



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Fourth Sunday in Lent (B) – Ephesians 2:1-10

Focus: *Grace Comes!*

word of life

“For by grace you have been saved through faith....” Ephesians 2:8 (NRSV)

Read Ephesians 2:1-10

This section of Ephesians is one of the most eloquent statements of the saving grace of God in Christ. It summarizes the theological understandings of the Reformation: “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God ...” (Ephesians 2:8-9 NRSV)

1. *Why do you think this verse is considered to be so central to the faith?*
2. *What is important to know about the 16th century reformation of the church led by Martin Luther?*
3. *What do you understand the central theme of the Reformation to be?*

The verses for today’s reading can be viewed in three progressive themes which lead to the central statement of grace and its lasting effect for the Christian life.

The first theme, found in verses 1-3, describes the time in the Ephesian community before the saving grace of Christ was known. This time is dominated by what Luther in the Small Catechism names as the powers that defy God: sin, death, and the devil. “You were dead through the trespasses and sin in which you once lived,” the chapter begins. (Ephesians 2:1 NRSV)

These powers are manifested in disobedience to the will of God and in following the passions of the flesh. (vs. 3) We acknowledge our captivity to these powers in our time of confession: We are in bondage to sin and cannot free ourselves.

4. *How would you describe the powers that defy God?*
5. *How are they manifested today?*

The second theme proclaims the saving love, grace, and mercy of God in Christ. (vs. 4-9) This saving power comes to us even in our sinfulness – “even when we were dead through our trespasses” (vs. 5) – and gives us life now and in the ages to come. (vs. 7) It is a gift given without any merit on our part.

6. *How do you describe the grace of God?*
7. *How does grace come to us even in our sinfulness?*

The third theme articulates the lasting effect of the gift of grace: “We are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works.” (vs 10) Fruit trees do what they are created to do; they bear fruit! And followers of Christ, living in their life of grace, do what they are created to do; they do good works which become their way of life. In Christ we are set free from the powers of death and sin, given life and salvation, and set free to do good works.

8. *How have good works become your way of life?*
9. *What are you set free to do?*

word among us

A man went into a hole-in-the-wall restaurant in a small town in the South. He ordered a typical Southern breakfast of hotcakes, bacon and eggs. When the server brought the meal to his table, the man was surprised to see grits on his plate along with the food items he had ordered. When he protested that he had not ordered the grits, the server said, “Oh, you don’t need to order grits. You get them even when you don’t order them. They just come with breakfast. ”

1. *Have you ever received something good that you didn’t ask for or request? Share some examples.*
2. *What does it feel like when you get something extra?*

The story about grits is a wonderful illustration to describe grace. You don’t need to order up grace. You can’t pay for it. You can’t earn it. GRACE JUST COMES!

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God – not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” (Ephesians 2:9 NRSV)

So how do we respond to such free, unmerited love and mercy? The man thanked the server for the unexpected gift. It affected him enough that he shared the story with others. In some small way, he was changed by the gracious act.

Grace does that to you. It changes you and re-forms you to be what God in Christ has meant for you to be all along – a doer of good works – not to earn God’s love and favor, but because it just comes!

3. *How do you respond to God’s grace?*
4. *How has grace changed and re-formed you?*

faith practice in daily life

Proclaim the good news of Christ in word and deed

Our lives of faith are reflections of the grace we have received. As we grow in our awareness of God’s grace in our lives; as we more fully realize the unmerited nature of God’s mercy; as we live and experience the power of God to give us life and hope – our lives are transformed.

We can’t help but tell others. We can’t help but show God’s grace in our actions and deeds. We can’t help but be what we were created to be – doers of good in the world. Faithful living becomes our way of life.

5. *Are you who God created you to be?*
6. *If not, what prevents you from doing so?*
7. *How might you show others about God’s grace through your actions and deeds?*

Prayer

Gracious God, we give you thanks for your gift of grace given freely through Christ our Lord. Amen

last word

Look for signs of God’s grace
in your daily life this week.