

# GRACE

Hello Faith Community Church, it's good to be with you again.

When I was a kid I learned two mnemonic devices, devices to help you remember something. One was the difference between mercy and grace. I was taught that mercy is God not giving us what we do deserve, i.e. God's wrath is not poured out on us for our sin. God's judgement and punishment is not given to us when that is what we deserve. So mercy is God withholding what we deserve in terms of punishment. And grace, on the other hand, is God giving to us what we don't

deserve, i.e. God giving us His blessings when we are sinful and we have been rebellious. Again, what we deserve is His wrath but He gives us His blessings instead.

The other mnemonic I heard about was what is grace? It took the word G R A C E and made that an acronym. So each letter stands for something. So GRACE is God's Riches At Christ's Expense. God's riches at Christ's expense. Grace.

Well, this week I had planned to push on with I Peter, but this morning - we record these on Tuesday mornings - this morning in my quiet time I had two passages of

Scripture that were part of my reading plan and I read them in juxtaposition to one another. They are a little bit lengthy but they were so impacting on me this morning they inspired me, they encouraged me, they lead me to deep worship and appreciation for who God is. And I wanted to share those with you today and we'll get back to I Peter next week.

This first one is from Isaiah 53. I'm sure that you're familiar with the passage. But as I read through it, I want you to hear what Christ's expense was for us.

"Who has believed what he has heard from us, and to whom has the arm of the

Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him like a young plant and like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty, that we should look at Him. And no beauty that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. And as one from whom men hide their faces, He was despised and we esteemed Him not. Surely He has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows, yet we esteemed Him stricken and smitten by God and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities, upon Him was the chastisement that brought

us peace, and with His wounds we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to His own way, and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth. Like a lamb that is led to the slaughter and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgement, He was taken away and for His generation who considered Him that He was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people. And they made His grave with the wicked and the rich man in His death, although He had done no

violence and there was no deceit in His mouth. Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush Him. And He has put Him to grief when His soul makes an offering for guilt. He shall see His offspring, He shall prolong His days. The will of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. Out of the anguish of his soul He shall see and be satisfied. By His knowledge shall the Righteous One, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will divide Him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors, yet He bore the sin of many and makes

intercession for the transgressors."

Wow, what a powerful passage! I know that was long but think about the expense that Christ paid. Now, turn with me to Ephesians 1, and we're going to read the first 14 verses of Ephesians 1. In this, I want you to hear God's blessings, God's riches that we receive, and pay particular attention to the number of times Paul says "In Christ," God's riches that we receive "in Christ."

"Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and are faithful in Christ Jesus. Grace to you

and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. In love, He predestined us for adoption to Himself, as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of His will, to the praise of His glorious grace, with which He has blessed us in the Beloved. In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of His grace, which



He lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight, making known to us the mystery of His will according to His purpose which He set forth in Christ, as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in Him, things in Heaven and things on Earth. In Him, we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of Him, who works all things according to the counsel of His will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of His glory. In Him, you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our

inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory."

Wow! Wow! I was struck this morning in that juxtaposition of those two passages. Christ's expense and our benefit, the blessings of God that were poured out on us. This week, my challenge to you is to look at those two passages: Isaiah 53 and Ephesians 1 and compare the expense that Christ paid and the riches that we are the beneficiary of because of His expense. Think about this: We have grace and peace because Jesus was despised and rejected. We are holy and blameless because Jesus was chastised and wounded.

We have redemption and forgiveness because Jesus was pierced and crushed. May these words give you great encouragement in whatever circumstance you find yourself these weeks. May they, may they be an inspiration to you. May you dwell on that goodness of God, on that grace of God that we are given. And if some of you who are out there watching this, if you haven't trusted in Jesus, and this, this holy exchange that's offered to you - your sins in exchange for God's blessings - if that sounds too good to be true and you just can't believe it, and you want to talk more about it, please email us. If you email us at

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that's

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we'd be happy to talk with you about that more, to explain more of the riches that God offers to us in exchange for our sinfulness. That we can be called children of God, instead of rebellious, sinful people. We'd love to have a talk with you.

For everyone else, and for everyone, I hope to see you this Sunday. This Sunday we will be talking about praying in the Spirit, as we continue our look at the armor of God. As always, we're praying for you.

Please pray for us as we continue to discern ways that we can minister to you and our community in these

strange times. And as we go contemplate on God's riches that are offered to you at Christ's expense. Thanks and have a great week.