

Week 43

October 22 - October 28

Matthew 20-25; 26:6-13; Mark 10:32-13:37; 14:3-9; Luke 18:31-21:38; John 12

The theme this week is grace. And as you may be able to tell, I had the lyrics to the wonderful hymn, Amazing Grace, running through my head as I wrote these devotional thoughts for you this week. Grace is a multi-faceted concept in Scripture and I hope that you thoroughly enjoy considering how God's grace impacts our lives, both as human beings in children and redeemed members of God's family. – David Curtis

October 22nd

Matthew 20:1-34; Mark 10:32-52; Luke 18:31-19:27. "Spiritually Blind"

"I once was lost, but now am found, was blind, but now I see" – Amazing Grace

The beggar Bartimaeus received the gift of sight in today's reading. While Mark is the only gospel that names the beggar, all three of them consistently show that the original request was for mercy. Why the connection between mercy and the receiving of sight? I think it is because the healing not only involved a physical need, but a spiritual one as well.

Without God's intervention in our lives, we are spiritually blind and lack an awareness of our sin and we do not see our need for God. Until the Holy Spirit opens ones' eyes to his or her spiritual need, they will not come to God for forgiveness and grace.

In His ministry, Jesus restored physical sight, but more importantly, He also restored spiritual sight. The Spirit continues on in this ministry, and our role is to direct those in whom the Spirit is working to the light of Christ that they might follow him as did Bartimaeus.

October 23rd

Matthew 21:1-11; 26:6-13; Mark 11:1-11; 14:3-9; Luke 19:28-44; John 12:1-36.
"Saving Grace"

Jesus never hid the truth of His purpose here on earth. Time and time again He predicted His death to His disciples, and yet they continually struggled to understand. In comparing His death to a kernel of wheat (John 12:24), Jesus makes it clear that His death will bring about new life for many. This is what the Apostle Paul meant when he said, "For God made Christ who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:21). Jesus was able to serve as the perfect sacrifice making full atonement once and for all for the sins of mankind (Hebrews 10:12).

This sacrifice is what allows God the Father to extend saving grace to all who come to Him in faith for the forgiveness of their sins. As John said in 1 John 2:2, "He is the sacrifice for our sins. He takes away not only our sins, but the sins of all the world."

It is an irony that should cause us all to be humbled, that the horrific death that Jesus endured on the cross was the very event that allows for the beauty of saving grace in our lives.

October 24th

Matthew 21:12-27; Mark 11:12-33; Luke 19:45-20:8; John 12:37-50. "Fears Relieved"

The construction of the Golden Gate Bridge had fallen behind schedule because of a number of workers who had fallen to their deaths. Engineers and administrators could find no solution to the costly delays. Eventually, in spite of the enormous cost, a giant net was installed to catch those who might accidentally fall. After it was installed, progress on the project was hardly interrupted. A worker or two fell into the net, but were saved. Ultimately, all the time lost to fear was regained by replacing fear with faith in the net.

Knowing that we need not be perfect in order to avoid judgment removes a great fear for the one who understands grace. Grace is what allowed the tax collectors and prostitutes (Matthew 21:31) of Jesus' day to be saved. The Pharisees, on the other hand, lived in constant fear of the law.

Like the workers on the bridge who no longer feared death resulting from a misstep, the Christian no longer fears the eternal judgment of God for a misstep.

October 25th

Matthew 21:28-22:33; Mark 12:1-27; Luke 20:9-40. "Grace Rejected"

Matthew 22:1-14 is the parable of the Great Feast. The parable illustrates how, because of the rejection of the Messiah by the Jews, God's grace is then made available to the Gentiles. As I read this story, I find it remarkable that one of the guests would show up for the feast without the customary apparel. I would think that the gratitude of even being invited to take part in the festivities would result in the appropriate response by this particular guest.

The parallels in this story to the human predicament we face are clearly seen. All around us are people who are rejecting God's invitation to enter into relationship with him. Hearing the call of grace, they reject the notion of their need for salvation assuming that their own righteousness is sufficient. Like the out-of-place wedding guest, they refuse to clothe themselves with the righteousness of Christ that comes by faith. Instead, they reject God's grace, trusting in their own righteousness which, in the eyes of God, is like filthy rags.

October 26th

Matthew 22:34-23:39; Mark 12:28-44; Luke 20:41-21:4. "Generous Grace"

"He who gives what he would as readily throw away, gives without generosity; for the essence of generosity is in self-sacrifice." – Sir Henry Taylor

As Jesus and His disciples sat and observed the giving practices of those who came to the temple to worship, Jesus seized a teachable moment when the widow dropped in two small coins (Mark 12:42). In that moment, we see the principle of proportionate giving at work.

As Jesus noted, even though the rich individuals gave more money, the gift of the widow was considered far greater in the eyes of God because of her sacrifice.

Aren't you glad that, in God's greatest gift to us, He did not limit Himself to a small portion of His grace, but rather made the ultimate sacrifice in sending Jesus to die on the cross. God is truly generous with His grace, giving it to all who might come to Him. There are no restrictions, no qualifications, no prerequisites. There is only free grace that is offered generously.

Day 300 – October 27th

Matthew 24:1-35; Mark 13:1-31; Luke 21:5-33. "Efficacious Grace"

"'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far, and grace will lead me home." – Amazing Grace by John Newton

In Jesus' description of the time of tribulation, He mentions that there will be attempts "to deceive, if possible, even God's chosen ones" (Matthew 24:24; Mark 13:22). This statement by Jesus gets me thinking about the role that God's grace plays in bringing about our salvation. As the words to Amazing Grace declare, "grace will lead me home." How true.

God's grace is efficacious in our lives, meaning that it will produce its desired effect in our lives once it has been given by God himself. Simply put, when someone is saved by God's grace through faith (Eph. 2:8-9), that grace will absolutely guarantee their salvation. "And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those He has given me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day" (John 6:39).

May you stand confident in God's grace, knowing that it will indeed lead you home.

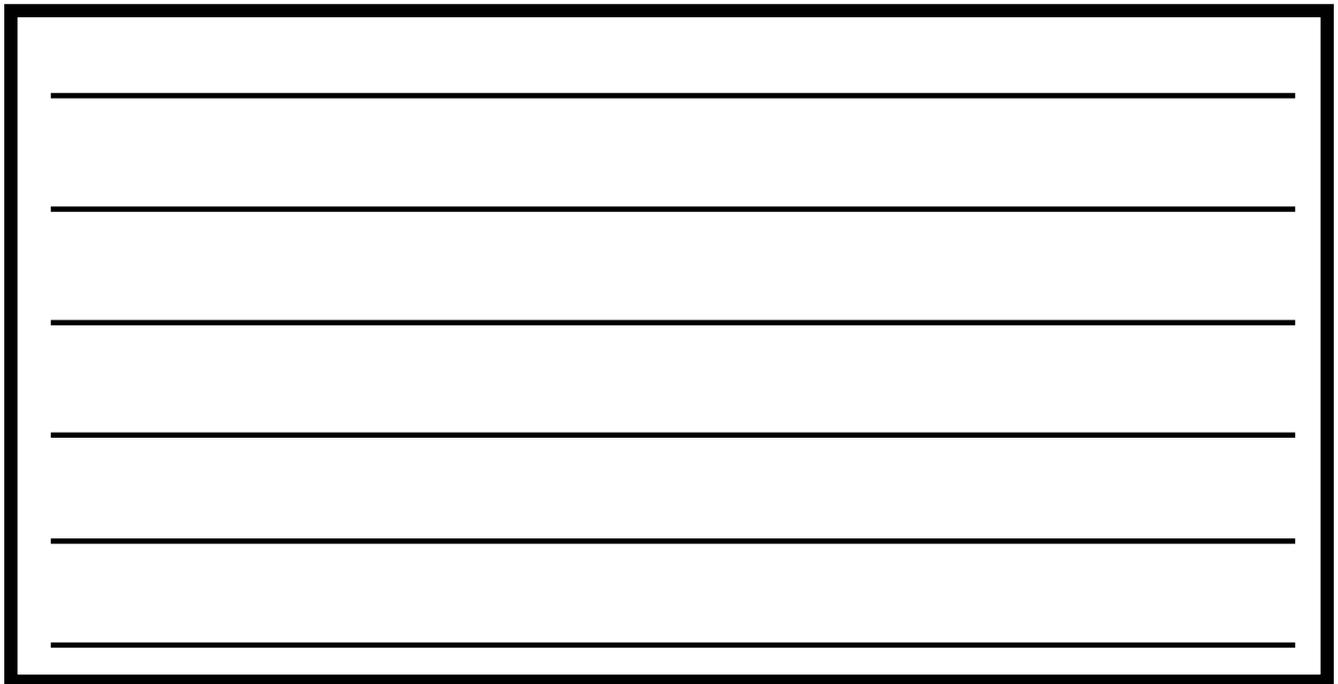
October 28th

Matthew 24:36-25:46; Mark 13:32-37; Luke 21:34-38. "Cheap Grace"

"Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate." – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

In illustrating the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus told a story about three servants. This story teaches us about the appropriate response to God's grace. To receive God's grace and never change your life, actions, or behaviors is to be like the third servant, to not receive God's grace at all. This is what the great German theologian Bonhoeffer called cheap grace.

The Apostle Paul was accused of promoting cheap grace by the Jewish believers who wanted the Gentile believers to follow the law. In Romans 6:1-2, Paul sets the story straight, "Well then, should we keep on sinning so that God can show us more and more kindness and forgiveness? Of course not! Since we have died to sin, how can we continue to live in it? The invitation to receive God's grace includes an expectation to take up your cross and follow Jesus (Matt. 10:38)



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