

“The Fullness of God’s Grace” (John 1:1–18) (10.2.22)

John 1:1–18 (NIV84) *The Word Became Flesh*

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.² He was with God in the beginning.

³Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.⁴ In him was life, and that life was the light of men.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.

⁶There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.

¹⁰He was in the world, and though the world was made through him, the world did not recognize him.¹¹ He came to that which was his own, but his own did not receive him.¹² Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—¹³children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.

¹⁴The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

¹⁵John testifies concerning him. He cries out, saying, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me has surpassed me because he was before me.' "¹⁶From the fullness of his grace we have all received one blessing after another. ¹⁷For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. ¹⁸No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known.

The word of God for the people of God.

LET US PRAY.

Title: **"The Fullness of God's Grace"**

INTRODUCTION:

It is a great challenge to try to convey what is included in the fullness of God's grace.

In a moment, I will begin to explain what biblical grace is about; but let me start with the opening of the entry for grace in the Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary: "Grace is the favor of God to human beings. The subject of grace in the Old Testament is too vast for comprehensive treatment." That is a

pretty amazing statement because most people think of the Old Testament God as one of wrath.

There are two other impressive things about that statement. 1) The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary is a SIX volume bible dictionary and it says the subject of grace is too vast for comprehensive treatment. 2) Then consider how prominent grace is in the New Testament and you will start to understand how critically important a place that grace plays in Christianity.

Let me give you another example of the challenge. You have often heard me quote The Prince of Preachers, Charles Spurgeon. In my Logos Bible Software, there are 65 different sermons by Spurgeon on the subject of grace; 65. So, it is clear that what you will be hearing today is just a sampling of the goodness of God.

This illustration should give you a proper perspective of the situation. Imagine that you are standing at the bottom of the Niagara Falls. You are holding a canteen that you want to fill. The water coming over the falls is God's grace. There is a tremendous reservoir of water at the top of the falls and it has been flowing for thousands of years. You unscrew the cap of your canteen and hold it up to try fill it with ALL the grace of God. It can't be done. Hopefully, you will capture enough

for your thirst to be quenched for your immediate needs.

BODY:

Here is a common definition of grace: "Grace is love demonstrated by giving; in the gospel, grace is unmerited divine favor, arising in the mind of God and bestowed on his people. It is often considered with regard to its beneficial effects."

As related to our salvation, there is the judicial aspect as we will ALL stand before a perfectly holy and just God to be judged. Justice would be if we got what we deserved. Mercy is when we do not get what we deserve. And, grace is when we get what we DON'T deserve. Instead of condemnation, we receive not only pardon, but eternal heavenly life based on the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8–9 (NIV84)

⁸For it is **by grace** you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—⁹not by works, so that no one can boast.

The crucial point that the Apostle Paul is making is that we cannot earn our salvation. We do not practice a religion of salvation by works. It is completely a work of our benevolent heavenly

Father. The connection between Christianity and good works is explained in Paul's next verse: Ephesians 2:10 (NIV84) For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

And, this is a wonderful lesson for us that too many people miss. Because we are saved by grace, we are a people of grace. God's goodness and favor are to flow through us, His children, and bless this world.

This concept is foundational to God's Chosen People. When God called on Abraham to be the father of The Chosen People – very near the beginning of our Bibles – God makes this promise: Genesis 12:3 (NIV84)

³ I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;

**and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."**

How was this promise enacted? The Chosen People were the Jews. Jesus was miraculously born to a Jewish virgin in the line of King David. God the Father sent God the Son to be the Savior of the world. A great act of grace. A great act of love.

Johnathan Edwards has often been called the greatest American theologian. He preached, "Christ is full of grace, as he is the grand medium by which all the goodness of God that men receive is conveyed. Fallen man receives no goodness from God of no kind, but that it is through the Lord Jesus Christ."

One of the most well-known portions of scripture is Psalm 23, which we used for our Call to Worship. It is filled with examples of God's grace. A shepherd provides and protects. Jesus says that He is THE GOOD SHEPHERD. Green pastures and restorative still waters are promised. We are empowered to walk the path of righteousness. Because of the presence of Jesus, we need not fear the shadow of death. Our Shepherd comforts us. Even enemies will witness our blessing at the Lord's Table. We are anointed to the point where it overflows. Goodness and mercy will follow us. And the greatest act of grace is that we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever!

Jesus, the One and Only, is full of grace and truth. It is through Christ's fullness of grace that we ALL have received one blessing after another. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. And all that fullness of grace is enshrouded by the glory of God – a glory without limits. Can you fathom it? I confess that I cannot. It is overwhelming.

I will paraphrase what Alexander Maclaren preached:

“The gleaming and radiant light of stooping love that shone forth warning and attracting in His gentle life, and the clear white beam of unmingled truth that streamed from the radiant purity of Christ's life, revealed God to hearts that pine for love and spirits that hunger for truth, as no others of God's self-revealing works have done. And that revelation of the glory of God in the fulness of grace and truth is the highest possible revelation.

For the divinest thing in God is love, and the true 'glory of God' is neither some symbolical flashing light nor the pomp of mere power and majesty; nor even those inconceivable and incommunicable attributes which we christen with names like Omnipotence and Omnipresence and Infinitude, and the like. These are all at the fringes of the brightness. The true central heart and lustrous light of the glory of God lie In His love, and of that glory Christ is the unique Representative and Revealer, because He is the only Begotten Son, and 'full of grace and truth.'

Here on the one hand is the boundless ocean of the Divine strength, unfathomable in its depth, full after all draughts, tideless and calm, in all its movements never troubled, in all its repose never

stagnating. On the other hand, what should be an extreme eagerness or enthusiasm is the emptiness of our poor, weak natures. **Faith** opens these to the impulse of that great sea, and "**according to our faith,**" in the exact measure of our receptivity, does it enter our hearts."

In Charles Spurgeon's morning devotion for March 15th, he wrote this:

*"Be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus."
—2 Timothy 2:1*

"Christ has grace without measure in himself, but he has not retained it for himself. As the reservoir empties itself into the pipes, so has Christ emptied out his grace for his people. "Of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace." He seems only to have in order to dispense to us. He stands like the fountain, always flowing, but only running in order to supply the empty pitchers and the thirsty lips which draw near unto it. Like a tree, he bears sweet fruit, not to hang on boughs, but to be gathered by those who need.

Grace, whether its work be to pardon, to cleanse, to preserve, to strengthen, to enlighten, to quicken, or to restore, is ever to be had from him freely and without price; nor is there one form of the work of grace which he has not bestowed upon his people.

As the blood of the body, though flowing from the heart, belongs equally to every member, so the influences of grace are the inheritance of every saint united to the Lamb; and herein there is a sweet communion between Christ and his Church, inasmuch as they both receive the same grace. Christ is the head upon which the oil is first poured; but the same oil runs to the very skirts of the garments, so that the meanest saint has an unction of the same costly moisture as that which fell upon the head. This is true communion when the sap of grace flows from the stem to the branch, and when it is perceived that the stem itself is sustained by the very nourishment which feeds the branch.

As we day by day receive grace from Jesus, and more constantly recognize it as coming from him, we shall behold him in communion with us, and enjoy the felicity of communion with him. Let us make daily use of our riches, and ever repair to him as to our own Lord in covenant, taking from him the supply of all we need with as much boldness as men take money from their own purse."

I shared Spurgeon's devotion because of the way he linked God's grace and communion with our God. And that is why I chose to preach this sermon today – the undeniable relationship between God's

grace and Holy Communion, which we will celebrate in a few minutes.

In the Reflection Questions on the back of the bulletin, there are questions about Communion and Grace. "Andrew W. Blackwood suggests that the Lord's Supper is an act with ten different meanings:

1. It is a memorial of Christ's redeeming grace: "This do in remembrance of Me." Like the Passover out of which it grew, the Christian Supper teaches us to look back upon the meaning of our redemption.

2. It is a symbol of Christ's death for us sinners: "This is my body, which is broken for you."

3. It is our mightiest means of grace. **Grace is the sum of all that we know about God.** It is the attraction of his goodness, supremely in the cross. The prayer, public worship, and the Lord's Supper.

4. It is a thanksgiving feast. Such is the literal meaning of that stately title, the Eucharist. In the Greek the original word means thanksgiving.

5. It is likewise a family meal. As such, it has among Christians the place which the Passover

filled in the religious experience of the ancient Hebrews. The Passover was preeminently a family meal.

6. This family meal is at the same time the Holy Communion with the Church of all the ages, on earth, and in glory. This is no small part of what we mean when we stand to say in the Apostle's Creed, "I believe ... in the holy communion of saints." The word "communion" literally refers to that which we have in common. Another word which means almost the same as communion is fellowship.

7. It is likewise a Sacrament. Theologically the word sacrament means an outward and visible sign of God's inward and spiritual grace.

8. The Sacrament is also a Covenant of Grace: "This cup of the New Covenant in my blood ..."

9. There is a sermon in the Supper, the most powerful and moving sermon in the history of the church: "Ye do show the Lord's death till He come." The verb translated "show" literally means to preach.

10. The Lord's Supper is a symbol of Christian hope: "... till He comes [again]."

CONCLUSION:

From the earliest days of Methodism, celebrating the Lord's Supper was central to the faith. John Wesley himself celebrated it as often as possible, several times per week. At the same time, God's grace and love were emphasized in Methodist teaching and preaching.

One author explains: "The Wesleys understood the Christian life, therefore, as a pilgrimage of "grace upon grace." The practice of Christianity begins in grace, grows in grace, and finds its ultimate completion in God's grace. Grace is God's unmerited love, restoring our relationship to God and renewing God's own image in our lives.

Through grace, God leads us into a dance of joy, justice, and jubilee in which we seek to radiate God's love, participate in God's reign, and seek the restoration of all things in the Three-One God. Christian discipleship is, first and foremost, a grace-filled response to the free gift of God's all-sufficient grace."

As Paul prayed for the Ephesians, I pray for you:
Ephesians 3:14–21 (NIV84)

¹⁴For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom his whole family in heaven and on earth derives its name. ¹⁶I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷so that Christ may

dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love,¹⁸ may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ,¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

²⁰ Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us,²¹ to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever! Amen.

Come, Sinners, to the Gospel Feast
(#616) by Charles Wesley

1. Come, sinners, to the gospel feast,
let every soul be Jesus' guest.
Ye need not one be left behind,
for God hath bid all humankind.

2. Do not begin to make excuse;
ah! do not you his grace refuse;
your worldly cares and pleasures
leave, and take what Jesus hath to give.

3. Come and partake the gospel feast,
be saved from sin, in Jesus rest;
O taste the goodness of our God,

and eat his flesh and drink his blood.

4. See him set forth before your eyes;
behold the bleeding sacrifice;
his offered love make haste to embrace,
and freely now be saved by grace.

5. Ye who believe his record true
shall sup with him and he with you;
come to the feast, be saved from sin,
for Jesus waits to take you in.

Amen and amen. Let us pray.