

Sept 5 2010 Communion Titus 3:3-8

## GOD'S AMAZING GRACE

Grace! It's more than a name. Grace! It's more than watching someone doing something flawless or smooth. Grace! We know it as something we don't deserve but God gives to us. Grace happens when you don't get a ticket for speeding. Grace comes when you hit a foul ball and the wind blows it just out of the reach of the fielder. Grace comes when you hit a golf ball toward the water and it skips across and lands on the other side. All that is grace. In our lives today God gives us what he wants to give us not the punishment we deserve when we disobey him. Grace and forgiveness go hand in hand. Forgiveness is a word that we sometimes use, but it does not roll off our lips easily. There are all kinds of forgiveness. These days they make golf clubs that offer forgiveness. They are made so that the ball will go straighter than before, less slice, fewer hooks. Hit it almost anywhere on the club and it should be okay. I heard at least one expensive car has some kind of monitoring system that will get you get back in your lane if you begin to drift to the other lane and another car is there... it does it for you! It also brakes if the car in front of you stops suddenly.

On any communion Sunday we remember forgiveness and grace. In fact each time you enter the Sanctuary you are reminded of God's Amazing Love and His Grace through the cross which hangs above this altar and the altar rail where you kneel to receive his grace. If you read the front of the communion table you find these words,

“This do, in remembrance of me.” What do we remember? We remember God’s love. We remember why God sent His Son in order for us to have life. We remember Jesus’ death and resurrection. We remember the Grace of God, that “who so ever believes in Jesus will find eternal life.”

We have all made mistakes in our lives. In fact, some clever person many, many years ago came up with the idea of putting erasers on pencils because he was tired of scratching out his mistakes or writing over it. The eraser made it easier to change things. A few weeks ago during a golf tournament the whole world watched as a golfer who seemed to have made the playoffs had to erase his entry of 5 and take a six on the last hole because he had grounded his club in the sand which he didn’t realize was a trap. He made a costly mistake. He was out of the playoff, lost thousands of dollars in a major tournament.

I remember when someone tried to put erasers on pens, but I don’t think that worked as well. But we all make mistakes from time to time. Sometimes those mistakes could be called ‘sins.’ We don’t like to use that word though. It sounds so, so, bad...and it is! Ask any criminal who is sitting behind bars and he might admit to doing something wrong but calling it sin? No way! Sin is well old stuff for some. Sin we all know is something we do against the will of God and we don’t even want to consider that. Sin is breaking His rules, His laws. John tells us that if we think we never sin, think

again, for we all do. And if we think that once we become a born again Christian we never sin think again because right then and there someone might commit the sin of pride thinking they are better than others. And let me say, that slithering serpent is looking for thinking like that to lead someone down the slippery slope to bigger sins. We would rather rationalize that everyone else is doing it so it must be okay than say we have committed a sin.

I may not like to hear it. You may not like to hear it. But here is the truth from God's word. We do sin in words and in deeds and God is not happy when we do. John Wesley tells us that when we walk closer to God we will sin less because we know that sin grieves the Father. His advice is the more one is surrendered to God the less they will sin.

So we make mistakes. A batter makes a mistake when he swings at a bad pitch. A safety makes a mistake when he doesn't cover the man he was supposing to and that guy makes a touchdown. But that one who lets his anger turn into bad actions commits sin. That one who starts to gossip about someone commits sin. That one who does not help someone in need commits sin. And yes we sin, and as I've said before, and it's worth repeating because it is John who said, if we say we don't sin, then we are calling God a liar.

Last week the message was about the choices we make and the consequences that happen because of those choices. The kids said they knew the consequences of wrong choices. One said he could either clean his room now, or when everyone else is out playing. Another said if he hit his brother he would be spending time in his room. Choices! We all make them. You see, we even chose to do things which we know are wrong to do.....that are called sinning.

Today the truth of Scripture is this: because we are prone to sin, God has this amazing Grace that he offers to us. Now don't think just because there is God's grace that you can get more grace if you keep sinning. That's wrong! Paul says that understanding is hogwash. God doesn't want you to sin more so he can offer you more grace. His Son died once for all so that his grace could set us free from the bondage that sin keeps us in. I for one am thankful every day for that wonderful Grace of cleansing.

Hear now words about that Grace from a little used book of the Bible. From Titus we read these words of grace....Titus 3:3-8 **READ**

For a few minutes this morning let's examine these words from Titus.

First he says, **we have done foolish things**. Sometimes those foolish things could be labeled sins. Titus lists some of those things that he thought were foolish but God revealed to him they actually were sins. Things God would not permit. Things like not

obeying God. Anyone here want to admit to that one? I'm sure if we were to be honest with God, we would all say we have disobeyed God at least once. And when we do and realize it, I wonder how many really tell God how sorry we are that we didn't do what he said. That's confessing. Even the early believers had a difficult time obeying God. Those 10 Commandments, which are not suggestions, but rules to live by, were tough to follow, so tough that the priests and those who interpreted the Law of Moses had to add extra things to try and explain God's law. God's rules seem so simple. God says it's wrong to worship idols instead of him. He says you need to worship just him and don't make someone else or anything your god. Take time to worship him, to praise him for his goodness and mercy. He tells us lying is wrong and so is cheating. We know taking someone's life is wrong, unless it's during a war. Don't mess around with someone else's mate. Don't spread vicious words about another person and don't envy someone for what they have and you don't. After all, God can give whatever he wants to whoever he wants.

If you had a check list, some of us would put a check beside some of those, though not all of them I hope. Not the 'big' ones as some like to say, but in reality, sin is a sin is a sin...God doesn't say there are big ones and there are small sins. Sin comes when we disobey God, period. And the consequences of sin is that it breaks your relationship with God. He can't stand sin. In fact, he won't put up with it. That's why he gave us his son,

to free us from our sin, to offer to us the grace of God that if we confess that sin “he is faithful and just and will forgive you.”

Now we turn to the Good News that Titus wants us to hear. He says **God’s Grace found you and transformed your life.** That’s God’s Amazing Grace. Though we deserve punishment God offers us life. Though sinners deserve to be punished for their sins, he offers his son who took the sins of the world upon him in order that those who repent can have a clean slate over and over again.

*“Amazing grace! How sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me! I once was lost, but now am found; was blind, but now I see.”*

John Newton wrote those words after finding the grace of God that transformed him one day from being a slave trader bringing slaves to England, to a preacher telling others of how he like the Prodigal son was lost but now was found; was blind to the Gospel message, but one day his eyes were opened to God’s call to forgiveness for how he treated those slaves and how he helped uproot them from their homes and God cleansed his life and brought him to the pulpit to tell others about the Amazing Grace of God that can save any wretch like him. He experienced a divine moment just like the Apostle Paul did when he was blinded on the Damascus road and God gave him his sight, both physical and spiritual as he commissioned him to carry the message of grace to the Gentile nations.

Why did he do that? So that we today, here in the Williamsville UMC could receive that same grace. That we today could look at this altar of grace and the elements of bread and wine knowing when we come to this table we come to receive grace upon grace. That we today who truly repent of our sins can find forgiveness and lead a life full of peace and hope. That we today who are in need of God's marvelous grace can receive it knowing God loves us and will accept us just as we are.

That's the truth of God's word from Titus who experienced the forgiving grace of our Lord and Savior as he shares with his friends then and we today who sit in these pews as he writes these encouraging words as a reminder of what God did then and does today. So *"Being made right with God by his grace, we could have the hope of the life that never ends. This teaching is true, and I want you to be sure the people understand these things."*

So may it be today for you who have ears to hear and hearts open to listen to the message of God about His Amazing Grace! When you receive the bread today, give him thanks. When you drink from the cup, give him thanks. Give him thanks for his Amazing Grace that gave us his Son. Amen!