

Titus 2:11-14
The Power of Grace

I can imagine that there will be some, maybe many, who feel that God has forgotten them this Christmas. Life circumstances are so that they may feel that God's grace has excluded them. That they are on the outside looking in and hope has passed them by. Their Christmas is not simply blue, but for them there is no Christmas, at all. And so, this morning I want to be emphatic and let individuals who find themselves in this place know that God has not forgotten you. Even in your despair, or what may seem like a hopeless situation, God's grace is sufficient for you, as well. Does not matter how far you may believe you are from God, his grace can reach way down, pick you up and place you on solid ground. His grace can, again and again, fill you with hope. And in doing so give you a Merry Christmas, too. Then, there may be those who look at their lives and say I have no need for grace. Life is good and has been so for as long I can remember. No need for a Savior here. I say to those in this place this morning that God has not forgotten you, as well. No one is outside of the reach of God's transforming grace. With this said, our texts requires that we talk about grace this Christmas Eve morning and in doing so, I want to share 3 things regarding the power of grace.

First, grace has the power to reach everyone. V11 ¹¹"For the grace of God has appeared that offers salvation to all people." God is not Santa Clause. Your being included in this offer it not based on whether you have been naughty or nice. Grace's offer of salvation is not made based on our worthiness. Grace offers redemption to all! When God sent Jesus, he had everybody in

mind. The Jew and the gentile. Male and female. Black and white and everything in between. Grace has the power to lift everyone from the pit of sin's despair. Grace excludes no one, but many, unfortunately, reject God's grace. And to be clear, Jesus is that grace. Mary's baby, the Son of the living God, born in a cave and placed in a manger (a feeding apparatus for animals). When God sent Jesus, he had you, he had everyone in mind.

2 Peter 3:9, “⁹The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but *everyone* to come to repentance.”

John 3:16, “¹⁶For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that *whoever* believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

Acts 10:42-43, “⁴²He commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead. ⁴³All the prophets testify about him that *everyone* who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name.”

Second, grace's power enables us to say no to self and yes to God. V12 “¹²It teaches us to say “No” to ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age...” If ungodliness (that is, doing what God does not approve) and succumbing to worldly passions (that is, lust in all its forms) remain a pattern of living for those who claim to be followers of Jesus the Christ, it is not because grace lacks the power to transform us. It is because we ignore or even refuse the tutelage of grace. Which begs the question, are we truly the recipients of God's grace, if this be the case. No doubt there will be millions of households celebrating Christmas, but not all will

be celebrating Jesus. It is very possible to be on the inside and remain on the outside. Are we saying no to ungodliness and worldly passions and yes to God/Jesus' way? And I am not talking perfectionism. None of us will be perfect but we can be faithful.

Matt 7:21 ²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”

1 John 3:6 ⁶ “No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him. ⁷ Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, just as he is righteous. ⁸ The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work. ⁹ No one who is born of God will continue to sin, because God’s seed remains in them; they cannot go on sinning, because they have been born of God.

Finally, grace’s power enables us to await the second coming patiently and faithfully. As Paul puts it, the “blessed hope”. **V13-14** ¹³ while we wait for the blessed hope—the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, ¹⁴ who gave himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for himself a people that are his very own, eager to do what is good.” We are desperately trying to save a dying world. I do not dispute the reality of global warming. I do not dispute the negative impact of hundreds, if not thousands, of years of bad stewardship of the earth. Neither do I have a problem with any attempt to make the world a better place for all. However, we know what the end will be. We know despite our best-efforts life as we know it will come to an end, a tragic end because of sin.

So, we cannot allow such initiatives like going green to detract the church from the primary mission. What I am saying is no initiative can ever take precedence over our mission to reach others with the gospel of Jesus the Christ. The primary work that is above every other good work is the sharing of the good news of Jesus. All other work should afford us, disciples of Jesus the Christ, the opportunity to do that work. When this is the case, we are patiently and faithfully awaiting the return of our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ.

Matt 24:36-39 ³⁶ “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. ³⁷ As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.”

Luke 21:25-28 ²⁵ “There will be signs in the sun, moon and stars. On the earth, nations will be in anguish and perplexity at the roaring and tossing of the sea. ²⁶ People will faint from terror, apprehensive of what is coming on the world, for the heavenly bodies will be shaken. ²⁷ At that time they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ When these things begin to take place, stand up and lift up your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

Heb 9:27-28 ²⁷ Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, ²⁸ so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him.”