

**SERMON – 7/9/00
FIRST CONGREGATIONAL WAUWATOSA**

“WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE – GRACE”

TEXT: EPHESIANS 2:8

FOCUS: HISTORY AND THEOLOGY OF “GRACE”

**GRACE, MERCY AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR CREATOR AND
LORD AND SAVIOR, JESUS CHRIST. AMEN.**

**G R A C E !!! --- A WONDERFUL WORD OF LIFE
TO BEGIN MY STUDY OF GRACE, I WENT TO
THE 1998 EDITION
OF THE WEBSTER COLLEGIATE DICTIONARY WHICH
DEFINES...**

**GRACE – GRACED – GRACING
AS TO CONFER DIGNITY
OR HONOR ON
ADORN,
EMBELLISH**

**THERE ARE SEVERAL OTHER DEFINITIONS:
---A TITLE OF ADDRESS OR REFERENCE FOR A DUKE,
A DUCHESS OR AN ARCHBISHOP.
----THREE SISTER GODDESSES IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY
WHO ARE THE GIVERS OF CHARM AND BEAUTY.
---A MUSICAL TRILL,**

**AT THAT POINT,
I DIRECTED MY RESEARCH TO THE BIBLICAL MEANING...**

**-----WHAT IS THE SPECIFIC BIBLICAL ---
OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT---
UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORD?**

“GRACE” IS AT THE VERY HEART OF THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL.

ONE WRITER STATES....

IT IS GOD'S UNMERITED FREE, SPONTANEOUS LOVE
FOR SINFUL PEOPLE,
REVEALED AND MADE EFFECTIVE IN JESUS CHRIST.

IN THE OLD TEST... "GRACE" INVOLVES SUCH OTHER
SUBJECTS AS:

--FORGIVENESS,
--SALVATION,
--REGENERATION,
--REPENTANCE AND
--THE LOVE OF GOD.

**THE ELECTION OF ISRAEL TO BE GOD'S PEOPLE
IS ATTRIBUTED IN THE LAW TO GOD'S FREE CHOICE,
AND NOT TO ISRAEL'S RIGHTEOUSNESS.

***GOD MADE A COVENANT OF GRACE WITH ABRAHAM.
--VERY EARLY IN SCRIPTURE WE BEGIN TO SEE A
CONNECTION BETWEEN "COVENANT" AND "GRACE."

***WHEN READING THE PROPHETS
WE FIND "REPENTANCE" AS THE CHIEF DOCTRINE.
YET IT IS A DIRECTIVE THAT THE INDIVIDUAL MUST ACT.

****IN MY EXTENSIVE STUDY OF AMOS
I CONTINUALLY HEARD THE
WOE VERSES....

WOE TO THE PEOPLE WHO DO NOT REVERSE
THEIR "WICKED" WAYS.

YET OVER AND OVER THE WRITERS OF AMOS
CONTINUED TO SHOW A "BRIGHT" SIDE
AND IN THE LAST CHAPTER :VERSE 14 WE READ...

"I WILL RESTORE THE FORTUNES OF MY PEOPLE ISRAEL."

IN EZEKIEL, WE READ IN 36:26

"A NEW HEART I WILL GIVE YOU, AND A NEW SPIRIT I WILL PUT WITHIN YOU; AND I WILL REMOVE FROM YOUR BODY THE HEART OF STONE AND GIVE YOU A HEART OF FLESH."

-----THAT IS A RECOGNIZED **GIFT OF GOD'S GRACE.**

YET EVEN WITH THESE POINTS OF
"HOPE"....OR "ANTICIPATION"

THE NEW TEST... IS WHERE THE FULLEST SIGNIFICANCE
OF GRACE IS FOUND.

PAUL WAS ACTUALLY THE WRITER
WHO BROUGHT THE WORD
"GRACE" INTO THE VOCABULARY
OF CHRISTIAN FAITH.

IN SECULAR GREEK THE COMMON MEANING OF THE WORD
IS **"PLEASANTNESS" OR "ATTRACTIVENESS".**

THIS IS FOUND IN LUKE 4:22 WHERE IT IS USED TO DESCRIBE
THE IMPRESSION WHICH THE WORDS OF JESUS MADE ON HIS
HEARERS:

"ALL...WONDERED AT THE WORDS OF GRACE."

OR IN COL. 4:6

"LET YOUR SPEECH BE ALWAYS WITH GRACE."

THE WORD ALSO MEANS A **KINDLY ATTITUDE OR FAVOR.**
THIS IS MENTIONED IN LUKE 1:30

MARY HAS "FOUND FAVOR WITH GOD."

THIS SAME WORD OF "FAVOR"
IS TRANSLATED FROM THE LXX
[OR GREEK TRANSLATION OF THE HEBREW OLD
TESTAMENT]

THE HEBREW WORD IS THEREFORE AN EQUIVALENT OF THE GREEK WORD ONLY IN THIS VERY LIMITED SENSE. IT FALLS FAR SHORT OF THE FULLER MEANING WHICH "GRACE" CAME TO BEAR IN THE NEW TESTAMENT.

THE LXX WORD ...USUALLY TRANSLATED WITH A CLOSER MEANING TO THE GREEK WORD OF THE NT IS
"MERCY"

THAT INTRODUCES THE CONNECTION
OF GRACE AND MERCY.

WE REFER TO THIS GREEK VERSION OF THE NT AS
THE MEANING OF THE WORD IN THE PAULINE WRITINGS.
IT TAKES ON A DISTINCTIVE NT MEANING
OF THE WORD. GRACE.

THIS WORD GRACE IS NOT USED AT ALL IN
MATTHEW, MARK, OR, 1 JOHN, 111 JOHN AND JUDE.

IN 11 JOHN, IT OCCURS ONCE ONLY

AND IN JAMES, 11 PETER, AND REVELATION TWICE EACH;

3 TIMES IN THE FOURTH GOSPEL,

6 TIMES IN LUKE,

8 IN HEBREWS,

10 IN 1 PETER

AND 17 IN ACTS.

IN ALL THESE NON-PAULINE BOOKS THE WORD APPEARS
ONLY 51 TIMES

AND OF THESE OCCURRENCES
27 ARE IN ACTS AND IN 1 PETER.

101 INSTANCES OF GRACE

APPEAR IN THE PAULINE LETTERS.
TWICE AS MANY AS IN ALL THE REST OF THE NT
IN ALMOST EVERY LETTER OF PAUL,
IT OPENS WITH THE GREETING:
“GRACE AND PEACE FROM GOD.”

*******JUST AS I OPENED, THIS MORNING WITH YOU.**

“GRACE” IS FREQUENTLY SPOKEN OF
AS GIFT BESTOWED BY GOD...

PAUL IS USING THE WORD “GRACE OF GOD” THAT IS
TRANSMITTED TO HUMANKIND THROUGH JESUS CHRIST,
HIS INCARNATION, DEATH AND RESURRECTION.”

WHAT GOD HAS DONE AND STILL DOES FOR PEOPLE IN
JESUS CHRIST, HIS SON,
IS GOD’S “OUTSTANDING ACT OF GRACE.”

GRACE IS OFFERED BY GOD TO PEOPLE
WITH THE SPECIAL PURPOSE OF ACCOMPLISHING
FOR US GOOD THINGS
WHICH WE CANNOT ACHIEVE FOR OURSELF’S.

---IT IS QUITE THE REVERSE
OF A REWARD FOR GOOD CONDUCT;
---IT IS RATHER A MEANS OF RESCUING US
FROM OUR OWN DEEP FAILURE
AND FROM OUR HELPLESSNESS TO OVERCOME IT.

GRACE IS A “FREE GIFT”
IT IS NEVER DUE TO US.
IT IS ABUNDANT AND ASSOCIATED
WITH UNLIMITEDNESS.

GRACE IS FREQUENTLY ASSOCIATED WITH FAITH.

THEOLOGICALLY, THE WORD AND MEANING OF GRACE
COMES THROUGH MANY THEOLOGIAN’S PERSPECTIVES:

**AUGUSTINE, WHO WAS BORN IN 354
WAS THE LAST OF THE ANCIENT CHRISTIAN WRITERS
AND THE FORERUNNER OF MEDIEVAL THEOLOGY...**

**HE WAS A PROMINENT THEOLOGIAN INFLUENCED BY THE
UNDERSTANDING OF "GRACE"**

**WE COULD SPEND HOURS DELVING INTO
AUGUSTINIAN HISTORY AND THEOLOGY.**

**MY PURPOSE TODAY....
IS TO VIEW THROUGH A BROAD SWEEP OF
AUGUSTINIAN THEOLOGY
SOME OF THE DEFINING, UNDERSTANDINGS OF GRACE.**

**AUGUSTINE'S STARTING POINT ON THE MATTER OF GRACE
IS THAT
---WE CAN DO NO TRUE GOOD
WITHOUT THE HELP OF GRACE.
---ONLY THROUGH GRACE IS CONVERSION POSSIBLE.**

**IT IS GRACE THAT, AFTER CONVERSION,
CONTINUES ENABLING THE CHRISTIAN
TO DO GOOD WORKS.
GRACE IS IRRESISTIBLE.**

**AUGUSTINE STATES
THAT ONE HAS RECEIVED THE FIRST GRACE
WITH BAPTISM.**

**YET WE MUST REMAIN FAITHFUL
THROUGH THE GIFT OF PERSEVERANCE**

**WHICH IS ALSO A RESULT OF GRACE
AND DOES NOT DEPEND ON HUMAN MERITS.
"SALVATION IS FROM BEGINNING TO END A WORK OF
GRACE"**

AUGUSTINE STRESSED THE PRIORITY
OF FAITH OVER WORKS.
AN INDEPTH STUDY OF AUGUSTINIAN THEOLOGY
DIFFERED FROM THE REFORMERS
OF THE 16TH CENTURY.
HOWEVER FOR OUR PURPOSE TODAY ...
I WILL MOVE ON IN HISTORY.

***THIS IS A GOOD PLACE
TO MOVE TO THE TIME OF THE REFORMATION
AND MENTION A PROMINENT THEOLOGIAN
MARTIN LUTHER.

DURING THE YEARS FROM 400 TO 1500 THERE WERE MANY
ADDED LAYERS OF CHURCH DOGMA WHICH DEVELOPED.

IT WAS MARTIN LUTHER WHO RETURNED TO
THE STUDY OF THE BIBLE
AND BEGAN TO LOOK CLOSELY AT
PAUL'S LETTERS AND
PAUL'S EMPHASIS ON "GRACE" AND "JUSTICE".

LUTHER IS PROBABLY MOST KNOWN FOR
THE THEOLOGICAL STATEMENT:
"JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH THROUGH GRACE"
LUTHER AND OTHER REFORMERS INSPIRED THE
REFORMATION OF THE CHURCH ITSELF.

****WILLIAM TYNDAL A 16TH CENTURY WRITER STATES....

"GOD'S GRACE TO EACH OF US SHOULD BE MADE
MANIFEST IN OUR GRACIOUS HOSPITABLE RECEPTION OF
EACH OTHER.

INDIVIDUALS LIVING IN GRACE SHOULD NATURALLY
CREATE COMMUNITIES WITH "HARBOROUS DISPOSITION."

GOD'S GRACE IS ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN THE FRAGILE
TIES OF COMMUNITY AND GIVE THEM THE STRENGTH TO

**BECOME A LIFE-SAVING, LIFE-ENRICHING NET OF
SUPPORTIVE RELATIONSHIPS.**

*******AS WE TAKE ANOTHER GIANT LEAP IN HISTORY WE
COME TO THE 1930-40'S AND A PROMINENT GERMAN
LUTHERAN PASTOR AND THEOLOGIAN...**

**DIETRICH BONHOEFFER
HE COINED THE PHRASES**

**“CHEAP GRACE”
AND “COSTLY GRACE”!!**

**“CHEAP GRACE”
BONHOEFFER WARNS US AGAINST,
PRIMARILY FOCUSES ON
THE INDIVIDUAL RECEIVING A FREE GIFT,
FORGETTING THE COST INCURRED BY THE GIVER.**

“COSTLY GRACE”

**AS EXPERIENCED BY INDIVIDUALS IN COMMUNITY,
DEMANDS THAT WE ACKNOWLEDGE THIS GIFT WITH
“GRACIOUSNESS”**

**A LIFE REDEEMED BY GRACE
SHOULD NATURALLY BECOME A GRACIOUS LIFE.**

*****IN MY RESEARCH I CAME ACROSS THIS STATEMENT WHICH
REALLY TOUCHES THE UNDERSTANDING OF “CHEAP GRACE”**

**“IN A MISGUIDED EFFORT TO MAKE THE CHURCH
ACCESSIBLE TO EVERYONE AND OFFENSIVE TO NO ONE, WE
PASS AROUND GOD’S GRACE ON A PAPER PLATE, RATHER
THAN APPROACHING IT WITH AWE AND WONDER.”**

**BONHOEFFER STATED IN HIS BOOK THE
“COST OF DISCIPLESHIP”**

**“CHEAP GRACE”
---IS THE PREACHING OF FORGIVENESS WITHOUT
REQUIRING REPENTANCE,**

---BAPTISM WITHOUT CHURCH DISCIPLINE.
---COMMUNION WITHOUT CONFESSION,
--ABSOLUTION WITHOUT PERSONAL CONFESSION.
----GRACE WITHOUT DISCIPLESHIP...
---WITHOUT THE CROSS,
---WITHOUT JESUS CHRIST, LIVING AND INCARNATE.”

“COSTLY GRACE”

--IS THE TREASURE HIDDEN IN THE FIELD.
--IT IS THE GOSPEL WHICH MUST BE BOUGHT AGAIN
AND AGAIN,
--THE GIFT WHICH MUST BE ASKED FOR,
--THE DOOR AT WHICH A MAN MUST KNOCK.”

“GRACE IS COSTLY BECAUSE IT CALLS US TO FOLLOW,
AND IT IS GRACE BECAUSE IT CALLS US
TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST.

IT IS COSTLY BECAUSE IT COSTS A MAN HIS LIFE,
AND IT IS GRACE BECAUSE IT GIVES A MAN
THE ONLY TRUE LIFE.

“COSTLY GRACE”

IT COMES AS A WORD OF FORGIVENESS
TO THE BROKEN SPIRIT AND THE CONTRITE HEART.

I RETURN TO THE HYMN-- “WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE”
FIRST VERSE.....“WONDERFUL WORDS OF LIFE AND BEAUTY
TEACH ME FAITH AND DUTY.”

PHILIP BLISS WROTE THESE WORDS IN 1874
BONHOEFFER WROTE --“COST OF DISCIPLESHIP”IN 1937.

IT SEEMS GRACE IS MORE THAN
DIGNITY OR HONOR
AS WE FIND IN THE 1998 DICTIONARY.
AUGUSTINE, LUTHER, BLISS, & BONHOEFFER HAVE ALL
REFERENCED THAT SOMETHING IS REQUIRED ON OUR PART
AND THAT IS, TO FOLLOW JESUS CHRIST!