we have to unlearn a lot of things.

We have to unlearn what we thought we knew about the heart of God. And we have to relearn his heart. We have to relearn his relationship with us and our relationships with one another in his family of grace.

Now, because it's so hard to see through that spiritual blindness, to recognize that you're blind and you don't know it, because it's so hard, I want to give you an illustration of what this is like.

[12 : 20] And this illustration, as I've talked with a few people, it's like it's imagining that you are driving in your car, and you like to drive all around Squamish, and you have this new car that you've gotten, and it was new when you got it, but you've had it for a few years now, and it's tuned to a radio station.

You like to listen to your radio as you drive around, but the problem is there's one preset on your car radio, and it's tuned to a station from Vancouver. Now, maybe this is a bad illustration because I don't listen to my car radio very much, and I actually don't even know if any Vancouver stations come through around here.

But imagine that it does, but it just comes through, and there's a little bit, there's a lot of static, but you can hear snatches of music here and there, and voices sometimes come through. And you think, this is what the radio sounds like.

This is how my car's radio works. This is what it's like to listen to the radio in my car. Now, imagine that you've been driving around for years like that, thinking that this is what the radio sounds like. Then you have a friend who gets into your car with you, and they look at your radio and they ask, why are you not tuned to Mountain FM? Why aren't you tuned to the station that's actually here in Squamish?

[13 : 33] And they take your radio, they tune it to Mountain FM, and they save it as a new preset, preset number two on your radio. And all of a sudden, the music comes through crystal clear.

It sounds great. There are voices. Everything is amazing. Your car's speaker system sounds awesome, and you can't believe it. And this whole time, you're like, what was I doing?

I was tuned into the wrong frequency this whole time. The music was in the air, and I just couldn't hear it. I was tuned to the wrong station.

I caught little bits and pieces of something. Now, what we call the Christian life, what we think the Christian life is, in my experience, is many of us have been tuned into the wrong frequency this whole time.

We think we know what the Christian life is. We think we've experienced it because we've got our radios on, and we're tuned to preset one. And it comes through, and there's a lot of static, and things aren't very clear.

[14 : 38] But hey, you know, I've picked up enough that I know what life is like. I've read my Bible, and I kind of know what's in it. I pray to God, and I know kind of how to pray. I take communion.

I know what that's about. I know. I come, and I listen to sermons. Sometimes I even take notes if I'm a really good boy or girl that Sunday. I sing songs, and I like the songs that we sing.

And then we have lots of conversations at church, and we're doing all these things, and we think we understand, and we think we know what all of this is about, what the Christian life is all about. And we go out, and we do good in our community, and we think we know what that's about.

And we're tuned to preset number one, and we have no idea. We're not tuned in to who God is. We don't know his heart, and we don't realize our relationships are actually nothing like what God means for them to be.

Each one of us comes programmed with that frequency. We're on preset number one, and we have these set of transactional relationships that we've learned.

[15 : 42] We think we know what all the transactions are between God and with other people, and we interpret everything through those lenses. And what my goal is today, my goal is to expose some of those.

And it's a little bit hard, because if I were sitting in my office with each one of you in a counseling, we'd be able to talk about what are the specific transactional relationships you have in your life that you've learned over the years, that you look at everything through that lens through.

What are your, what's your transaction with God that you're relying on? What's your transaction with other people that you keep turning to? Since we're not in my office, and we aren't able to have that really focused conversation, I want to sort of do a broad, ask some broad questions to maybe draw out what's going on.

What's going on in your life? What stations are you tuned into? And I want to show you that God's word has for us a better, truer station to turn your radio to.

That's something that Jesus, and as we're going through the life of Christ, you're going to find this about Jesus, is that was his number one goal, is Jesus was walking around on earth, and everybody else was tuned into transactional radio station preset number one.

[16 : 56] They had their ideas of how to relate to God and other people, and Jesus had his radio tuned into grace. He had his radio tuned into who God was, because he knows his father's heart, and he relates to other people that way, and they're all baffled by him at all times.

They don't get him. He does all sorts of things that they don't expect. And I want to show you that there is a better, truer way to tune your radio.

Here's some signs that you might be on the wrong frequency. And I'm going to start out with our relationships with other people, sometimes what we call our horizontal relationships with other people, as opposed to our vertical relationship with God.

Our horizontal relationships with other people, you can tell there's transactions. Whether it's a family member, whether it's a neighbor, whether it's our church, with anyone else, here's some signs that there's transactions going on, transactional thinking.

You, first of all, you might resent others, because they're failing to meet your needs. You've got these felt needs for respect and affirmation and love and acceptance and recognition, which are all great things.

[18 : 12] They're all good things to want. But you come in, and the deal is, the other person is supposed to give those things to me. And when they don't, I'm going to make sure that they know that I'm not happy.

I'm going to find some way to get back, some way to enforce and to punish, or just secretly hold bitterness and resentment in my heart. Second, you might value others because they are doing something for you and for your family.

You value them for what they can do for you and for your family. Third, you might find yourself saying or thinking, well, I did this for you, so you ought to do that for me.

I did this for you. You ought to do that for me. Or you look at other people and you're saying, you're not doing for me what you're supposed to be doing, so why should I do this for you? Why should I be doing that for you?

Sometimes you might, fourth of all, approach other people, or you might approach church leaders, and you come to them with this question, how come you aren't doing this? How come you aren't doing this?

[19 : 29] Sometimes you're careful in a relationship. You're like, oh, I don't want to give too much. I don't want to pour myself too much into this because, oh, I don't want the other person to get any ideas. I don't want them to get any ideas that I might be full of grace.

Sometimes you give a lot in a relationship. You give a ton and just pour yourself out because you're expecting the other person to give back to you. Sometimes you keep score about who's doing the most for the other person.

Sometimes you think, and here's one that, we often don't think of this as transactional, but it really is, because, and this is something that you have to understand is, you're not just putting pressure on the other person to hold up their end of the deal, you're putting pressure on yourself to hold up your end of the deal.

So you think you've got a job in your relationship and your job is to make other people happy. Or your job is to appease their anger. Or your job is to give them whatever they want.

Or your job is to at least, you know, to not bother them with your troubles. And you live in fear that you're going to be punished if you don't keep up your end of the deal.

[20 : 47] Sometimes the other person has no idea that that's the deal. They're not even thinking that way at all, but that's the way you're thinking. And you put pressure on yourself. Sometimes you surround yourself with other people just so that you won't feel alone.

Not out of concern for them, but just to make those feelings of loneliness go away. Sometimes you seek out certain friends because they give you access to social circles or to career opportunities or because they just make you feel better about yourself.

And if any of those start showing up in your life, and who among us, who among us has not had some of that present in our life and in our relationships?

But that's this transactional thread that runs through our lives. That's this radio frequency that we're tuned into. We're just thinking in terms of giving to get.

And it flows out of a deeper transactional relationship with God. Here's what's going on in our relationship with God. First of all, one sign of a transactional relationship with God is what we call legalism.

[21 : 57] Have you, if you've ever heard of legalism, maybe you've got all sorts of ideas in your head, but here's what legalism is at the heart of. You're really concerned about rules, whether it's God's rules or man-made rules, and you think that fundamentally God is a severe God and he is out there to police you.

He's out there to police you, out there to make sure you're keeping all his rules, and if you don't keep them, you're going to get punished. You keep the rules, that gets you to heaven, and you won't get punished.

That's your relationship with God. And so you spend your life, you're busy doing all sorts of good things. You're busy running around doing good things, wearing yourself out. You're a perfectionist. You're trying to be excellent all the time.

You learn all the Christian language. You learn all the Christianese. So bless you, brother. You know, all those little things that Christians say that you won't hear outside. And you interpret hardship in your life as maybe God's punishing me.

You hide your sins so that you can look as good as possible. And there's a lot of legalism there. Unless you think, you know, okay, well then maybe I don't take sin so seriously.

[23 : 05] Well then, you live a life of what's called license. And that's also a transactional relationship with God, by the way. Here, God is a neglectful God, and he's excusing your sin.

He just stands at a distance. He's got sort of this small, much smaller code of ethics that you have to keep. And he doesn't get particularly bothered if you do something wrong. You know, he'll get off your back as long as you're not too bad.

And that's the deal you have with God. God, you'll get off my back as long as I'm not too bad, and I'll call on you occasionally if I need some help. Until you live a life cavalier about sin, you have higher priorities in your life than God, you've got other stuff going on.

And when hardship comes, you're shocked. And then you get angry at God. This wasn't part of the deal. This isn't how, this isn't what I signed up for when I signed up to be a decent Christian.

This isn't what I, this isn't part of that transaction I have with you, God. And usually what happens in the Christian life as I watch people over time is they tend to flip and flop back and forth between legalism and license.

[24 : 13] They get really, really concerned about keeping the rules and this slavish fearfulness, and then maybe they realize that's too much and they flop over into getting, being too cavalier about sin, and then they, until something happens, they flip back and forth.

Sometimes you stick in one or the other. But both of them are transactional, and neither of them understand grace at all. Both of them are tuned to the wrong radio frequency.

And before we talk about that radio frequency, I just want to call out, what I want to raise in particular is two transactional patterns that I think we here at our church are vulnerable to.

And so this is coming from six and a half years of being with you. And I want to call out, I think there's a couple that we tend to be vulnerable to. Maybe there's more than this, but just, I've noticed these.

And pattern number one is this expectation we have of ourselves that I'm not supposed to be a bother to other people. And so this pattern you say to yourself, you say, oh, I don't want to be a bother to anyone.

[25 : 21] If I need a ride somewhere, oh, no, no, no, no, I'm not going to ask for help. You know, I wouldn't want to trouble anyone with my weakness. Or you're going through a really hard time with the family members.

Oh, I don't want to bother the pastors with that. They've got so much going on. Oh, I don't want to trouble other people. And you view it, that's your job. That's your part of the transaction is you don't bother other people.

And what this does is it creates an isolation in our church family where we're all siloed off from one another and separated from one another. We actually don't know what's going on in each other's lives and in each other's hearts.

We don't know what we're struggling with. We can't be there for each other. And then pattern number two is this.

Here's the transaction. I and my family, we moved to Squamish for a certain lifestyle and I'm going to be a well-behaved person as long as God lets my family live that lifestyle. I moved to Squamish for a certain way of life or I'm here in town for a certain way of life.

[26 : 22] I like that. And my deal with God is that I'll be a well-behaved, good Christian. I'll sometimes come to church. I'll just be a decent lead person. I'll look good for him as long as he lets me live the lifestyle that I'm here for.

And that creates a mindset of independence. We're not actually willing to function as a family anymore. We're just here for a lifestyle. We're not actually, we don't have a zeal for the Lord and a passion for him and a sense of greater, a greater sense of what we're here for in this town.

Isolation and independence mean that we are vulnerable to functioning as though we've got just distant relationships. This isn't like, this isn't a functioning the way that God calls us to.

He calls us to live as a family of grace. And that's what I want to turn to now. And I know this has been heavy. I know this has been a lot. But I want to turn to now that there is a much better way to live.

Because our God is a father of grace, a father of mercy. And I want us to tune our radios to that frequency of grace and of mercy.

[27 : 41] How do we get to patterns where we're willing to open up in our relationships where we're actually willing to be a bother to one another? How do we get to patterns where we're actually willing to sacrifice our lifestyles because we want to live as a family together.

And we want to live and serve the Lord faithfully. And first, it begins with understanding the heart of God. That's where this is going to start. And there's so much more.

I just want to take a long time to just take an extended time to talk about the heart of God here for us. And I really honestly do feel that I could just flip over my Bible to any passage and we could talk about it.

We could talk about the heart of God and how it's on display in page after page of scripture if you have eyes to see it. If you have eyes to see him as he is. One I find helpful is Romans chapter 8 verses 12 through 17.

Romans chapter 8 verses 12 through 17. And here's what this says about God. And Paul is writing and he's talking about the kind of relationship that we have with God and the kind of way that we live because we have that relationship with God.

[28 : 52] And he says, So then, brothers, we are debtors not to the flesh to live according to the flesh. For you, if you live according to the flesh, you will die.

But if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of adoption as sons.

By whom we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God and if children, then heirs.

Heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him. There's a lot here and I just want to focus on a few things here.

First of all, Paul talks about the flesh. You know what the flesh is? The flesh is just you living life your way, the way you've always learned it, the way you've always run it, doing relationships your

way.

[30 : 08] The flesh thinks transactionally. The flesh agrees with the devil who also thinks transactionally. That's what I was talking about a couple years ago from the book of Job.

A flesh, this says, submits to what's called a spirit of slavery. Slave relationships, that's the ultimate transaction, right? I give you labor and I belong to you.

I give you labor, you give me food, you just make sure I can survive. Slave relationships are the ultimate transaction and they carry with them a fear of punishment.

This says here, you know, the spirit of slavery, you fall back into fear. There's a fear of punishment when you break the law. And some of us, that's the way we relate to God. We think that God is basically a slave master who's going to punish us when we do stuff wrong.

And that's all there is. But then the spirit, he talks about we've received instead the spirit of adoption as sons. Here's how it is.

[31 : 15] The spirit teaches us to think about God as a God of grace. He talks about, he introduces us to this idea of grace.

He programs in a new preset on our radio, a graced relationship. Now you're adopted. You did nothing to earn this position. You don't get adopted into a family because you're a really good kid. What adoption story have you ever heard of that consisted of, well, I went to the orphanage and I looked for the best behaved child. I looked for the child who was the most good looking, the best behaved, who seemed to perform the best as they were stacking blocks, you know, and that's the one I wanted for myself.

With God, that's not the way it works. He adopts us into his family through no merit of our own. Not because we're good enough. Not because we have something to offer him.

We don't. But he welcomes us into our family. And we're, he's our father now. That's what it means to be a Christian. He welcomes us into our family and it's his son who takes the punishment that we deserve for our sin.

[32 : 25] It's his son who does good on our behalf. Adoptive son relationships are entirely about grace.

And you know what's great? This is the kind of father who has compassion on his children. That's what we read in Psalm 103. It's the Lord has compassion, the father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

for he knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust. When you're weak, when you can't handle life, when it all gets too much, when you're failing, when it seems like you're just a total loser and you can't get anything right, and you're not a success at all, and you're falling short of who you thought you would be.

When you're guilty, you know you've sinned, you know you've broken God's law, you know you're not who God has called you to be, yet you still have a father who forgives all your sins.

You still have a father who has compassion on you. You still have a father who's not going to point his finger at you and say, you should have done better. Shape up, kid.

[33 : 43] You have a God who is in a covenant relationship, and his steadfast love never ceases. In a transaction relationship, law governs everything. It's all about enforcing the law, keeping your end of the deal, making sure the other person keeps their end of the deal.

You do better, I'll do better, and maybe if there's, as long as in general you're doing a pretty good job, I'll show you a little bit of grace, throw you a little biscuit every now and then. In a grace relationship, grace motivates everything.

How can I do good for you? How can I pick you up? How can I be there for you? How can I love you? You have law, you have expectations, but they're so helpful because the law, God's law, all of a sudden gives you guidance and direction.

Oh, here's how I can, here's how I can love you. Yes, that's what I needed. I want to know what that looked like in action. I want to know what my relationships are supposed to look like because I just, I just don't, I'm just a baby.

I don't know how to love people. I don't know how to love God. Thank you for your law. Thank you for your law. But the gospel story begins with grace and this goes all the way back.

[34 : 52] Let me, let me read to you another passage. I could just go on and on, but in Galatians chapter three verses 15 through 18, Paul talks about how this is just, even in the history of how God has related to people, this goes back because we think of God giving his law to Moses and we

think, oh wow, you know, God must have given that law.

That's the kind of relationship where God gives his law. We're supposed to keep the law and that's final. Do good or die and that's it. But Paul reminds us that grace came before the law.

Galatians chapter three verses 15 through 18, he says, to give a human example, brothers, even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.

And so what he's going to do is say, before the law came, there was a covenant. He says, now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring.

It does not say unto offsprings, referring to many, but referring to one and to your offspring who is Christ. This is what I mean. The law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God so as to make the promise void.

[36 : 15] For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise, but God gave it to Abraham by a promise. And so what he's saying is it's not the situation where God gave Abraham a promise that he would make him a great nation, that all the nations of the earth would be blessed through Abraham and this amazing relationship of grace.

It's not like God did that and then he said, oh, I made a mistake. We need laws. We need to throw that out, get rid of that. Let's have a law relationship. Let's have a transactional relationship. What Paul is saying is that the laws are nested inside of that grace relationship that he has with his people.

And so it is with us. Whatever expectations we have that God has called us to, they are nested within a grace relationship with God and with other people.

You can see this in Jesus. At every story, at every moment in his life, he is bursting with grace in the way he relates to other people. One that I can think of most, that has come up in some of the conversations I've had is in Mark chapter 10.

Mark 10 verses 13 through 16. Look at this. This is one that if you grow up in Sunday school or in junior church, you grow familiar with this one, you kind of forget how remarkable this is.

[37 : 40] Mark 10 verses 13 through 16. They were bringing children to him that he might touch them. And the disciples rebuked them. But when Jesus saw it, he was indignant and said to them, let the children come to me.

Do not hinder them. For to such belongs the kingdom of God. Truly I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it.

And he took them in his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them. So what happens here is that people are bringing their children. They want Jesus to hold them, to bless them.

And his disciples who are kind of there, they think of themselves as bouncers. They're giving access, granting access to Jesus here. And they are rebuking the people.

Don't trouble the teacher with your, you know, don't trouble the teacher with your little kid, right?

Your snot-nosed little brat isn't going to give our teacher anything. What good's he going to do?

[38 : 44] He needs to pal around with the big rabbis. And Jesus rebukes that transactional thinking. He gets indignant that they're just thinking on those terms like he's in some sort of give-to-get relationship with all the crowds around him.

Jesus is tuned into a different frequency. You know what's so amazing about Jesus? Not only is he tuned to a different frequency, but anytime anyone tries to get him to bathe transactionally, he pushes their hand away and he puts the dial right back on grace.

Let the children come to me. Don't hinder them. Wouldn't it be remarkable in our relationships if we did that? If anytime I got started thinking transactionally towards you, you were like, Dave, what are you doing, man?

Don't you remember? Don't you know that I love you? Don't you know that I'm going to have mercy on you? Don't you know that I care? I'm with you.

Jesus baffles his disciples because he's always showing grace. Jesus baffles the Pharisees because they're all about keeping all the laws and making sure everyone else is too.

[39 : 53] And he's always showing grace. And he sometimes gets in people's faces when they are digging in their heels about relating transactionally.

That's who our Savior is. He is so much better than you think he is. He is so good. And if you know him, that changes everything.

You're not flip-flopping back and forth between legalism and license. You're just on a whole other frequency altogether. Your radio is tuned to something else. You look at God and you see him as

your father.

He is full of grace. He takes sin more seriously than I ever thought before, but his grace runs so much deeper than I ever thought before. This is remarkable. You look around at the world around you, at your relationships and your life and you don't see all these things as, oh yeah, that's just how it is.

That's what I deserve. You look at it and you see, I can't believe God has been so kind to me. I can't believe I have people sitting next to me that I love. I can't believe that I'm hearing his word. I can't believe I can walk outside and enjoy the sunshine.

[41 : 03] I didn't deserve a lick of this. This isn't my due. This isn't what I was owed. This is a God who is gracious and merciful and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. You see all of life as a gift when you have your eyes open to grace.

And his kindness leads you to repentance. It leads you to go, oh man, in light of all this grace, I can't believe I sin against a God like this. Oh God, have mercy on me.

Have mercy on me. And he does. And here's what happens. You see that God isn't a severe God. He's not policing you. He's not riding your back and chiding you all the time.

You take his law seriously. You love to see him please, but you can rest. You can just rest. You don't have to put up a righteous front and be a good person in front of everybody else because you trust his gracious heart.

And you look around, you see other people trusting his heart too, and you can start being more vulnerable with them and more open. You see that God isn't a neglectful God. He's not excusing you. He's actually deeply involved in your life as a father who has compassion on his children, a father who says, you shall be holy for I am holy.

[42 : 20] He actually wants you to be like him. He's saying, be like me. I'm your father now. And so you're serious about sin. You put it to death.

And God is your highest priority in life. Hard times come and you're not surprised. You're not living for the easy life anymore. You're willing to walk the pathway of Jesus, a pathway that includes suffering.

It makes you a resilient person when you know grace. And here's what happens then to your relationships with other people. You start leading your relationships with grace too.

You start leading your relationships with, I am with you. I'm with you because God says that to us. I'm with you. And so we turn to one another and say, hey, I'm with you. And you start insisting that your relationships be infused with grace.

You take that dial, you're always turning that radio back to grace when you're with other people. When other people fail to respect and affirm and love and accept and recognize you, it hurts.

[43 : 25] And you grieve it. And you pour out your heart before the Lord. And you cry. But you're not devastated. You're not crushed. You don't punish them for it. Maybe you go and you sit down and have a conversation with them about it.

But you don't beat them up over it. And you don't become embittered about it. You value others even when they can't do anything for you and for your family. You welcome them into your home. You befriend them. You care for them. You begin saying and thinking these things. You know, hey, I did this for you and I don't expect anything in return. You're not doing that thing for me but you know what?

I'm going to love you anyway. I'm going to love you anyway. You used to approach other people with a question. Why aren't you doing such and such a thing?

Why isn't your church running this ministry? Why aren't you making dinner for me? Why aren't you doing this? Why aren't you doing that for me? And now you ask, well, how might we do this together?

[44 : 29] How might we do this? You give in a relationship not to in debt someone to you but because you love them. You want to show God's grace.

You don't keep score about who's doing the most. You seek out people who won't get you anywhere socially. People who won't help your career. People who won't boost your ego. You just want to bless them.

And then, you free yourself from a lot of pressure too. Because you know that you are holy to the Lord. You belong to him. You are his possession.

His treasured possession. And you know your job in a relationship. You know what? I'm just here to be holy to the Lord. I'm here to live to honor God and to love you. And that means, you know what? I don't have to keep you happy. That's not my job. I don't have to appease your anger. Not my job. I don't have to give you whatever you want.

[45 : 24] I don't have to avoid bothering you with my troubles. I'm not going to pressure myself to do those things. That's not what relationships are about. Pressuring myself to do all those things that I think I'm supposed to do in a relationship.

I know God's law. I want to follow it. But I know there's grace for me when God, when I fall short. I have that trust in the heart of God that he is going to show mercy and compassion.

And that gives me boldness in my relationships. I can rest. A church in which those grace relationship patterns are present.

It looks like this. We look at one another and we say, hey, you know what? The Bible says, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the law of Christ. That's in Galatians 6. Bear one another's burdens. You know what? I can share what's troubling me with other people.

I can open up to them. I can ask for help. And that creates this shared experience. I confess that it took about five years of being here before I just kind of started doing that with a few people.

[46 : 32] Opening up about what's really weighing on my heart. Opening up about the things that are really hard for me. I've needed that. And you need it too. That's what a grace relationship looks like.

When you're not trying to keep other people from being troubled by you. But oh, you can just be honest. Another pattern is you look and you say, you know, we did move to Squamish for a certain lifestyle.

But you know what? God has called me to be holy. I know what I'm really here for. I belong to him. You know what? That's far better than any plan I had for me and for my family.

That's far better than any lifestyle that I thought I wanted to live. How can I live for him? How can I live faithfully for him and for his church family? How can we, how can I be a part of creating a family of grace at Squamish Baptist Church?

I want to do that. I want to play my part. I want to be a person who becomes a conduit of God's grace and kindness to other people. Instead of looking at those around me and thinking, why aren't they doing better?

[47 : 42] We look around and we think, how can I help them? How can I be with them? How can I live a life of grace?

And those are what relationships look like in the family of grace. I want you to know the heart of God. As we're learning about Jesus Christ from this series, I want this to be more than, as BK preached on, I want it to be more than sort of a Jesus trivia class where we're learning all the fun details about all the background of Jesus Christ.

And that helps us understand who he is. But that's just a means to an end. Knowing all the historical background of the Gospels is a means to an end. You know what the end is? Knowing Jesus better. Knowing his heart.

Understanding him so that his law becomes something where you read it and you're like, ah, I know what he's like. Isn't this amazing? He's so gracious. I want to serve him more.

I want to be like him. And I want everyone else around me to feel the same way. How can we live as a family of grace? Father, I know that I myself fall terribly, terribly short of this.

[48 : 57] I feel, Father, like I have, I now have a new preset in my radio station of grace, but I keep going back to the old one and spending significant time there.

And it's just soul-sucking. And many of us, that's the only way we know how to live. We've learned how to manage life in a transactional relationship with you and transactional relationships with other people.

We've learned how to expertly manage life that way. Some of us have done so very successfully. We confess that and we repent of our success. Some of us know the misery and failure of living life that way.

Thank you for letting us fail at transactional relationships. Thank you for forcing us to run to you and find a better way to live. I pray, and I'm asking God, that more and more of our transactional relationships would fail so that we would turn to you.

We would learn a new way to live. Lord, would you bring us to the end of ourselves, show us the weakness of the flesh, the foolishness. I pray that more and more people would come for help, for mercy, that we would find a new way to live in the family of God.
[50 : 17] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.