

Grace

REVIEW: We have reached our final week in our series on grace. I will be honest with you, you know when people say that you have barely scratched the surface on a subject, and you wonder how that could be because you talked about so much already? Well I promise you I am not lying when I say that we have barely scratched the surface.

There are numerous examples in the Bible of what grace looks like. God's grace to us, our grace to others. We have not talked about the relationship between grace and truth. That is such an important concept primarily because in John 1, John tells us that Jesus was full of grace and truth. Why those two attributes? How do they relate to each other? If we are supposed to be like Christ, how are we to be filled with grace and truth? What would that look like in real life?

I have said this numerous times during this series, if you wrung the Bible out, grace would come pouring out of it like a soaking wet sponge. That is what the story of God is all about.

INTRO: As we enter this last message on grace, I have a thread of a theme running through the message today that I hope will be evident. I am trying to hit several facets of grace in one final wrap up message, knowing that what I am attempting is laughable because there is far too much to cover in one sermon. The thread that I hope to weave throughout the sermon, and a theme of grace we have not hit on yet is when we experience God's grace, we extend that grace to others.

John 13:12-15

I. The famous foot washing passage

A. We all know the story of Jesus washing the disciples feet in the upper room on the final night

1. In fact we have looked at this story a couple times this year
2. But did you ever stop to think beyond just the physical act to the grace that Jesus displayed?
 - a) We usually focus on the act of washing someone's nasty, smelly feet
 - b) We usually focus on Jesus humble, servant attitude that He displayed
 - c) But we miss the grace that took place in this act as well because we are so focused on the physical
3. Think about the fact that Jesus did not exclude anyone
 - a) He washed Philip's feet
 - (1) Philip - who thought it was impossible to feed 5000 people with one kid's lunch
 - (2) Philip questioned Jesus' commands, he questioned Jesus' power
 - (3) How did Jesus respond - He still washed his feet

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b) James and John

- (1) These guys were focused more on position in the kingdom than the kingdom itself
- (2) What did Jesus do with these two that seemed more interested in personal advancement than the kingdom?
- (3) He slid a basin under their feet

c) Peter?

- (1) Peter stopped trusting Jesus in the midst of the storm
- (2) Peter tried to talk Jesus out of going to the cross - to which Jesus replied, "Get behind me Satan"
- (3) Peter, within hours of this very event, Peter did the very thing he swore he would not do, deny Jesus, even cursing His name
- (4) What does God do with promise breakers? Wash their feet

d) And Judas?

- (1) The greedy rat that sold Jesus out
- (2) Surely Jesus would not wash Judas' feet - knowing what Judas was up to
- (3) Let's hope Jesus doesn't, because if Jesus does - than we would have to wash the feet of the Judas' in our lives
 - (a) Jesus' Judas walked away with 30 pieces of silver
 - (b) Your Judas walked away with your security, or your job. Or your spouse. Or your virginity. Or your childhood
- (4) So if Jesus washed His Judas' feet, that would mean you should wash yours
 - (a) Most people would rather play darts with a picture of their Judas than wash their feet
 - (b) But not you! You are not most people! Because your feet are wet - they were washed by Jesus Himself, every part of them - ever sin, every thought, every part

B. John 13:12-15

1. "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."
2. Max Lucado wrote, "To accept grace is to accept the vow to give it."
3. Not only does this passage teach us about servanthood, it teaches us about grace as well
 - a) The very fact that we accept God's grace
 - b) Becomes the motivation for us to give out God's grace

C. So in our time remaining, I want to look briefly at two examples of the grace of God (one from the OT and one from the NT) which spills out of people's lives to others

II. The story of Ruth

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- A. For time's sake we will not read the story of Ruth
- B. If you recall, Naomi was Ruth's mother-in-law
1. Naomi had lost her husband previously, and Naomi lost her sons also
 - a) She had no one to care for her
 - b) She was left with Ruth and Orpah
 2. Naomi tried to release them and let them go to their mother's homes
 - a) Ruth refused, and travelled with Naomi to Israel
 - b) They had been living in Moab
- C. There is more to this story, and it is a great story to read through, but allow me to cut to the chase
1. Naomi and Ruth were struggling and needed to find a way out of this situation
 2. They realized that a man Ruth had been gleaning food from was a relative and could act in the role of the kinsman redeemer
 - a) That was a role that would redeem (buy back) the family to keep them safe and provide for the family - provide what they could not
 - b) He would then marry the widow and take on the responsibilities of the family
 - c) Property was not transferred to a widow in those days but to the brother
- D. Naomi told Ruth exactly what she needed to do
1. She needed to go to Boaz after a day of harvest, wait for him to eat, and then go to bed
 2. Ruth then needed to go, all washed up, in her best clothes, uncover his feet, and lie down.
 - a) Pretty steamy stuff there folks!
- E. What happens next?
1. Boaz discovers Ruth in the middle of the night
 2. She tells him that he is their kinsman redeemer, and asks for him to take them in
 3. He agrees, but knows there is one even closer than he that should be allowed to redeem the family first
 - a) That is a sign of integrity on Boaz's part
 - b) In fact, when Boaz goes to this other man, he let's him know that it is more than just Naomi and the land involved, Ruth is part of the package
 - c) He turned down redeeming the family, so Boaz took on the position
- F. What does all of this have to do with grace?
1. For starters the kinsman-redeemer is a type of Christ

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- a) It pointed forward to the day that Christ would redeem His people for Himself
 - b) The kinsman-redeemer stepped in to help the helpless
 - (1) In that society woman had very few rights
 - (2) If their husbands were out of the picture, their very lives could be in jeopardy
 - c) Christ is our kinsman-redeemer
 - (1) He steps in to help us in our weakness
 - (2) When we had no ability to help ourselves He came in to redeem us and give us new life
 - d) So the whole story, and the greater reality it points to is dripping with grace
2. But then we simply have the grace of the story itself
- a) Boaz helping the helpless
 - b) Boaz, “bending down” to help in a horrible situation
 - c) Boaz dispenses grace in giving Ruth more than he needed to when Ruth gleaned grain from the field
 - d) Boaz dispensed grace when he accepted the role of kinsman-redeemer
 - (1) Even presenting the role to the first in line in such a way that he figured he would turn it down
 - e) Boaz dispensed grace in sending Ruth from the threshing floor with extra grain, telling her, “You can’t return to your mother-in-law empty handed”
 - f) Boaz dispenses grace because he was acquainted with grace
 - (1) Ruth asks why she found FAVOR in his eyes
 - (2) He realizes the sacrifices she has made for her mother-in-law and asks God to bless her for it
 - (3) That is a person already familiar with grace
- III. The second story that comes from the NT is a very familiar story - the story of the Prodigal God
- A. Yes, most people know the story as the Prodigal Son
- 1. However, if you have ever read Timothy Keller’s little book called *The Prodigal God* you would understand why I say the Prodigal God
 - 2. Prodigal means “one that gives lavishly” - that would be God, not the son
- B. We probably all know this story
- 1. A man has two sons
 - 2. The younger son asks for his inheritance so he can leave the house
 - 3. Dad gives it to him
 - 4. He leaves and spends his money so foolishly that he winds up broke with a famine in the land

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5. He has to resign himself to slopping pigs
 6. Finally he comes to his senses and returns home - realizing even his father's servant eat better than this, maybe dad will take me back as a servant
 7. As he is still walking up to the house, dad comes flying down the driveway with arms wide open to welcome his son home
 8. His son can hardly stand it, knowing how he treated his dad, not even feeling deserving to be called "son"
 9. Dad largely ignored what his son said and called for the best robe, and a ring, and sandals
 10. Then, go kill the big cow, we are partying - my son was dead but is now alive
 11. The older brother goes and pouts
 - a) Largely because dad is now spending his inheritance
 - b) The younger brother took his, ran and mis-spent it
 - c) Now dad is spending the money on HIM!
 12. Dad comes out and pleads with his son to come to the party
 - a) You are always with me
 - b) Everything I have is yours
 - c) But as far as we can tell, the older brother never gets past his brother's foolishness
- C. That is quite a story of grace
1. Dad was gracious to even give his younger son anything
 - a) Inheritances were given upon death
 - b) In essence the younger son is saying, "I'd rather you were dead dad. Just give me my stuff."
 - c) Dad could have put his own son to death right there, but he displayed grace
 2. Perhaps my favorite display of grace is when dad burns rubber down the driveway to meet his son coming back
 - a) He had been gone for a while, being foolish with his inheritance
 - b) Yet Dad does not care, he wants his son
 - c) It does not matter where the son has been, or what he did, he is back
 - d) That is grace
 - (1) And sad to say, that too often that is the grace I excitedly receive, but not the grace I excitedly give out
 - (2) I so appreciate it when I am in need of grace from another, and they grant that grace to me
 - (3) Yet somehow, in certain situations, I don't seem to want to give the same grace that someone else is in need of

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- e) This is a lesson for me as much as anyone else
 - (1) Jesus washed the feet of his Judas
 - (2) I have Judas's in my life
 - (3) I have "prodigal sons" in my life
 - (4) And yet I still struggle to be the prodigal father I should be
 - (a) The one that lavishes grace upon my Judas
 - (b) The one that goes so over the top in showing favor to my lost son that people wonder if I have taken leave of my senses
- f) I'm just going to take a shot in the dark here and guess that there several of you out there, that, if honest, are like me, or the older brother in the story
 - (1) Someone has done something to us that we find indefensible, and unacceptable
 - (2) They hurt us in some way that cut us deep
 - (a) They behaved foolishly and broke up the family
 - (b) You trusted them with your whole heart only to have it stomped on
 - (c) You loved them deeply, and they turned their back on you when you needed them the most
 - (d) Whatever it was, they hurt you, and hurt you bad, and you feel as if you could never run down the driveway
 - i) You could never lavish them with the grace of the best robe, ring, and sandals
 - ii) You could certainly never throw them a party
 - iii) And to think of washing their feet, absolving them of all they did to you - your mind cannot even entertain the thought
 - (3) Yet that is what we are called to do
 - (a) "I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you."
 - (b) We are all called to display the grace that God gave so lavishly to us

D. So what I want to do is end with three stories to illustrate this gratuitous grace

1. The first two relate well to what we have been saying about being gracious to those that have hurt us in some way
2. The final story, while seemingly simple, sums up how we should live our lives in grace

IV. Three real life illustrations of grace

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A. The first illustration is the events started on October 2, 2006 By Charles Carl Roberts

1. He entered the West Nickel Mines Amish School in Pennsylvania armed to the teeth
2. He bound 11 girls ages 6-15
3. He shot ten of the girls, and finally turned the gun on Himself
 - a) Three girls died immediately
 - b) Two girls died in the hospital
4. The event shocked the nation
5. But what was even more shocking was the forgiveness and grace of the Amish community
 - a) More than half of the people at the funeral for the shooter, Roberts, were Amish
 - b) An Amish midwife who helped deliver several of the murdered girls made plans to take food to his family
 - (1) She is quoted as saying, "This is possible if you have Christ in your heart."
6. By the way, the shooter's wife, is now a speaker, giving her testimony for Christ, and His healing following the events

B. The second story took place in NY in November of 2004 and is Victoria Ruvolo's story

1. Driving home from her niece's recital, getting ready for a quiet evening in front of the fire, her life changed dramatically because of a prank she never saw coming
2. An 18 year old boy leaned out the window of his car and threw a frozen turkey at her windshield, in an effort to scare her - for fun
 - a) The 20 lb tom crashed through her windshield, bent the steering wheel, shattering her face
 - b) She survived only because some good doctors wired her jaw, affixed an eye by synthetic film, and bolted titanium plates to her cranium
3. Nine months later she stood face to face with her offender, Ryan Cushing
 - a) He was no longer cocky, foolish or wielding frozen fowl
 - b) He was trembling, tearful, and apologetic
4. People packed the courtroom to see what the sentence would be for this boy that came to represent a generation out of control
 - a) The sentence infuriated everyone in the courtroom
 - (1) Only six months behind bars, and five years of probation - some counseling and public service
 - b) The only one not infuriated was Victoria Ruvolo
 - (1) She asked the judge for the reduced sentence

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- c) The boy walked over to Victoria, and she put her arms around him and embraced him
 - (1)The whole crowd stood watching
 - (2)She held him tight and stroked his hair as he sobbed
 - (3)She then whispered, “I forgive you. I want your life to be the best it can be.”
- 5. Later on she was quoted as saying, “God gave me a second chance at life, and I passed it on. If I hadn’t let go of that anger, I’d be consumed by this need for revenge. Forgiving him helps me move on.”
 - a) This event led to her new mission in life
 - b) She volunteers at the county probation department
- C. These are dramatic displays of grace in our time
 - 1. These displays of grace are only made possible by people that have encountered the grace of God themselves
 - 2. Have you encountered the grace of God?
 - 3. Are you letting your life be shaped by the grace of God?
 - 4. Is there someone in your life that you know that you need to let go of the past, and allow grace to take control
 - a) A means of throwing yourself on the grace of God
 - b) Of relying on Him to display the grace you received to others.
- D. Allow me one more story
 - 1. It’s short, simple, sweet, and displays that a life lived in grace does not always have to be about forgiving a wrong, it can just be lavishing on someone in need with love
 - 2. READ: *Grace* Ch. 9 - story of wedding dress
 - 3. This is how God operates
 - a) God shows us grace so we can show grace to another, and on down the line it flows
 - b) Overflows might be a better term

CONCLUSION:

I don’t know about you, but that is the grace I want! I want to know the grace of God so well, so intimately, that it flows out of me to others. I want my life to be marked by grace. My prayer is that is what your heart is crying out for too.