

THE GRACE OF GRATITUDE

When we are grateful, we extend grace.

KEY POINTS

- ❖ “Life isn’t fair,” we’re probably inclined to agree.
- ❖ All of us have sinned and fall short of God’s glory (Romans 3:23) and the wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). That’s what hell is – eternal separation from God.
- ❖ But the gift of God is eternal life.
- ❖ All along the road to hell there are off-ramps with the same set of directions to the same destination – salvation: Repent of your sins, be baptized in Jesus’ Name for the washing away of those sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).
- ❖ Once we’ve left the highway leading to hell, we enter the Kingdom of Heaven, which has both temporal and eternal dimensions. Temporally, we participate in creating and sustaining a love culture, wanting the absolute best for one another. We believe that God has given us the absolute best and we are predisposed to giving the absolute best to others. *Or we should be.*
- ❖ But two natures grapple within us. The Apostle Paul says, “... the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want” (Galatians 5:16-17).
- ❖ God gives us access to the gifts and fruit of the Spirit – tools that cause us to walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh. And an important aspect of the Spirit-filled life is *the grace of gratitude*. When we are grateful, we extend grace.
- ❖ In a way we can’t understand, even the God of creation who is complete within Himself has the attribute of gratitude. God rewards our self-sacrifice with responsibility in His Kingdom. This is grace! *It is a privilege* to be involved in hands-on service in God’s church.
- ❖ In Matthew 19, Peter reacts to a statement of Jesus by basically asking, “Is there anything in it for us who have given up everything to follow you?” (v. 27)
- ❖ Jesus assures him that all who follow Him will be rewarded, but then He adds a curious statement: “But many who are first will be last, and many who are last will be first” (v. 30).
- ❖ *Does this mean that God prefers those who live lives of sin and repent at the last minute over those who give Him a lifetime of faithful service?*
- ❖ In Matthew 20, Jesus expands on the idea of “the first being last and the last being first” by telling the story of a landowner hiring daily workers. Some were hired for the full day. Other were added throughout the day, with the last set working only for a few hours.
- ❖ At the end of the day, the first arrivals saw those who worked only briefly getting a full day’s wage. Since they had worked so much longer, they anticipated getting paid more than the latecomers. But when it was their turn to get paid they got...A FULL DAY’S WAGE. *“Life isn’t fair.”*

KEY SCRIPTURES:

Matthew 19:27-20:16; Galatians 5:16-17

- ❖ But pay attention: There was more work in the vineyard than the first set of hired hands could handle. As Jesus said, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field” (Matt. 9:37). We should welcome everyone who comes into the church!
- ❖ ALL the workers received what they needed to take care of their families and commitments. The initial hires expected more because they compared themselves to the later hires, which led to greed. *We have what we need to make us content until we start comparing.*
- ❖ Sometimes we want more stuff – not that more stuff will bring any additional benefit, but to gloat. Just ask the farmer who tore down his barns to build bigger ones when he brought in a good harvest, and the Lord “required his soul of him.” That very night, he died (Luke 12:16-21).
- ❖ Like Peter, many of us can say, “We left everything to follow you! So, what will there be for us?”
- ❖ Jesus gives a clear illustration of the privilege it is to have a job in the Kingdom (Lk 17:7-10). He ends with this: “So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do...say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty.’”
- ❖ Today let’s pray a prayer of gratitude and remember just what it is that Jesus did for us. Then ask Him to soften our heart. To make them like His heart. And to fill us with compassion for the lost -- and the latecomers. *The grace of gratitude.*
- ❖ And if you don’t know Jesus today – or if you’ve turned back from serving Him – you’re on a pathway to death and hell. But the gift of God is eternal life. Repent of your sins, be baptized in Jesus’ name for the washing away of those sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

DISCUSSION/REFLECTION TOOLS

1. Read Matthew 19:16-26. How did what he heard lead to Peter’s question in v. 27? Can you identify with him (and/or with the first workers in Matt. 20)?
2. Discuss: How is it an act of God’s grace that He allows us to serve in His kingdom (see Lk 17:7-10)?
3. In what ways is our assembly being called upon to extend grace today? What can we – from “those who have laboured long” to the “newcomers” – be grateful for and how can gratefulness feed a spirit of grace?

PRAYER TIME







Lord, it is a privilege to serve You. Help me to be grateful. Teach me to extend grace to others as You extended grace to me. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Start-up: Child: “That’s not fair!” Parent: “Life isn’t fair.” What is your opinion regarding those statements?

WEEK OF SUNDAY, OCTOBER 2, 2022

NOTES

Meditate as you read through/listen to this week’s message. If it helps, use symbols for your notes.

-  (Reminds me/Confirms)  (New idea)  (Think about)
-  (Do this)  (Speaks to my heart)  (Must share)

PRAYER NEEDS/THANKSGIVINGS

Go deeper with your Life Group family.
 CONNECT-REFLECT-DISSECT THE WORD
 Your Life Group ~ Your Lifeline