

Fall Outreach Dinner Message

October 27, 2017

“Grace to Grace”

Wasn't that a delicious dinner?! Mouth watering, wild caught, Alaskan salmon....not only tastes wonderful....but if you ate at least 6 ounces, you are now being supplied with all of the protein, minerals, essential fatty acids, and vitamins you need for today!....Now you'll have healthy bones and teeth, a balanced thyroid, a well lubricated brain and a strong beating heart! That was no accident of random natural processes either! God prepared that fish to provide specific nutritional needs for you...with the same detailed precision that he applied to create your body. He also superintended every move that amazing creature made....from a tiny little gelatinous sphere, spawned in a busy little Pacific mountain stream, then traversing hundreds of miles of watershed....spending 3 years in a vast complex ocean...to grow and to accumulate just the right elements to become your perfect meal tonight! The chemistry, and the physics, the hydrology and the climate control...and the seasonal timing of such an enterprise is staggering!

The rest of your meal was no logistical picnic, either! By my calculations you enjoyed the bounty of

over 12 different plants, from 6 different countries....depending on which flavor of tart you selected.....and they were all produced by nothing short of a miracle! Just the right soil conditions, sun exposure at the right temperature, and water frequency was needed to produce those flavors. Again, none of this happened through random natural events....the Creator of the universe made it all come together by His own intelligent design.

My point is this...whether you know Him or not, ...whether you believe in Him or not,...whether you worship Him or not....the only living and true God of creation, has been taking pretty good care of you! Whether you are under 7 or over 70, and all ages in between,...God has been providentially meeting every one of your needs since before you were born....by His **common grace!**

What is common grace? It's the goodness and benevolence of God that we read about in the 145th Psalm. It is God, in His sovereignty, providing the bounty of His great creative works for all people. The everyday, continual providential care that God's grace blesses the unrighteous with, as well as the righteous. Two farmers work the land in the same district. One farmer believes in and loves God....worshipping Him each Lord's day...praying and

reading his Bible, daily. The second farmer doesn't even believe that God exists! Yet, Jesus says that both farmers receive the same blessings of sunshine and rain in Matthew 5:45. "He makes His sun rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust." They both raise their crops, and both profit, *in this life*, by common grace.

What is grace?...It is undeserved favor from God....unmerited blessings, that man is not worthy to receive. Or better still, it is favor *against* merit! Every since Adam and Eve sinned in the garden of Eden, by disobeying God's word, every human born,... except one baby in Bethlehem,... has deserved death! They didn't simply disobey God...they each set about to become God themselves and establish their own self rule...as every human being has since,...following in the footsteps of Satan. But God by his common grace...provides the bounty of temporal life. Every breath they take, every pleasure they enjoy, every extra moment of life they are given in which to consider God's right as their Creator to rule their lives, is a grace gift from God.

Common grace is seeing the vibrant colors of the rainbow, the bold and mellow blends of autumn hues in the fall leaves, the verdant greens of lush growing landscapes, and the dazzling glow of sun

painted clouds melting into the horizon. Common Grace is tasting the cornucopia of flavors that we feast upon for a lifetime,... hearing the sweet melody of the beautiful sound of music,...feeling the pleasurable sensations of a thousand textures and the warm sun and a cool breeze. Common grace is the warmth and kindness in the people sitting at your table tonight....whereby God has restrained their capacity to do evil, so much so that they might even practice the golden rule of "doing unto others as you would have them do to you." Common grace is seen in the civility of a society within which we conduct our business and live our lives in relative peace. Why, were God to lift His restraining hand only slightly the public order would descend into anarchy and chaos, in a fury of self destruction! God has often shown us the reality of that natural disposition for hateful violence, by lifting His hand only slightly at times. When God stops restraining evil even for a moment terrorism breaks out....should he continue to withhold his common grace for a season...the conflagration of world wars!

Common grace is the love of family, friends and community...it's love and marriage...it's enjoying your favorite sport or hobby and the strength to play them well, and the healing process your body needs to

mend the broken bones and cuts and bruises when you don't play so well! Common grace, in fact, is so common that the only reason that sorrow and tragedy stand out is because there is so much joy and gladness! The only reason that we recognize ugliness is that God has given us so much beauty! Common grace is having meaningful jobs and the pursuit of happiness and the resources and faculties to improve your station in life. And we enjoy these blessings in daily life,... as believers and unbelievers alike! What do *you* enjoy in this life? Thank God for His grace in providing it!...You don't *deserve* it....that's the definition of grace....and it comes from a loving and merciful God!

Why does God provide this common grace? We also read in Acts 14:17, "Nevertheless, He did not leave Himself without a **witness**, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." Common grace, as a witness of God's goodness...ought to be enough to move our human hearts with supreme gratitude!....Moving sinners to repentance and faith!...Causing us to worship such a good and great God, and live the rest of our lives for His glory! But it doesn't!....Our sin is too deep...we are just too selfish by nature.

The apostle Paul rebukes the unbeliever in Romans 2:4: “Do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and long suffering? Not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance?” Yes, Paul we do despise it....We think so little of His kindness...we take it for granted. Human depravity is so complete that in the face of the testimony of all His goodness, in spite of His patience, men choose to worship themselves instead of their benevolent Creator!

You see, common grace will not save us....it will *never* turn us to repentance...our desperately wicked hearts betray us..."For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." ... "And the wages of that sin is death!....(pause)....but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord!" You see common grace will *never* save us...**special grace** from God is required for that miracle! Saving grace is *special* grace! We need to be “re-created”, given a new and clean heart that is not evil. And only God can do that by His *special grace*.

Let's listen to another verse...one that speaks of that special grace....**Titus 2:11**: “For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men.” Dear ones, that's not just the divine attribute of grace...but the person and work of Jesus Christ

Himself...the *incarnate* grace of God! God coming to earth in human flesh to live a perfect life and present Himself a perfect sacrifice for our sins,...to satisfy the righteous judgments of a holy God! (read Titus 2:11-14)

Listen carefully, my dear friends....this is not a fish story! If you have not yet experienced God's special saving grace, you are still separated from Him by your sin. "It is appointed unto man, once to die, and after this,...the judgment." According to Hebrews 9:27. If you do not know His special grace in this life, you will receive justice instead of mercy....on judgment day, in the next life.

Special grace is when God performs in your life the miracle of trading places with Jesus Christ! 2 Corinthians 5:21 says: "For He made Him who knew no sin (that's Jesus Christ), to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him!" That's the special grace of God treating Jesus on the cross, as if He had lived your sinful life,...and treating you, *forever*, as if you had lived His sinless life! That's the gospel, and the very essence of His special grace!

You say, "But if God does this *for* me, than there's nothing I can do!" Yes, Jesus does say in John 6:44, "No one can come to me unless the Father who

sent me draws him, ...and I will raise him up on the last day.” Are you being drawn to the savior tonight? Is the special grace of God calling out to you? Jesus also said in John 6:37: “All that the Father gives me will come to me, and the one who comes to me I will by no means cast out!”

Let’s make it real simple....You have the witness of His **common grace**....Do you have the calling of His **special grace**? Let’s make it as simple as **A,B,C**. God is calling you tonight by His special grace...then, **A** – admit that you are a sinner...hate your sin as God hates it, and turn away from it...that’s repentance! **B** – believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,... God’s **special grace incarnate**,...and believe that He died for your sins on the cross, by God’s design,...His only plan of salvation. Believe that He was buried in a tomb, conquered death and rose from the grave, as **the resurrection and the life** for all believers! That’s faith! And, **C** – come to Jesus,.. ”For there is no salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven, given among men by which we must be saved!” If, by the special grace of God, you find yourself being made willing....you will not find Him otherwise.

Let’s pray for just that special grace.