

Grace

October 9, 2022

Our Savior's Way Lutheran Church

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Grace, mercy and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Grace...If you looked up the word in the dictionary, you might find many different definitions. Theologically speaking, it is a free and unearned act of God that restores us to Himself. Why? Because each of us is flawed in some way or another, and Grace is the starting point for things to be right once again. We don't deserve it and can't do anything to earn it, because it wouldn't be grace anymore if that were the case. And yet, through His Grace, God offers salvation to all.

Then again, simple acts of grace don't just come to us through God. Maybe you can think of a time in your life when you might've received grace. Grace can be found in something as small as when someone paid for your coffee while you were in a line. Or maybe you received a thank you note in the mail for something you hardly remembered. Or just maybe someone forgave you for really hurting them. Take a moment now. Close your eyes and visualize that time. Where were you? How did you feel? What happened? Hold on that feeling. You can open your eyes now...

In our Gospel reading for today, Jesus healed the ten lepers, but only one came back praising God with a loud voice, and fell at Jesus feet, giving Him thanks. The other day, I read that someone had suggested 9 different reasons why the others didn't return. And so, I thought that I might share them with you:

One of the 9 went to see the priests to see if the cure was real.

One wanted to wait and see if it would last.

One said he would see Jesus later.

One decided that he had never had leprosy in the first place.

One said he would have gotten well anyway.

One decided to give the glory to the priests who would declare him clean again.

One said, "O, well, Jesus didn't really do anything."

One said, "Any rabbi could have done it."

One said, "I was already improving on my own."

While scripture doesn't share with us what actually happened to the other nine, it's doubtful that more than 10% of people are ever truly grateful to God for the Grace that He has given to them. Because, as I shared with you two weeks ago, it seems like the more we have, the less gratitude we can feel. And less grateful we are, the more disappointed we can become in life.

It reminds me of an old story of a man who, after being lost and wandering for days in a forest, stumbled upon a barn at dark. It was cold and the winds of a storm was howling outside. After walking into the dark barn, his eyes began to adjust and see what was in the barn. He lit a match and saw that it was where the devil stored boxes full of seeds. Written on many of the boxes read the words, "Seeds of Disappointment" to be sown in the hearts of men.

About that time, one of the devil's helpers arrived to load up and deliver more of the seeds. The man asked him why there were so many boxes full of seeds of disappointment? The helper laughed and said, "Because they're so effective and take root so quickly." Then the man asked, "Do they grow everywhere?" The helper stopped and glared at him, and said, "No. They never seem to grow in the heart of a grateful person."

When Jesus said, "Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this

foreigner,” I don’t know about you, but it’s not too hard for me to imagine that Jesus may have felt a little disappointed after healing the ten lepers—which means that even though He was fully God, He was also fully Human. He had come to His own, and His own didn’t receive Him. He performed miracles that people might be healed and cleansed from their sins. And He even gave His life for us on the cross that all of us might be forgiven and receive the eternal salvation. And yet, as the other nine and so many of us do today, we can often go about our day, living our lives as if nothing has happened. Seemingly ungrateful for the many, many blessings that we receive from God.

As we come to learn from our Gospel reading today, Gratitude should always be our response to the grace of God as we experience it. But, before we begin to judge others, it might be helpful to remember that experience of unexpected grace that you thought about earlier. Remember what was placed in your heart? How did you react? You might’ve been speechless. You might’ve talked too much. A smile might’ve come over your face, and you might’ve wanted to give someone a hug. Or you might’ve been so overwhelmed that you didn’t quite know how best to respond. Now think about all that our Lord has done for you.

Earlier in Luke’s Gospel, the sinful woman kissed and wiped Jesus’ feet (Luke 7:50). And after seeing and hearing the Samaritan giving Him praise and falling at His feet, Jesus once again said, “Rise and go your way; your faith has made you well.” And we ought to do the same simply for the faith that God has given to us. So grateful that at any moment, we could fall at His feet and praise Him.

Because through His means of grace, He continues to forgive us our sins and offers us salvation. He provides for all our daily needs in body and soul. His mercies are new each morning. And He even gives grace to those of us who don’t always fall at His feet and praise Him.

Having been baptized into His death and resurrection, and having received His Spirit, we do our best not to allow seeds of disappointment to take root or consume us. We give grace to others and through daily repentance, we praise and thank Him for what He provides. We allow His Word to guide us. And in humble gratitude, we partake of His body and blood – in, with and under the bread and the wine – for the forgiveness of all our sins, that we might live our lives as fully devoted followers, giving Him all glory and honor.

Following in His footsteps, we might even take the time to find our peace with the 90% of people who experience His grace and yet express it in other ways, because grace that's truly freely given is also free from expectation. Knowing that, what becomes visible over time is what comes from the Spirit – love, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control, that in the end, all people might learn and grow in Christ Jesus, our Lord, be healed and cleansed from sin, and be restored to God once again to receive that eternal salvation, that He came to bring us all.

For that, we give Him thanks and praise, both now and always.

In Jesus Name, Amen.