

Series: **God is...So What?**  
Today's Title: **"God is Gracious"**

December 4, 2022 – *Selected Passages* – Sermon 16 of 16

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**Objective:** To help people know God is gracious and the blessing and obligation of receiving His grace.

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### ***Opening Prayer***

In his book, What's So Amazing About Grace, Phillip Yancy describes a world without grace.

This is a world where the strong oppress those who are weaker.

Vengeance, anger, resentment, and hate are the norms.

Everyone is an enemy threat.

Kindness and charity are virtually unknown – hidden out of sight because they appear to be weakness in a world ruled by strength (Although they are actually where true strength is found!).

Yancy simply refers to this as a world of *UNGRACE*.

We actually know this world of ungrace.

It describes much of our world today.

It's always described much of the world through history.

***What is the time period of the most ungrace in history?***

Hard to narrow that down, isn't it?

- Is it the Mongol Invasions and Conquests of the 13<sup>th</sup> century – death toll of 60-100 million?
- Maybe it is Mao and the Chinese Communist Party – in the 1950's – starved no less than 55 million of their own people?

- How about the Holocaust by the Germans in WWII – killing 7-11 million Jews?
- The Ukrainian famine of 1932 – a result of the Soviet Union’s policy to get rid of Ukrainian Nationalist – killing 3.5 to 10 million Ukrainians.
- The Cambodian Killing Fields – 1975-1979 – killing up to 2 million?
- What about the Armenian Genocide? Rwandan Genocide? Genocide in Darfur which is still happening today?

(Source: <https://owlcation.com/humanities/The-Top-10-Worst-Genocides-in-History>)

This list doesn’t even touch on the more ancient evils and horrific atrocities in history.

It’s not difficult to show that our world – human history – knows little about grace.

**The Church has not always been a harbor of grace.**

At times throughout it’s history – mostly through legalism and spiritual arrogance – or a quest for power – the Church has been guilty of its own form of ungrace – perhaps most blatantly seen in the Middle Ages.

But this is because the people of God – the Church has, at times, forgotten the God of Scripture.

We have forgotten – been ignorant of – or sinfully rejected what the Bible reveals of the nature of God – His attributes / perfections.

*The greatest danger to forgetting – or not knowing the nature of God – is we will then create in our minds a God after our own image.*

And that is not a very glorious or gracious image!!

Today is the last message in this series – “**God Is... So What?**” In this series we have taken 16 Sundays to focus on some of the primary attributes / perfections of God.

But we’ve worked hard to make sure to understand why these attributes are so important.

So What? Why do these things matter?!!

Today – message #16 – we’ve saved what might be the best attribute for last: God’s grace.

It’s always difficult – and maybe a bit foolish – to try and rank the things of God.

After all, who is to say His **kindness** is more vital than His **holiness** - or His **providence** more important than His **power**?

Since each of His attributes / perfections are organically connected and dependent on His other attributes, singling out one over the others is not good theology.

*But God’s grace is a bit different.*

Why? Because grace is the one thing Christianity has to offer the world – that no other religion has to offer.

*It is the grace of God – in Christ – that allows us to be redeemed and reconciled to the perfect, holy, righteous God.*

Let's be content to say this: The grace of God is experienced by us – and impacts our current life – in more tangible ways than most of His other attributes.

It's not more important than the other attributes, but it is an attribute we experience now, and it's a communicable attribute that we can – and we must – share this divine grace with others.

**God reveals His grace.**

We first learn that God is gracious from the mouth of God Himself – when He shares with Moses some of the details of His nature.

He reveals to Moses the kind of God He is.

**Exodus 34:6**

The LORD passed before him (Moses) and proclaimed, “The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious...”

Mercy and grace are often stated together – which causes some people to think they are the same – or at least synonymous.

But they aren't the same – they aren't synonyms.

**Mercy** = Withholding deserved penalty / punishment

**Grace** = Giving what is not deserved

These terms are often mentioned together because in salvation we are spared the penalty / divine judgment we deserve due to our sins, but we also receive divine and eternal blessings from God which we don't deserve.

The grace of God towards us means we receive His unmerited – undeserved favor and blessing even though what we deserve is His wrath.

It's because of God's grace that those who believe – those who admit their sins and their need for God receive His favor, even though we deserve His punishment – we deserve His judgment.

Wages are earned by our labor – our work – our deeds. Grace means receiving what we don't deserve. It's a gift – something undeserved – unearned.

The Bible is explicitly – and repeatedly clear about God being a gracious God.

**Psalm 86:15** (also 145:8)

“But you, O Lord, are a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.”

**Romans 5:17** (NLT)

“But even greater is God's wonderful grace and His gift of righteousness, for all who receive it will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ.”

**2 Timothy 1:9**

“...God, who saved us and called us to a holy calling, not because of our works but because of His own purpose and grace, which He gave us in Christ Jesus before the ages began...”

**1 Peter 5:10**

“...the God of all grace, who has called you to His eternal glory in Christ...”

Theologians typically have two classifications of God's grace in the world.

### 1. Common Grace

**Matthew 5:45**

“For He makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.”

**Psalm 145:9**

“The LORD is good to all...”

Common grace means the blessings of life are experienced by those who follow God – and those who don't.

Unbelievers can enjoy the fruits of this life. The blessings of marriage, of children and family, and of good food and drink.

They can enjoy all the pleasures of this life.

Common grace also means that God restrains evil in the world, which is a blessing to believers and unbelievers alike as God's restraint prevents certain sinful acts.

Common Grace is also realized through civic or governmental authorities when they work to bring justice into society.

### 2. Special Grace

Special grace is the grace of God that works in the lives of those He has chosen for salvation.

By His Special Grace God regenerates them and reconciles them to Himself.

Special grace is not for everyone – it's 'special' – only for those who have been chosen for salvation.

Whenever the Bible speaks of God's grace in salvation, it's referring to His Special Grace.

### ***Apply it... So What?***

We've taken a quick look at God's attribute / perfection of grace.

We have seen how God is gracious.

We've seen the 2 categories of grace: Common grace and Special grace.

Now, let's look at the importance of grace in our life.

Let's see how grace impacts and changes our life – and what the obligations of grace are in our life.

### **Know the value of grace.**

Our world of ungrace - is not aware of their ungrace.

A world without grace is just what they know.

*They don't know the beauty or the value of grace.*

They don't know the one thing they truly covet is not even what they pursue.

God's grace is what they're searching after, but they are settling for the pleasures of life – the victories of the flesh, believing the meaning to life rests in such things.

But time and time again, even after acquiring what this world has to offer, they find themselves empty...again.

And the search for meaning – and for inner peace – continues, but without finding the grace of God, they will keep looking but will never find the one thing that can give rest to their troubled and dissatisfied spirit.

***Do you know the value of God's grace?***

***Does His grace satisfy you?***

All the Biblical writers champion grace, but the Apostle Paul is probably the clearest and the most vivid in his explanation of God's grace.

So important and radically life-changing was God's grace in the Apostle Paul's life that in almost every inspired letter he wrote that is part of the New Testament, he began those letters with phrases about grace.

"Grace and peace to you..." Galatians 1:3

"Grace to you and peace..." Col. 1:2

"Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior." Titus 1:4

At the end of many letters – he put a spotlight on God's grace.

"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen." Galatians 6:18

"Grace be with you..." Col. 4:18

"Grace be with you all." Titus 3:15



Why is Paul so ‘strong’ when it comes to God’s grace? Probably because of what he was before he encountered God’s grace.

- Paul was a man of ungrace - severe ungrace.
- He was a man who lived for the Law of God.
- He was a misguided man who truly believed he was good enough to merit God’s favor.
- He believed he was better than almost every other person.
- He believed his works were the key to his spiritual life.
- He arrogantly believed God favored him more – because he was a dedicated and motivated religious person.

It’s those who were so far from grace – like Paul was before his conversion – those who tried to live according to law – that truly know the wonder and beauty of God’s grace.

**Ephesians 2:1-9**

1 “And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

2 in which you once walked...and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us,

5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved—

7 so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,

9 not a result of works, so that no one may boast.”

**The value of grace** – is in receiving what we could never earn.

**The value of grace** is in receiving the kindness of God toward us in Christ – instead of His judgment.

**The value of grace** is being saved from ourselves.

**The value of grace** is receiving a priceless, eternal gift from God.

That passage begins with this description of who we were before our conversion to Christ:

“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

2 in which you once walked...and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.”

*Grace turns death into life.*

*Grace turns failure into perfection!*

The other value of grace is in its transforming power in our life.

**1 Corinthians 15:10**

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me.”

God's grace is transformative – not just in our salvation – but in our sanctification – our spiritual growth and maturity.

Grace fuels our entire life in Christ – not just our conversion.

**Christ came to give us unending grace.**

**John 1:16**

“And from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

Colossians 1:19 (see also 2:9)

“For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell...”

“from His fullness” - points to the deity of Christ - the fullness of God in Christ.

“fullness” = Greek: *pleroma* - ‘everything in God’

Jesus was not just another teacher - not just a popular figure with a following - not just a moralist or a revolutionary. He was fully God - and fully man.

“we have all received” - Jesus came for every single person.

This doesn't mean everyone will be saved - only those who put their faith in Christ will be saved - but His invitation is to “all” humanity.

Maybe you're here this morning and you've always felt on the 'outside' - like the grace of God is for other people - that somehow you have forfeited your chance to receive God's grace and forgiveness.

Know this: Jesus Christ loves you - He died for your sins - He offers you His complete and eternal forgiveness - but you must put your faith in Him - you must **A**dmit your sins...and **B**elieve in Jesus as your Savior.

“And from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace.”

“grace upon grace” - what a marvelous phrase!

Lit. = ‘*grace instead of grace*’

It’s an unusual phrase with a wonderful and refreshing meaning.

It has the idea of the escalation of God’s grace in our life.

His grace is ever-increasing.

It’s a picture of an overflowing fountain of grace - which never runs out of grace. God never has a drought of grace - there’s always more grace!

### **The obligation that comes with grace.**

There are many obligations that come with God’s grace. Today, I want to focus on what I believe is the most important one because it is the mission He’s given all who have received His grace.

We are to share His grace.

We are to let others know about His grace.

In his 2<sup>nd</sup> letter to Timothy, Paul says this.

**2 Timothy 1:8-9**

“Therefore, do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord... who saved us and called us to a holy calling...”

He told the Ephesian elders...

**Acts 20:24** – *Paul is speaking to the Ephesian elders*

“...the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.”

The “holy calling” Paul mentions to Timothy.

The “ministry” Paul refers to with the Ephesian elders – of testifying “to the gospel of the grace of God.”

We have that same calling – and ministry.

This “calling”, and “ministry” is not just for Apostles – not just for Pastors.

It’s for everyone who has received His saving grace!

- We must share it with others.
- We are to tell others – those who live in the world of ungrace – about the wonderful grace of God in Christ – that He wants to lavish on them!!

We are going to do something different this year leading into Christmas.

We’re planning to do the same thing in the weeks before Easter next year.

We have 4 tables set up – 2 in the front – 2 in the middle.

On those tables are post-it notes – and markers.

Earlier this week in my Tuesday video – and earlier in the service today – I told you to begin thinking and praying about who God would lay on your heart to invite to our Christmas services this year.

In your circle of influence – family – friends – neighbors – coworkers – who are 3, 4, or 5 people that God is bringing to mind – that you will promise before God to do 2 things:

1. Pray for them.
2. Invite them to Christmas Eve – or one of the Christmas services we are planning.

The obligation of God’s grace in your life – is to share it – to tell others about the amazing gift you have received.

**Here’s what we’re going to do.**

1. I’m going to pray for us.
2. Then, as we begin to sing the next song – I want all of you to come up to the table closest to you – and get a post-it note.
3. Write on that note 3, 4, or 5 names of people God is placing on your heart – that you will commit to inviting to a service this Christmas season.
4. After you write their names on that note – go and put the note on the wall.

***Over the next 2 Sundays*** – if you want to add a name to the wall – you can do that.

The notes on the walls will be a reminder to you to invite those people – and a reminder to all of us to pray for the names on those notes.

The week before Christmas – there will be times for you to come in here – and pray over the names on the walls. Before the Christmas Eve service we will take the notes off the wall – and we will pray that people who live in a world of ungrace – who have never known the transforming power of God’s grace – will receive His saving grace this Christmas!!!

***Close in prayer***