

Pentecost 5A: Proper 9  
 July 9, 2017  
 Ken Wratten at St Luke's  
 Zechariah 9:9-12  
 Romans 7:15-25a  
 Matthew 11:16-19, 25-30  
 More Styles of Grace

God comes to banish war and to proclaim peace  
 Paul describes his struggle with sin, but grace of God  
 Jesus: take my yoke upon you, and learn from me

Last Sunday I spoke about ways that Bishop Mary modeled God's grace working in her at the funeral service for her husband, Michael. I described two expressions of God's Grace: The first was **Sanctifying Grace**, which brings growth, maturity, and movement forward in the process of becoming Christ-like. The example I gave was Bishop Mary's forgiveness for the driver who hit Michael.

The second expression of Grace was **Sustaining Grace**, which is given at special times of need; especially during adversity or suffering. When we feel overwhelmed with a complicated decision to make, or struggle with the pain of losing someone we love, Sustaining Grace gets us through those times feeling lifted up, held close, and loved by God.

There are other expressions of God's Grace. By paying attention, by staying open to God, we can see the flow of God's Grace in our lives.

In Paul's letter to the Romans, he describes the internal struggle of a believer; knowing what God wants us to do and not to do, but having to fight temptations that want us to do exactly the opposite. These do not have to be the Big Sins, like the ones in the Ten Commandments, but they are more often the little things;

Knowing it is my turn to walk our dog, but pretending I don't notice him pacing at the door; Living in the flow of God's Grace, I can be better than that.

Seeing a homeless person outside a store asking for money, but pretending I don't see them when they look toward me. Living in the flow of God's Grace, I can be better than that.

This form of Grace has been called **Serving Grace**. It is the gift to serve in a way that reflects the love of Jesus to the other person. 1 Peter 4:10 says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." This gift of Serving Grace gets

us past holding onto every minute of the day for what pleases us, or keeping every penny for our own comfort, but intentionally using time and resources to please God.

Jesus says, “Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest.” Jesus recognizes that we all have the conflicts at work in us that Paul described in Romans. His offer is rest from our weariness, help with our burdens, and learning about the divine gift he offers of being gentle and humble of heart. This is known as **Securing Grace**; being kept secure in spite of our sin. I have felt this form of grace at a tough time when Christian friends pray for me, send me a card that they are thinking of me, give me a hug at the peace, or just touch my shoulder as a sign that they care about what I’m going through. I have felt their love, and God’s love. I am grateful that Grace has nothing to do with our deserving it. It is a free gift God gives us, and because of this gift, we can stand secure in God’s love for us.

Reverend Ardyss reminded me of one more quality of God’s Grace; it is offered to every single person, regardless of the shape their spiritual life is in; in fact it is offered before we ask, before we try to earn it, even before we were born. This is called **Prevenient Grace**. Jeremiah 1:5, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you...”

Jesus’ offer of rest, help, and learning is **an invitation to live in a state of Grace with God**. Grace is at the heart of our relationship with God. The decision we are offered is to open ourselves up to living in the flow of God’s Grace that Sustains, Sanctifies, Serves, gives Security, and is Steadfast – waiting for us even before we ask.

As a boy I drove my mother crazy by packing away the birthday gifts or Christmas gifts that I especially liked. Since I liked them, I wanted to save those gifts; and not break them, or wear them out. Sometimes it was months or years before I used them. But that wasn’t what my mom wanted. She wanted me to open, and use, and enjoy the gifts she had bought for me. Open the gift of God’s Grace. It is not meant to be saved, but to be used and shared. Amen.