

Grow, Pray, Study for the Week of June 16, 2024

Weekly Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, who has safely brought me to the beginning of this day: Defend and keep me by your grace; and grant that this day I fall into no sin, neither run into any kind of danger; but that I may do always what is righteous in thy sight; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. -- Morning Prayer (adaptation)

Monday, June 17

Scripture: John 1:16-18

From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace;
as the Law was given through Moses,
so grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.
No one has ever seen God.
God the only Son,
who is at the Father's side,
has made God known.

Observation

Here we read what is at the heart of John's message: through Christ, we have "received grace upon grace." Through Christ, we see God-in-flesh. And through his teachings, his actions, and his messages we catch a glimpse of how God moves around in the world.

Application

In Christ, we're given a glimpse into the kingdom of God. We see it as Jesus offers healing and forgiveness, reaches out to those on the margins, and gathers folks into beloved community. How do you notice Jesus offering grace upon grace? How do you experience this grace?

Prayer

God, you have always wanted your human children not just to know about you, but to know you. Thank you for coming in Jesus to give me the clearest picture of your loving, forgiving heart. Amen.

Tuesday, June 18

Scripture: Psalm 86: 3-6,15

Have mercy on me, Lord,
because I cry out to you all day long.
Make your servant's life happy again
because, my Lord, I offer my life to you,
because, my Lord, you are good and forgiving,
full of faithful love for all those who cry out to you.
Listen closely to my prayer, LORD;
pay close attention to the sound of my requests for mercy.

But you, my Lord,
are a God of compassion and mercy;
you are very patient and full of faithful love.

Observation

The Psalms are a book of poetry, hymns, and prayers. If ever you feel at a loss for words when it comes to prayer, try reading a Psalm. Today we read a prayer from someone is crying out to God for comfort and forgiveness, while trusting in God's enduring grace.

Application

God's grace is not a new offering; it is part of the very nature of God. God's grace holds us when we are afraid, broken, or gone astray. It is not a gift for only when we are good; it is a promise that we are God's no matter what, and by God's grace we can know healing and life.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, when I've gotten something wrong in my life, lead me to genuine inner sorrow and a desire to change. I thank you that for all of us "grace can trump justice." Amen.

Wednesday, June 19

Scripture: Romans 1:7; Philippians 1:2; Philemon 1:1-3

To those in Rome who are dearly loved by God and called to be God's people.
Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

May the grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

From Paul, who is a prisoner for the cause of Christ Jesus, and our brother Timothy. To Philemon our dearly loved coworker, Apphia our sister, Archippus our fellow soldier, and the church that meets in your house. May the grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Observation

Grace is central to Paul's writings and is his most common greeting as he begins each of his letters. God's grace changed Paul's life, totally and completely. And he believed that God's grace had the power to change and transform others: how they see themselves and how they see one another. How has God's grace changed your life?

Application

Paul often connected grace with peace in his greetings. Grace leads to inner peace because God's grace comes from God's unending, never-failing love for you and those around you. How much peace do you have right now? Ask God to help you embrace God's grace and increase your peace.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, you are the ultimate source of grace and peace. Help me to embrace your grace and increase your peace in my heart, mind, and soul today. Amen.

Thursday, June 20

Scripture: Colossians 4:2-6

Keep on praying and guard your prayers with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray for us also. Pray that God would open a door for the word so we can preach the secret plan of Christ—which is why I'm in chains. Pray that I might be able to make it as clear as I ought to when I preach. Act wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the opportunity. Your speech should

always be gracious and sprinkled with insight so that you may know how to respond to every person.

Observation

Grace is not only a gift given to us, but is a way of life. In these words from Colossians, we're given some instruction for how to care for one another: wrapping the church in prayer, acting kind and wisely toward others, and speaking with grace. Just as God is gracious, so too are you invited to be gracious and generous.

Application

At a recent funeral, during the time of remembrance, one of the sons spoke of their parent as someone who was gracious and generous in their being. "He said yes whenever possible. If we'd ask for a favor, he said yes before hearing the request." This struck me as both a simple and profound way to approach life. God has said "yes" to us before we even know to ask. How is it that we can approach life with the same gracious and generous spirit?

Prayer

God, make me gracious as you are gracious. Give me a spirit of "yes" as I seek to honor you and love my neighbor with all my heart. Amen.

Friday, June 21

Scripture: Ephesians 2:8-10

You are saved by God's grace because of your faith.^[a] This salvation is God's gift. It's not something you possessed. It's not something you did that you can be proud of. Instead, we are God's accomplishment, created in Christ Jesus to do good things. God planned for these good things to be the way that we live our lives.

Observation

I love these verses, because they remind us that the whole of God's love and salvation is a gift for us. It is not earned; it is given freely and without strings. It runs counter to the way that our world typically works; it can be difficult for us to accept this gift, trusting that God's love is wholly ours without our earning or deserving.

Application

You are God's accomplishment (v10). Did you hear that? You are God's accomplishment. Right now, in this moment, just as you are: God is proud of you. When you struggle to believe in yourself, or have doubts, remember this: you are loved fully and completely. How does trusting these words give you confidence to live as God's chosen and beloved one?

Prayer

God of life, thank you for loving me fully. When I doubt or stumble, surround me with your grace. Remind me, again and again, that I am one of your greatest accomplishments. Help me to live with confidence that I am yours. Amen.

Saturday, June 22

Scripture: Luke 4:16-21

Jesus went to Nazareth, where he had been raised. On the Sabbath he went to the synagogue as he normally did and stood up to read. The synagogue assistant gave him the scroll from the prophet Isaiah. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me.
He has sent me to preach good news to the poor,
to proclaim release to the prisoners
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to liberate the oppressed,
and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*

He rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the synagogue assistant, and sat down. Every eye in the synagogue was fixed on him. He began to explain to them, "Today, this scripture has been fulfilled just as you heard it."

Observation

These verses tell of the beginning of Jesus' ministry and include his first sermon. They also set the tone for his entire ministry: to "*preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the prisoners and recovery of sight to the blind, to liberate the oppressed, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*"

Application

Jesus invited his disciples to "follow me." He didn't just mean to literally follow from town to town. He meant to act, speak, and serve in the ways of Christ. As followers of Jesus, we are called to not only receive his gifts, but to make them part of our life's work as well. Reread this passage today and consider: how has Jesus invited you to make these the foundational words and actions of your own life and ministry? How might you make these words your own: "Jesus has sent ME to preach good news to the poor, proclaim release to prisoners, liberate the oppressed, and proclaim God's good news?"

Prayer

God of grace, God of life, you have called me and I am yours. May the ministry of Jesus inspire my own daily living. Amen.