

GRACE RECEIVED

General Comments:

This is the second Pastor's talk given on Friday. It introduces the concept of Palanca, and provides a way of introducing the prayer banner.

Outline

1. **God gives to every Christian all that is necessary to live a life in grace.** God's spirit in us fills us with the possibility of union with God. But this possibility cannot be realized without God's help, without actual grace. God's nature is grace. God's action is to offer grace to us. The focus of this talk is on our experience of God's grace and our empowerment to live in God's grace.

2. How does God help us to live the life of grace?

Ezekiel 37: **God is present with us as life and breath; God infuses us with Spirit**

3. Why do we need God's help?

In ourselves, by our nature, we are powerless to achieve any spiritual goal (John 6:44; John 15:5; 2 Corinthians 3:5).

We are called to relinquish our strengths, allowing God to guide, help, strengthen us.

4. When does God help us?

Always. **God is always more willing to listen than we are to pray, to give than we are to receive, to forgive than we are to be made whole.** Paul Tillich: "We occasionally encounter the God who continually confronts us".

God always helps us at the right time. [This is a good place for the speaker to share a personal experience]. If we allow ourselves to be open to God's grace, God will be there, and God's grace is sufficient.

5. How does God help us?

God enlightens our minds, God gives us a new vision, a new lens through which to see the world. Thomas Merton had lived in the monastery for a number of years, and wrote in his journal after visiting Louisville, KY:

"I seemed to have lost an eye for merely exterior detail and to have discovered, instead, a deep sense of respect and love and pity for souls that such details never reveal. I went through the city, realizing for the first time in my life how good are all the people in the world and how much value they have in the sight of God?."

God gives us a new ideal, a new vision.

6. How much does God help us?

God gives us all we need to live the Christian life, the life of grace. God gives us neither too much nor too little (2 Corinthians 12.9). God provides.

Israel's journey from slavery to freedom...life in the wilderness...manna for each day...they tried to hoard, and the excess went bad...tried to gather on the Sabbath, and the excess went bad. God provides: words to the hymn, "Trust and obey" express this.

7. What is our response to God's grace?

We must have faith to respond to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives. This is our responsibility. God initiates the life of grace. We respond.

Doris Donnelly tells the story of her great aunt Greta, who immigrated from Holland to America. Thrilled at the prospect of being reunited with her family after twenty-five years, Greta booked passage on the first steamer leaving Rotterdam, settling for accommodations in steerage rather than waiting another six months to travel in the grand style her relatives had planned.

A thoughtful employee invited her to come to the upper deck each of the 14 days, escaping the damp dark quarters in which she slept. She declined, calling this "minding her place". She never presumed that there was anything more to crossing the Atlantic than enduring the volcanic tosses from her mildewed perch.

Upon landing in the New York Harbor Greta became aware of what she had missed. On the upper deck there were tapestries, buffets, chandeliers, Oriental rugs, silver, etc. Most alarming, was the fact that there were people, just like Aunt Greta, stranded in fourth class quarters, who had accepted the invitation and had enjoyed these treasures daily. "Imagine", Greta would gasp in recalling the experience, "it could have all been mine if I had only said Yes".

We are called to say "yes" to God's grace. Our yes is the beginning of the abundant life.

8. How do we ask for God's help?

"Ask and it will be given you": Jesus

"Let your requests be made known to God": Paul

To live in grace is to invite God into our lives. In these moments there are men and women who are in intercessory prayer for you and me. [Bring out the prayer banner.] They are also sending us visible signs of Palanca, which comes from the Spanish word meaning "lever". "Give me a fulcrum and a lever and I can move the world", Archimedes said. Prayer is a form of palanca, a lever by which God works in our lives. [List other forms of Palanca, i.e. general letters, communion ware, cross and candles, stole, etc.]

9. Conclusion

This Pilgrimage is an outpouring of God's grace during these three days. God brings us to this place to give us grace. God infuses us with the Spirit, God gives us a new lens to see the world, God invites us to say "Yes" to a life of grace.

Receive the grace of God. God loves you and so do I.