



# RED HILL LUTHERAN CHURCH & SCHOOL

## THE WEEKLY BRICK

August 23, 2009.

*As you come to him, the living Stone-rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him-you also, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. - 1 Peter 2:4-5*

### “The Amazing Grace of God”

John 6:56-69

John 6:56-57 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. <sup>[57]</sup> Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me.

“Amazing grace, how sweet the sound...” The words of the great hymn bear witness to the central affirmation of the Christian faith—that we are saved by God by grace received through faith. Christian worship is a recitation of God’s salvific acts in human history and our grateful response for those actions. God’s grace is God’s unmerited favor towards you and evidence of God’s desire to love you, lead you, and transform you. It is our response to God’s grace that motivates the Christian to serve others, forgive others, and to surrender to Jesus’ command to take up one’s cross and follow Him. May you hear the “sound” of God’s gracious love for you and may it be a sweet reminder of a divine love that will never end.

#### I. GOD’S GRACE

Grace: God’s \_\_\_\_\_.

*Romans 3:21-24 But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup>This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup>for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup>and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.*

Greek: χάρις (‘charis’) = “The divine influence upon the heart...acceptable, benefit, favor, gift.”

#### II. GOD’S GRACE IN YOUR LIFE

1. GOD HAS \_\_\_\_\_ ME TO BE IN HIS FAMILY.

*John 6:65 He(Jesus) went on to say, “This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.”*

2. GOD IS \_\_\_\_\_ IN MY LIFE.

*John 6:56-58 Whoever eats my flesh and drinks my blood remains in me, and I in him. <sup>57</sup>Just as the living Father sent me and I live because of the Father, so the one who feeds on me will live because of me. <sup>58</sup>This is the bread that came down from heaven. Your forefathers ate manna and died, but he who feeds on this bread will live forever.”*

3. GOD HAS \_\_\_\_\_ MY LIFE.

*John 6:61-64, 68-69* Aware that his disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, “Does this offend you? <sup>62</sup>What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before! <sup>63</sup>The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. <sup>64</sup>Yet there are some of you who do not believe.” For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him... <sup>68</sup>Simon Peter answered him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. <sup>69</sup>We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God.”

(Answers: I. Unmerited Favor. II. 1. Chosen. 2. Working. 3 Secured.)

## WEEKLY BIBLE STUDY

**Monday, August 24<sup>th</sup>** Read *John 4:1-26; John 4:1-26; John 6:56-57*

This week, we will be analyzing both various scriptures that explicate the necessity of God’s grace in our lives, and to expound upon the gospel lesson from yesterday, John 6:56-69. Divine grace is the foundation of our lives as believers. Martin Luther, in his typically candid way, expresses the primacy of grace:

“This is the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies through faith, as it is written in I Cor. 1 [:30]: ‘Whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption’... This inexpressible grace and blessing was long ago promised to Abraham in Gen. 12 [:3]: ‘And in thy seed (that is, in Christ) shall all the nations of the earth be blessed’... Therefore everything which Christ has is ours, graciously bestowed on us unworthy people out of God’s sheer mercy, although we have rather deserved wrath and condemnation, and hell also... Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness and all that he has becomes ours; rather, he himself becomes ours.” (Martin Luther. *Two Kinds of Righteousness*. In *Martin Luther’s Basic Theological Writings*, ed. Timothy Lull. [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989], p. 155).

In John 4:1-26, Jesus meets the woman at the well in Samaria. In this exchange, Jesus embodies divine grace. In the ancient world, for a religious leader to speak with a woman, and a Samaritan woman at that, was forbidden. However, Jesus is not simply talking, he is talking with her about her life! Scholars suggest that the woman has been “shunned” by the village since she comes to the well at the “sixth hour” (approximately noon), in the heat of the day, when she would expect no one to be at the well. The woman has come for water for her physical thirst yet Jesus offers her “living water” for her spiritual thirst. The water Jesus offers is His grace and love that quenches our thirst for love, hope, forgiveness, and peace. Jesus offers you this same grace to quench your spiritual thirst! Jesus knows who you are and what you need just as He knew the Samaritan woman and her true needs.

In our lesson from yesterday, Jesus affirms that the one who “receives” Jesus; they experience a mutual abiding relationship with Jesus. Jesus “remains” (Greek, *menei*) in the Father, and Jesus remains in us and we in Him. The Greek word, *Meno*, from which *menei* derives, is one of the most important theological terms in the Gospel of John. The Father “remains” in the Son (See John 14:10), the Spirit “remains” in Jesus (John 1:32), and believers “remain” in Jesus and Jesus in them (John 6:56; 15:4). The implications of all of this “remaining” are many. The Christian believer possesses an intimacy with and security in Jesus. Just as Jesus receives His life from God, so we receive the divine life through and because of Jesus.

**Tuesday, August 25<sup>th</sup>** Read *Psalm 86; John 6:58-59*

Today, let’s focus on three Biblical truths about God’s grace. First, God’s grace is unconditional (Romans 11:5-6). The very nature of divine grace is that God loves you and accepts you based on His love not your performance. Second, God’s grace is unlimited (Ephesians 3:16-20). God will not “run out” of grace. Sometimes we think that God must be tired of us, our sin and recalcitrance, and at some point will just give up on us! However, the Bible tells us that God’s love is more expansive than we can even fathom. Third, God’s grace is unending (2 Thessalonians 2:13-17). God’s grace will continue into eternity. Even in heaven we will rely on God’s grace. In response to our grace-full God, we are to live lives of thanksgiving, servanthood, and joy.

The location of Jesus in John 6:56-69 is the Capernaum synagogue. As a recognized teacher, Jesus often spoke in Jewish synagogues where such teachers had opportunities to give expositions and exhortations (See also Mark 6:1-6; Luke

4:16-28; and Acts 13:15-42). The synagogue services were not as formal as our American churches. In these verses Jesus returns to the “manna miracle” described in Exodus 16. Jesus reiterates that Moses’ bread did not give lasting life; God has now given the genuine life-giving “Bread from Heaven.” Those who “eat” this “Bread” (i.e. “ingest” Jesus’ words, promises, and commands) will be “filled” in heart and soul, and will have eternal life (life that is experienced now and will continue into eternity).

Going Deeper: *Romans 11:5-6; Ephesians 3:16-20; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17*

**Wednesday, August 26<sup>th</sup>** *Read Colossians 2:6-7; John 6:60*

Usually, we tend to associate grace with our eternal salvation. We are “saved by grace.” Of course this is absolutely true! However, we need God’s grace to live our lives as disciples of Jesus and to grow in faith. God’s grace enables you to become the person that God wants you to be. The theological understanding of this aspect of grace is *sanctification*. God accepts you as you are (grace) but refuses to leave you that way (grace). Luther understood the graceful nature of the Christian life:

“I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in true faith; even as He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian Church on earth...” (Martin Luther, *The Small Catechism: The Apostles Creed*. [Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1971], p.123).

As we see in John 6:60, as the people began to understand Jesus’ teaching, they found it to be totally unacceptable. Jesus faced conflict on every side! The Jewish leaders were hostile to Jesus; the many “Galilean disciples,” those who likely followed Jesus early in His ministry, began to turn away from Him; and (as we will see tomorrow) Jesus’ closest disciples are disturbed by Jesus’ teachings. The on-going, popular enthusiasm for Jesus to be a political Messiah (See John 6:15) is coming to an end which is evident in verse 60. The people began to understand that Jesus was not going to deliver them from Roman imperialism. Perhaps, as Jesus continually used images and metaphors that would offend the sensibilities of the listeners (“eat my flesh” “drink my blood”), the followers looking for a truly Jewish savior, found these statements ludicrous. Jesus may be a wonder-working sage, but His words were “hard.” The question, “Who can listen/accept” Jesus’ words, really means, “Who can obey these words?” What do these teachings have to do with the defeat of Israel’s enemies? Jesus came for an entirely different purpose than the exchange of earthly governments.

**Thursday, August 27<sup>th</sup>** *Read Ephesians 2:4-10; John 6:61-62*

God’s grace was a primary doctrinal concern of the Lutheran Reformation. Luther and the reformers were insistent that grace alone was the necessary “remedy” for human alienation and sin. Human beings are sinners and are captive to sin. Because God cannot allow sin in His presence, God, through Christ, makes us righteous. It is through Jesus, His person and presence in our lives that we are made righteous and are given a future with God.

...[G]race is sufficient to enable us to be counted entirely and completely righteous in God’s sight because God’s grace does not come in portions and pieces, separately, like so many gifts; rather it takes us up completely into its embrace for the sake of Christ our mediator and intercessor, and in order that the gifts may take root in us. (Martin Luther. *Luther’s Works* 35:370, rev.)

In John 6:61-62, Jesus’ disciples now add to the list of those who are upset with Jesus and His words. (For other instances see John 1:47; 2:24-25; and 6:15). Jesus, aware that the disciples were also “grumbling,” (See also v. 41), asked what was so offensive to their ears. (The Greek word for “offend,” is *skandalizei*. I.e. “Scandal”). Saint Paul wrote that a crucified Messiah was a “stumbling block” (same Greek word, *skandalon*) to the Jews (See 1 Corinthians 1:23). New Testament scholar Ben Witherington notes that in v.62, “Jesus...suggests that were they to see the Son of Man ascend to where he was before; they might be even more scandalized. One of the keys to the whole discourse is mentioned in v.63b—that which gives spirit and life are Jesus’ words...the issue here is salvation through revelation and the transformation it brings.” (Ben Witherington, *John’s Wisdom: A Commentary on the Fourth Gospel*. [Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996], 160)

**Friday, August 28<sup>th</sup> John 6:63-65**

After Jesus' ascension, the promised Holy Spirit was given to the disciples. (See John 7:38-39; Acts 1:8-9). The Holy Spirit poured out gives life (salvation) to those who believe (trusting Jesus through faith). Without the Holy Spirit, humankind (the "flesh") is absolutely unable to come to and understand Jesus' person and works (See John 3:6; 1 Corinthians 2:14). Although many of Jesus' followers believed Jesus' words to be "hard," actually Jesus' words are "spirit" and "life;" meaning, genuine spiritual life can only be achieved through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Spirit who works powerfully in and through the words that Jesus speaks awakening genuine spiritual life. The spiritual life described by Jesus throughout John 6, is a life that is received by faith. The isolated words of Jesus do not work "automatically." If that were true, most people who read the New Testament would be changed or convicted simply through the act of reading. Conversely, Jesus continually affirms that anyone who follows and believes Jesus (then and now), were and are drawn by the Father's love, through the Spirit's work in the individual's life, toward Jesus who made possible divine/human reconciliation. Consequently, Jesus knew which followers were believers and which ones were unbelievers. Those who remained with Jesus were the evidence God's salvific work in the hearts of humankind. The unbelieving crowd, those who found Jesus' words, "hard," is evidence that "the flesh counts for nothing" (v. 63).

**Saturday, August 29<sup>th</sup> Read Luke 21:1-4; John 6:66-69**

Grace, graciousness, gratitude, gratuity, "grace-full," *gratis*—all these "grace words" not only sound similar, they also are similar in meaning. Notice that they all indicate a giving of a gift that is based on the generosity of the giver. At the heart of grace is the understanding of the giving of a "gift." What kind of gifts can you give to others in response to God's gifts to you? Here are some ideas:

- \* Mend a quarrel
- \* Write a long overdue note or letter
- \* Make that phone call
- \* Take a walk with someone you care about
- \* Listen
- \* Speak a kind word to someone you do not know
- \* Forgive someone who has hurt you
- \* Apologize if you have hurt someone
  - \* Encourage another person
- \* Offer to baby-sit for a weary couple
  - \* Pray for someone who is in need
- \* Tell the people close to you that you love them

The rejection of Jesus by many of his followers: their disappointment concerning His alternative messianic vision, His "hard words," His increasingly offensive images (eat flesh, drink blood), and His many other "objectionable" sayings (even tax collectors can be the object of God's mercy), all this and more proved to be too much. Many of His followers quit, gave up, and ceased being His "disciples." Disciples here refer to followers in general, not to the 12 disciples. We can see this *Vis a vi* v. 12. I find Jesus' words in v. 67 poignant: "Do you want to quit on me as well?" (RSV the revised Seth translation). Peter, the spokesman of the disciples in general, gives yet another confession of faith. The road may be hard, and His teachings tough, but those teachings lead to eternal life! (v.68) In v.69, the phrase, "We have believed and have known" is probably a better translation of the Greek perfect tenses (as opposed to the NIV where it is rendered, "We believe and know.") Peter's confident statement that he and the disciples know Jesus as "the Holy One of God" is in some ways similar to Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus' transcendent nature ("the Holy One") and His representation of the Father ("of God") is another way of confessing Him as the true Messiah.

