

Title: “This is Amazing Grace”

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Matthew 20:1-16

9/20/2020

Lesson: *“This is amazing grace. This is unfailing love. That you would take my place. That you would bear my cross.” Through faith we receive this truth and live it out in our daily lives.*

Message:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

⁹“The workers who were hired about five in the afternoon came and each received a denarius. ¹⁰So when those came who were hired first, they expected to receive more. But each one of them also received a denarius. ¹¹When they received it, they began to grumble against the landowner. ¹²‘These who were hired last worked only one hour,’ they said, ‘and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the work and the heat of the day.’

¹³“But he answered one of them, ‘I am not being unfair to you, friend. Didn’t you agree to work for a denarius?’ ¹⁴Take your pay and go. I want to give the one who was hired last the same as I gave you. ¹⁵Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money? Or are you envious because I am generous?’

Amazing grace, How sweet the sound
That saved a wretch like me.
I once was lost, but now I am found,
Was blind, but now I see.

The words from this song are as strong and powerful today as they were when they were written over 250 years ago. The lyrics remind us of what we look forward to as we cross over from this life into the next. It is a song of hope and peace and so it’s no wonder that it is sung at so many funerals.

Yea, when this flesh and heart shall fail,
And mortal life shall cease
I shall possess within the veil,
A life of joy and peace.

The song reminds us that it is in our death that we fully appreciate that which Christ has won for us. It’s a song that looks forward in time, forward to a future where we live in the presence of God.

I bring this song up because I am reminded of it when I read this passage of scripture. It describes the landowner's grace. He gives freely, not based on what was earned. This is an illustration of God's grace. It is so amazing, so awesome, so underserving, and so simple. Sometimes in life we try to complicate everything – overly so. We believe that we must dig because there must be more that is buried, more that is hidden from us, more that we must find. But with God's love there isn't. It is fully exposed: God loves us completely. It is as simple as that. How amazing is his grace?

There is another song, with a similar name, that doesn't look forward as much as it celebrates the present. "This is Amazing Grace" by Phil Wickham and it starts out this way:

Who breaks the power of sin and darkness
Whose love is mighty and so much stronger
The King of Glory, the King above all kings

The next stanza answers this question and then the chorus invites us to respond to the King above all kings. It starts like this:

This is amazing grace
This is unfailing love
That You would take my place
That You would bear my cross
You lay down Your life
That I would be set free

It is a song reminds us that we are alive, today. We are alive in a sinful world, that we are alive as sinful people, but also that we live in the promise of God's grace. We cling to that hope with faith. And upon our death we will trade in that promise and hope and faith for the reality of being with God.

We'll trade in the prodigal son inside each of us that squanders the many gifts and blessings that God has given us.

We'll trade in the Adam and Eve that continually turns *away* from God and *towards* the many sinful thoughts and deeds.

And we'll trade in the Thomas of our doubts of faith that we have in God and in his love for us.

But today. Now. Here on earth, we still carry that with us. And like Paul, we do what we hate, and don't do what we ought to do. We fall short. Very short as we realize **all** that we need to trade in to be God's presence. And this realization is crushing. Maybe unbearable. And so, we fall to our knees.

But like Peter, we hear the words of forgiveness from Jesus. Like Mary, we see the empty tomb. And like the early church we begin to understand the story of grace and mercy and forgiveness. And although we understand there is still sin, we also understand that there is still God's mercy. We understand that there is still Christ's cross that we can return to over and over to receive the precious words of forgiveness.

And in our baptism and with every time we approach the Lord's table, we are reminded of who we are and are reminded that our God died for us. Even while we rebelled against him, he suffered and died for us.

We don't deserve this. We don't deserve his love. We don't deserve his mercy. He deserves better than us. He deserves more than we can ever give.

But on that cross, he gave more than we can ever give. He gave so that we could experience more than we ever deserve.

On that cross he gave more than we deserve so that we could experience more than we deserve. He gave all so that he could give all. He sacrificed so that we could abound.

And he asks for no repayment but simply that we empty ourselves so that he can give more. Overflowingly more. So that he can pour into us boundless grace and mercy and forgiveness. And he asks us to pour out that which he gives; that we pour out to others grace and mercy and love. That we serve others as he has served us. And he asks that we trust that our vessel will never run dry but be constantly overflowing because of him.

This is amazing grace, indeed.

Please pray with me.

Lord,
King of Glory, King above all kings. You bring our chaos back into order. You make us a son and daughter. You lay down your life. So that we could be set free. Jesus, I sing for all that you've done for me.