

“The Way of Grace”

1 Peter 2:4-5 & 9 and John 6:35, 8:12, 10:9 & 11, 11:25, 15:5, 14:1-14

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Prayer for Understanding Gracious God please help us understand and live your will. Open our hearts to love as you love. Amen

Jesus said, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” The way is grace. The truth is everyone is loved by God. Receiving and sharing grace is life. Grace is the free and unconditional love of God. Grace is self-sacrificial love. Grace is compassion, empathy and service. Grace protects, helps and heals the vulnerable, the unemployed the poor. Grace loves, gives and serves so no one gets sick, no one experiences violence. Grace transforms hate, violence and injustice into love, protection and equality for all.

Jesus taught and showed the disciples grace. In the midst of a starving crowd Jesus proclaimed. **John 6:35 “I am the bread of life.”** Jesus nourished them with bread, fish and grace.

A woman caught in adultery was about to be stoned. Jesus deplored the darkness of judgement and proclaimed forgiveness saying. **John 8:12 “I am the light of the world.”**

People were blaming others, people were even blaming a blind man, saying he was blind because of his sins. Jesus explained that one is spiritually blind when you blame another and said. **John 10:9 “I am the door.”**

Last week we prayed the 23rd psalm. God restores our souls. Jesus will provide us with everything we need, guide us, comfort us, transform us and reconcile us with everyone. Surely goodness and grace will always be with us. Jesus said. **John 10:11 “I am the good shepherd”**

Lazarus died. Jesus brought him back to life. Jesus said. **John 11:25 “I am the resurrection and the life.”**

Jesus taught about the power of grace to forgive, heal, adopt, transform, renew and invigorate each of us, everyone, enabling us to forgive, heal, adopt, transform, renew and invigorate others. Jesus compared it to a vine giving life to the branches so they can produce fruit. Jesus said. **John 15:5 “I am the vine.”**

In our scripture today Jesus said. “I am the way, the truth and the life.” Jesus washed the disciple’s feet a tangible sign of God’s grace for them, for us. Jesus commanded them, and commands us to do likewise, to graciously serve others. Jesus enjoyed a meal with them. Partaking together of the bread of life and the cup of salvation.

Jesus knew that all the disciples in a few hours will abandoned him, betray him, deny him. All the disciples lost hope, lost faith. Not one of them was able to muster any form of trust in Jesus. They were unable to help each other. Each of them scattered in fear. Yet, God loved each of them completely, perfectly. Grace is the free and unconditional love of God for all people regardless of what anyone says, does or believes. Grace is the redeeming, transforming, resurrecting love of God for all people.

After Jesus proclaimed his love for everyone by washing feet and sharing a meal. Before the disciples betrayed Jesus and his crucifixion. Jesus said. **John 14:1-14 NLT Jesus said, “Don’t let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, and trust also in me. There is more than enough room in God’s home. If this were not so, would I have told you that I am going to prepare a place for you? When everything is ready, I will come and get you, so that you will always be with me where I am. And you know the way to where I am going.” “No, we don’t know, Lord,” Thomas said. “We have no idea where you are going, so how can we know the way?” Jesus told him, “I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one can come to God except through me. If you had really known me, you would know who God is. From now on, you do know God and have seen God!” Philip said, “Lord, show us God, and we will be satisfied.” Jesus replied, “Have I been with you all this time, Philip, and yet you still don’t know who I am? Anyone who has seen me has seen God! So why are you asking me to show God to you? Don’t you believe that I am in God and God is in me? The words I speak are not my own, but God’s who lives in me, does God’s work through me. Just believe that I am in God and God is in me. Or at least believe because of the work you have seen me do. “I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with God. You can ask for anything in my name, and I will do it, so that I can bring glory to God. Yes, ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it!”**

The disciples wanted to know the specific way, the details. Where should we live? What should we do? They were groping around aimlessly for a way, a truth, a life, and Jesus the way, truth, and life is lovingly looking at them, washing their feet, dining with them, teaching them. Jesus is embracing them with grace. Jesus is grace. There is one way to God, grace. Money, success, stuff, generosity, works, religion, repentance, gratitude will never get you to God for God is already with you and will always be with you. Nothing can ever separate anyone, ever, from God's love. God is pure grace, free love, joy and peace for everyone.

The disciples still cannot perceive God's grace. The disciples beg Jesus show us God. Jesus is God. For God so loves us that God sent us Jesus. For God so loves us that the Holy Spirit sustains our life. For God so loves us that God has an eternal, glorious perfect home filled with all the love and joy of the world for us to enjoy with God and everyone for eternity. Jesus tells them, and us, my words reveal God's love. Jesus' actions show God's love.

Jesus' words and works are merely the beginning of God's grace. The disciples, you and I will do even greater works because God is with us. Together we will permeate the cosmos with grace.

Do not let your heart be troubled. Feast upon God's grace. Read God's love letter to you, the Bible. Enjoy God's creation. Play, dance, dream. Savor God's grace.

Do not let your heart be troubled share God's grace. You are capable of doing greater acts of grace than Jesus because the Holy Spirit is within you. More than forgiving enemies. More than welcoming outcasts. More than helping others become whole. More than feeding the hungry. More than sheltering people from storms. More than healing people from disease.

God continually pours grace into us. We are equipped to provide endless grace to others. Grace inspires us to join God in creating a world where no one becomes sick. In this season that appears to be serving with self-sacrificial love, staying home if you are sick, washing your hands, wearing a mask in public, not for yourself rather sacrificing a little bit of comfort so someone else does not get sick. Again, I do not know the specifics of what we should be doing, however I do know that being gracious to all will provide the answers. As we journey into the future with the gift of medicine, our creativity, our compassion we will be able with God's grace to heal people.

Grace inspires us to join God in creating a world where no one is hurt by violence, where children can go to school free from school shootings. Like the disciples, I do not know the specifics of the way we achieve a world where everyone loves, accepts, respects and honors each other. I do know the key is grace. Loving, forgiving and inspiring others to the highest standard, to love as God loves us.

Grace inspires us to join God in creating a world where all have employment, food, clothes, housing and health care. Grace inspires us to join God in creating a world where no one is ever sexual assaulted. Grace inspires us to join God in creating a world where the rich and powerful have compassion, care for and serve all who have less.

Grace inspires us to join God in creating a world where the color of one's skin is seen as unique, beautiful, a wonderful facet of God's image. Certainly, a world where anyone can run free without being shot. God promises that we can do more than Jesus did during his time on earth with God's grace. Whenever you experience a hopeful moment and serve with hope you are an agent of grace, a vessel of grace, a person of grace. The Holy Spirit is filling you with grace that will enable you to be Jesus hands and feet. God's grace flowing through you is enabling you to partner with God in being the bread of life, light of the world, the door, the good shepherd, the resurrection, the way, the truth, the life.

Peter declares. **1 Peter 2:Select Verses NLT "You are living stones that God is building into God's spiritual temple. You are a chosen people. You are royal priests, God's very own possession. As a result, you can show others the goodness of God, for God called you out of the darkness into God's wonderful light.**

God's grace is connecting us to everyone. The Holy Spirit is within us. You, me, everyone is a temple for the Holy Spirit. All of us are vessels of grace. God is mortaring you to all other people. Together we will be formed into an eternal mansion where we savor the goodness, love and joy of all people for eternity.

Let not your heart be troubled. Savor God's grace. Share God's grace. Amen