

“You Are Not Full of Grace, God Is”

Gen. 9:8-17

With all the rain we have been having this year, I couldn't help but focus in on our Old Testament text and God's covenant with Noah. That rainbow in the sky is a reminder, not only of what God did in His judgment upon the world, but it is the sign of the promise He has made that He will never do it again.

The rainbow in the sky is really a sign of God's grace. He rescued Noah and his family. God could have looked at the world and said, “These people are evil. I am going to wipe them all out and start over.” He could have done the same thing with Adam and Eve. He could have judged them, judged Satan, sent them all to hell for eternity and started over. But He didn't. Adam was His son. He loved him. He loved him so much God immediately promised to send His own Son to die in Adam's place. This is grace.

Noah was God's son. He wasn't just going to drown him and start over because it would be easier. With our own children, we don't simply do the thing that is easiest. God, our Father, has made some hard choices. He has made choices which placed the burden of sin on God, upon Himself. This is grace.

What is grace? It is not a one time gift that we receive through faith. It is not a magical feeling that wafts down or rains down from heaven. It is not a substance that we get more of by reading God's Word or partaking of the sacrament.

It is not as if we have to acquire this substance to fill us up so that when we become full, then you can leak some out upon others. Then you can stand before the judgment seat of God and say, "Look at me Lord. I am plumb full of Your grace."

Grace is not a substance you receive, but rather it is a disposition God has toward you. God, in His goodness and righteousness, abounding in steadfast love, is graciously, kindly disposed toward you. Your salvation comes by grace. Salvation comes by God's opinion of you. His free, undeserved love toward you is grace. We call that "mercy" sometimes. Grace and mercy tend to go together.

Mercy and grace are not things that you can take hold of or grab or use. Also, it is not something that you get one time, like at your Baptism, and then you don't ever need it again. The whole idea is that we are eternally in the grace of God. Because of our Baptism, we live under God's grace and favor 24/7. You are in a state of grace. You are not the keeper of this special substance God has given you. You are living under God's benevolent, free gift of Him looking at you and all you have done and Him choosing to see the righteousness of Jesus.

It is this message of His grace and mercy proclaimed by His Word spoken by prophets, apostles, or the Son of God Himself, preached in His churches this very day; it is this message of grace which creates faith and righteousness in you. God's Word is a means of grace. It is a means (along with the sacraments) whereby the Holy Spirit shows you His favorable disposition toward you.

Noah received God's grace. God chose to love Noah. God chose to be favorably disposed toward him. And Noah benefited in this life and for all eternity because of God's grace.

In our Epistle reading, Paul prays for God's grace and favor for the church in Ephesus that they may "know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge." God loving His human children to the extent that He does is beyond

understanding. As Paul says, “the breadth and height and depth of His love” – His love and the love of Christ surpasses knowledge.

We saw this last week with the feeding of the 5000. It would have been easier for Jesus to declare that day to be a day of fasting in devotion to God and send the crowd back to their homes. But He had compassion on them. They were “like sheep without a shepherd.”

In dealing with His human children, God’s pattern of behavior is never simply to do that which is easy or convenient. He does what is necessary, even if blood must be shed. We read in Mark’s Gospel that in the villages and cities all around Galilee, people brought the sick to Him and even touching the fringe of His garment brought healing.

Sometimes God heals physical illness in a way that seems easy and convenient. But that newness of health and strength of those touching the fringe of His garment only has value in faith. And our faith only has value in a Messiah who fulfilled the covenants that came before Him.

God made covenants with Adam and all of Adam’s children whom He loved. The Messiah, the Christ, the Son of God cannot bring real healing in an easy or convenient way. There is no forgiveness of sins without the shedding of blood.

God could have judged Adam and started over. It would have been easier. But Adam was His son, and God is full of grace.

God could have drowned Noah with the rest of Adam’s children and started over. It would have been easier. But Noah was His son, and God is full of grace.

God could sit in judgment upon you and me. It would have been easier. But He chose to send His own Son so that we can start over. Paul says, “If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation. The old has gone; the new has come.” God is full of grace. Amen.