

SHINE Through Graciousness

Changing Your Perspective

June 26, 2016

PRELUDE – Trust in You

Songs – Trust in You

This is Amazing Grace

Turn and Greet

Video Announcements

Song- What Love Really Means

Offering

I will love you for you

Not for what you have done or what you will
become

I will love you for you

I will give you the love the love you never
knew.

That song is such a good and tangible reminder of what we learned in week one of this series, Shine through Graciousness.

We learned that God loves us that much. So much that we don't have to clean up our act, or try to behave better, all we have to do is repent (which means to change our mind) and believe that God has made a way through Jesus to make us right with Him. We admit that we are sinners and fall short of God's perfect standard and in return He gives us his saving grace.

As Ladell stated, Saving grace is "God doing for you what you do not deserve (because you are dead in sin) and cannot do for yourself (make yourself holy and righteous) –

with no strings attached.”.

God will love us for us, not for what we have done or what we will become but simply for who we are.

While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. And as we drink that in, as we soak up that saving grace, as we live out of it, through God’s enabling grace we are able to live according to His will and to be gracious individuals.

The more we stay rooted in the grace and what we have been given, the more we are able to extend grace and to shine with graciousness toward others. You gotta have it before you can give it.

During the past three weeks, Rick has spoken to us about what graciousness is.

Graciousness is the predisposition to treat others with the same kind of grace we ourselves have received and continue to receive from God.

And since graciousness is the predisposition to treat others with the same kind of grace we ourselves have received and continue to receive from God then it means that our basic orientation towards others will be to do for them what they do not deserve and cannot do for themselves – with no strings attached. That will be our goal. That will be our desire.

We learned that graciousness is fuzzy...that there is no formula and that it requires

wisdom and discernment: asking and allowing God to enable us to discern if this person and situation requires more grace or truth in love. Do we push in to it or just wait?

We learned about how to relate with graciousness to individuals with whom our values clash, individuals and groups of people who are not playing by “our rules.” And then last week, we talked about how to be gracious with other Christians who have sinned against us, who have let us down and wounded us.

It’s been so good and so helpful to understand what it means to be gracious with some very good reminders and examples. If you missed any of the messages in this series or you need a refresher, then I

encourage you to go back and listen or watch on-line at our website or app.

In just a few moments, we are going to watch a video (some of you have seen this before) called The Butterfly Circus. This morning I want to ask as you watch it that you pay particular attention to

(pic of Mr. Mendes)

Mr. Mendes and notice how he sees things. Notice especially the words he speaks to Will throughout. Just a hint, Mendes is an illustration of a gracious person.

Let's watch.

VIDEO- Butterfly Circus

Mendes SHINES. He stands out. He is different. He does things differently. And we could talk about how he seems to understand that graciousness is fuzzy. How he is gracious...treating Will better than he deserves or expects even after Will literally spits in his face! He is not passive and loves Will enough to speak the truth in love. And all though those are all great things to look at, today, I want to use Mendes illustrate today's topic, "Changing Your Perspective."

Mendes clearly operates differently than others. He sees things differently. He sees people differently. His perspective illustrates what gracious people see that others do not.

We are going to take a look at three specific ways he views people that illustrate for us

how gracious people see others.

The first is that Mendes sees the Imago Dei, the image of God. He sees people the way God sees them. He sees that every person, no matter how flawed they might appear to the human eye, has been created in the image of God.

He tells Will, “You are Magnificent.” And you can tell by his eyes and the way he says that to Will, he means it. As the on-lookers and the Carnival Barker look at Will they see a man that is to be mocked or pitied but not Mendes. Mendes sees beyond the apparent flaws to the image of God in Will.

In Genesis, chapter 1 we read:

*...God created mankind in his own image,
in the image of God he created them.*

Genesis 1:27 (NIV)

Gracious people see others as God sees them. Created in His image, each and every one of them. Every single human being. Even “them”...even “those people”, you know...the Liberals, the Conservatives, The pro-gun people, the anti-gun people, the people who hurt us, the people who break the law, the people who are broken and messed up. All of them have been created by God.

I think about Jesus and how he responded to lepers in his day. Lepers were people who were to be avoided all costs and yet Jesus sees them, he touches them. He draws near to them. He knows that despite their apparent

flaws that they are valuable, that they too have been created in the image of God.

Gracious people see the image of God in others.

The second way that Mendes illustrates the way gracious people see others is his response to Will's statement about the sideshow.

Will implies that sideshows are a must in the circus life because "people come from all over to see us." And Mendes responds "And why do they come Will?" Silence. Mendes goes on to say "There is nothing inspiring about a man's imperfections on display."

Mendes sees that the world wants to put the

flaws of others on display as a way to make ourselves feel better about “us” when we look at “them”. Gracious people don’t do that.

Gracious people don’t buy in to the tactics of this world and the enemy, ripping people down and mocking their flaws for the sake of building themselves up.

Gracious people understand that the enemy comes to tear down, to steal, to kill and destroy but Jesus comes to set the captives free, to bring healing and hope to the hurting, and to offer His saving grace to ALL.

In the first week of the series, Ladell shared with us the story of the woman caught in adultery. The religious leaders bring her before Jesus having been caught in the act.

They put her on display and they feel pretty good about themselves, self-righteous, until Jesus says let he who is without sin cast the first stone. And the crowd dispersed.

He then turns to the woman and builds her up instead of tearing her down. He could have called her out, called her names, guilted her in to behaving better but instead he says “Neither do I condemn you, go and sin no more.” Instead of ripping her down and shaming her, he offers her hope and healing, he offers her a better way, and challenges her to become who she was created to be.

Gracious people seek to build up instead of tear down. They offer the hope found in Jesus.

The final way Mendes illustrates how gracious people see others is illustrated in the difficult conversation with Will when he speaks the truth in love. “Cursed from birth, a man—if you can call him that—whom God himself has turned his back on.” He goes on to challenge Will pushing on the fact that Will believes that statement and challenges him to believe that “The greater the struggle the more glorious the triumph.”

See Mendes believes in the power of redemption. He believes that we serve a God who can redeem any person and any circumstance, no matter how flawed or messed up they may seem.

Mendes believes in the power of God and his ability to make beauty from ashes. Mendes

believes that if we allow Him, God will take our hurt, our pain, our shame, our flaws and work through them. That God's glory will be revealed when we turn all that over to Him.

Gracious people believe that God can redeem ANYONE. ANYONE.

And the Bible is full of them. Stories of messed up people doing messed up things and yet God makes a way where there seems to be no way. He takes people and circumstances that seem unlikely to be used by God and he uses them to display his power, his glory.

So what do gracious people see that no one else does?

Gracious people see others as God sees them.

Gracious people see beyond the flaws to the potential.

Gracious people believe that God can redeem anyone, that no one is beyond God's redemptive power.

Gracious people look at others through the lens of John 3:16.

For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:16 (NIV)

Gracious people stay rooted in God's grace

that He loved them so much that he sent Jesus, his one and only son, to pay the price they should have paid and died the death they should have died. For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

Gracious people know they have been forgiven and made right with God no strings attached. And because, they drink deep of that grace, because they really soak it up and soak it in, they are able to see that God loved not just them, not just the people they love or care about or feel compassion for, but that God loved the world, all the world, every single human being, even “those people”. Gracious people get that. They see that God has made a way for ALL to be made right.

I don't know about you friends but as for me,

I'm far from the gracious person I want to be. As Rick said, being gracious to those who are like you, who like you, who you are favorable to you is NOT what makes us SHINE. What makes us SHINE in this dark and hurting world is the ability to be gracious to those who are NOT like us, who do NOT like us and who we are not favorable towards.

I find it easier to be gracious to people with whom I have no bone to pick. Far too often, I find it easier to be gracious to people who I have compassion for but I struggle to be gracious to those who have hurt me, to those with whom I cannot agree with. And the more they have hurt me, or irritate me, or disagree with me, the more I find myself thinking of them as "less than." I can't see the image of God in them at all, I can only see their flaws

and I'm happy to point them out to others and I certainly can't see any possible hope of redemption.

I so want to be like Jesus. I so want to be gracious like him. He knew when to be patient and when to rebuke. He knew when to speak and when to be silent. I so often think about his response as he hung there on the cross having been brutally beaten and tortured and then hung to die. He says, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do."

He loves them and is gracious to them. As Rick says he is predisposed to treat them better than they deserve with no strings attached.

I so want to be like that. I want to SHINE with graciousness to this hurting world. But I know I can only do that as I stay rooted in God's saving grace and allow his enabling grace to work in me and through me for I am not Jesus. So my only hope of being like him and shining like him is to stay connected to him.

And that's why friends I'm ready for our next project. I really want to allow God to work in my heart and help me to shine with graciousness toward my enemies. As Rick mentioned last week, we will be doing a SHINE project for each of these message series and today we begin our Shine Graciousness project.

For the next four weeks, we are inviting all North Heartlanders (and anyone else who

wants to) to take up the challenge of *graciousness*: **the unconditional predisposition to treat "them" better than they deserve because that is how God treats us.** Graciousness shown to those whose values clash with ours and those who have sinned against us is a powerful way for Christians to be the light that Jesus called us to be.

So part one of this project is to identify the "them". Who is it that you struggle to be gracious with? Who are the individuals and groups with whom you disagree, dislike or distrust? Who is currently mistreating you? Who has done so in the past with whom you have not made peace?

In just a moment when the band starts playing, I want to ask you to take the challenge to write the names of “them” (individual names or groups of people) on a black piece of paper and then bring it up here to the stage or on the tables in the Café and Family room. The black papers are in the seat backs in front of you or on the tables in Café and Family room.

Don't worry if you are watching on-line this week (or if you think of others you need to add to your list), we will offer an opportunity for the next couple of weeks to add to the jar of names at our Shine Graciousness project table.

Let's pray

SONG-Your Grace Finds Me

This week as we begin the project, our goal is to do the radical thing that Jesus told us to do for our enemies.

“You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you ‘Love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!’ In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For He gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike.” *Matthew*
5:43-45 (NLT)

This week, I invite you - actually, I challenge you - to act as light-bearing children of our gracious Father by praying daily for the people on your list.

What should you pray? How about starting with the truth about ourselves.

Lord, I am not fond of this person/group, but you already know that. So, I ask you for a love I don't have and can't begin to produce in my own power.

And then let's pray the Lord's Prayer for them throughout this next week, beginning with today. As I pray, I ask that you would pray along silently and insert the name of the person or people you are praying for.

Father in Heaven, lead _____ to hallow Your name - to treasure You above all and admire You more than anything.

May Your Kingdom come in _____ life, just as it is coming into mine.

Help _____ to do Your will the way the angels do it in heaven with all their might and with great joy.

I pray you will bless _____ with an abundance of food, clothing and shelter; education, health and happiness just as I pray You will bless me with those same things.

Forgive the sins _____ commits.
Bring _____ to think differently
about You and to become a forgiving
person.

Protect _____ from overpowering
temptations, and from the destructive
power of evil.

Amen.

Prayer pastor

Next Sunday “Remembering Our Roots”

FIREWORKS! Sign Up...come hang out with
me