

Song Service – God’s Amazing Grace March 30 – April 1, 2019

INVOCATION / OPENING

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. Our service focuses on a parable Jesus used to teach people about sin and grace, repentance and restoration. We look at the Parable of the Prodigal Son. In the two sons we see ourselves. In the Father we see God’s amazing, unconditional love and forgiveness.

CHILDREN’S DEVOTION

Good evening/morning. Thanks for coming up front. Today let’s play store. I will run the store. You’re the shoppers. (Show a doll for \$30.) What do you have to do to make this doll yours? (Pay \$30.) That’s right. (Show a truck for \$30.) What do you have to do to make this yours? (Pay \$30.) That’s right.

(Show a picture of Jesus with words “God’s Forgiveness.”) How much do you have to pay for this? Nothing – that’s right! It’s not that forgiveness is cheap. God gave his Son, Jesus, for your forgiveness. Jesus died on the cross for your forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness costs God a lot. But it costs us nothing.

Some people, however, think that being sorry for their sins pays for their forgiveness. While we are sorry when we realize we have sinned against God, our sorrow doesn’t buy forgiveness. Jesus did. Some people think that turning away from sins pays for forgiveness. God wants us to turn away from sin but that doesn’t buy us forgiveness. Jesus did. Forgiveness is yours through faith.

Let’s pray. Dear God our Father, thank you for giving us Jesus to bring us forgiveness. Dear Jesus, thank you for living and dying to save us. Dear Holy Spirit, thank you for giving us faith and through it, forgiveness. Amen.

DEVOTION 1: Rebellion & Results of Sin Luke 15:11-16, 25-32

¹¹ Jesus continued: “There was a man who had two sons. ¹² The younger one said to his father, ‘Father, give me my share of the estate.’ So he divided his property between them. ¹³ “Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living. ¹⁴ After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need. ¹⁵ So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs. ¹⁶ He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.

²⁵ “Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard music and dancing. ²⁶ So he called one of the servants and asked him what was going on. ²⁷ ‘Your brother has come,’ he replied, ‘and your father has killed the fattened calf because he has him back safe and sound.’ ²⁸ “The older brother became angry and refused to go in. So his father went out and pleaded with him. ²⁹ But he answered his father, ‘Look! All these years I’ve been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. ³⁰ But when this son of yours who has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him!’

³¹ “‘My son,’ the father said, ‘you are always with me, and everything I have is yours.’ ³² But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’”

Here we see the sin of two sons. One can't stay at home, care for his father, and wait until his father dies for his inheritance. He gets that inheritance ahead of time and sinfully wastes it on a wicked life. The other son is a stay-at-home son. He worked hard, obeyed his father, and lived an outwardly moral life. But inwardly he is self-righteous and self-centered. He doesn't care about his father's love and concern for his brother's soul and salvation. He thought that if anyone deserved the father's love, he did.

In the audience to whom Jesus spoke there were tax-collectors and sinners. There were Pharisees and teachers of the law. When you consider Jesus' audience, you get the connections, don't you? The run-away son represents the tax-collectors and sinners. Tax-collectors collected taxes for the government but were crooks. The sinners were others who lived outwardly immoral lives.

The stay-at-home son represents the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Outwardly they were good and moral. But they were self-righteous and self-centered. They thought that if anyone deserved God's love and attention, they did; certainly not the tax-collectors and sinners.

Both rebelled against God. You see the results of such rebellion. The run-away son finds himself in ruins. He was homeless, hungry, and destitute. His brother had it all. Or, at least it seemed that way. But when his brother returned, his true self came out. He was angry, jealous, and at odds with his Father. Even though he has everything, he isn't satisfied. Even though his brother is back, he isn't joyful. Even though his father is happy, he isn't.

As Jesus challenges the Pharisees and teachers of the law in their thinking, he challenges us. On one hand we may find ourselves wallowing in the moral mud of life, caught in a sinful lifestyle, wandering from God, wasting life, ruining relationships, hurting ourselves. We may feel destitute and wonder whether there is hope for us. Can we be saved?

On the other hand we may be outwardly good people who inwardly struggle with self-righteousness. We may think we are better than others. At times we may think we are good enough to deserve God's love and eternal life. We may lack in compassion for those struggling in life or in passion for the lost. We may be angry that God forgives those we deem the worst of sinners. We may be angry that God blesses immoral people with good things he doesn't give to us. But at times, in our self-righteousness, we may wonder whether we have done enough to be saved.

The truth is, apart from our Father's mercy; apart from Jesus; apart from the faith the Holy Spirit works, there is no peace, no forgiveness, or no eternal life. **(SONG – Lord, I Need You)**

CONFESSION / QUIET REFLECTION

In Proverbs 28:13 God says, **“Whoever conceals sins does not prosper; but the one who confesses them and renounces them, finds forgiveness.”** We take time for silent confession.

DEVOTION 2

Restoration

Luke 15:17-24

¹⁷ “When he came to his senses, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! ¹⁸ I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. ¹⁹ I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired servants.’ ²⁰ So he got up and went to his father. “But while he was still a long

way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him. ²¹ “The son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’” ²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. ²³ Bring the fattened calf and kill it. Let’s have a feast and celebrate. ²⁴ For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.’ So they began to celebrate.

If you were the father in this parable, would you have been so receptive to your wayward son’s return? He bailed! He wasted a lot of money! His life was wicked! He was filthy and stunk! Wouldn’t his return raise some trust issues and all kinds of questions? There would be hurt to get over.

But the father has no hesitation when he sees his son at a distance. There is no lack of compassion; no shortage of forgiveness; no probation period for his son to be restored to sonship. Joy is over-flowing. Forgiveness is full. Acceptance is complete. Restoration is total.

You see, don’t you, the message Jesus is sending to the tax-collectors, sinners, Pharisees, teachers of the law, as well as to you and me? While God is holy and hates sin, he is compassionate. He is merciful. He wants all people – no matter how bad they may be – to see their sin and lostness, and come to him for forgiveness, love, and acceptance into his family.

Jesus wants people to see that forgiveness isn’t earned or deserved. Forgiveness is ours because Jesus kept God’s law and died for our sins. Jesus removed our curse of sin by his life and death. He saved us from hell. He has won for us forgiveness and eternal life. These are yours through faith in him. In view of this, I now share with you the assurance of your forgiveness in Jesus.

FORGIVENESS / ABSOLUTION

“Christ died, the righteous for the unrighteous to bring you to God. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in according with the riches of God’s grace.” Because of Jesus, God our Father has forgiven you all your sins. You are at peace with God.

GENERAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father, you are good and your love endures forever. We praise you that in your love you have mercy on sinners like us and forgive us because of your Son Jesus. Keep us from failing to see the need for his forgiveness. Keep us from despairing that there is no forgiveness for us. Keep us from thinking that we can earn or deserve this forgiveness. By your Holy Spirit working in word and sacrament, help us to always trust that forgiveness and salvation are our by grace through faith in Jesus.

Be with your Church throughout the world. Provide workers who faithfully proclaim and apply your word. Be with those who are persecuted for their faith. Give them your protection at the same time you give them courage, patience, and perseverance in their faith.

Bless St. Paul’s School, our staff, students, and families, and all who work on the school project as we prepare to break ground. Touch the hearts and bless the lives of our people that we faithfully rise up to serve you and generously support the ministry we strive to carry out.

Thank you for guiding both Pastor Smith and Mr. Biedenbender through the call process. As you have led both to remain in service to St. Paul’s, continue to bless their service as they work with our ministry team, leaders, and members to carry out the Great Commission.

Heal families that are struggling through strife. Be with those who are sick, injured, and/or are hospitalized. We pray for retired Prof. Marv Meihack as he recovers from surgery. Bless him with patience, peace, and

strength. Be with his family. We also thank you that you have been with Evangeline (...leen) Carlstrom, granddaughter of Joel and Joyce Johnson, as Evangeline recovers from surgery. Thank you for blessing success to the surgery. Now bless Evangeline with recovery and good health.

We bring these petitions to you in the name of Jesus, and in his name come to you with The Lord's Prayer.

LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name; your kingdom come; your will be done on earth as in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.