

(05-18-25 Kathy's Retirement)

It's All About God's Grace

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

Right after Easter Sunday, Somi and I flew to South Korea and spent over three weeks with our family members. We visited my mom in Gwangju and had a wonderful time together. Even though my mom is suffering from dementia, she can remember most of our memories we shared together. I am so grateful that she receives and enjoys compassionate and professional care from a hospital where she has been for almost two years. I also traveled with my in-laws, who supported our stay in South Korea in various ways. It was a time for us to reconnect and reaffirm our love for one another. Over the past three Sundays, I preached at my friends' churches and sister-in-law's church. I usually try not to preach while visiting South Korea, but God placed a burden on my heart to preach about healing. I was able to understand why God nudged me to preach when I visited the churches. I immensely appreciate your prayers for my trip and I'd like to express my gratitude for our lay speakers who filled in the pulpit while I am gone. Tim, Trevor, and Grace, thank you so much.

My trip can be summarized in a single word: grace. It's all about God's grace. God has faithfully answered my prayers as I visited my family members, friends, and churches.

In today's scripture, Apostle Paul says the same thing: **"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."** (1 Corinthians 15:10)

I remember one day when I took a class at Concordia Seminary, and the professor asked me, "Jung, one of the major theologies of the Lutheran church is 'justification.' What is the major theology of the United Methodist Church?" Without hesitation, I said, "It's a theology of grace." Then he said, "I thought it was 'sanctification.'" So I said, "Professor, justification, and sanctification are parts of the theology of grace. Do you not know that Methodists have a more profound theology than Lutherans?" I'm just kidding. I didn't say that.

I'd like to quote from retired Bishop Kenneth Carder about grace.

"Grace pervades all of creation and is universally present. Grace is God's presence to create, heal, forgive, reconcile and transform human hearts, communities and the entire creation. Wherever God is present, there is grace! Grace brought creation into existence. Grace birthed human beings, bestowed on us the divine image, redeemed us in Jesus Christ and is ever transforming the

whole creation into the realm of God's reign of compassion, justice, generosity and peace.” (which means the kingdom of God)
Kenneth L. Carder *A Wesleyan Understanding of Grace* from ResourceUMC.org.

This is why we can say that it's all about grace. Do we need a new start? Then we have to confirm God's grace in our lives first. Do we want to experience healing, renewal, and transformation of our lives? Then we need to pray for God's grace and God's presence in the power of the Holy Spirit. Grace is the starting point of our new relationship with God and even with the people around us. Grace can empower us to become the gracious agents of God to our neighbors. God's grace will help us to recollect who we are and move forward. As the Apostle Paul stresses, “It's not about me, it's all about grace.”

We should remember three things as we consider God's grace as God's gift to us.

First of all, God's grace is working abundantly and incomparably even at this time.

When we read the scriptures about God's grace, it is clear that they emphasize the generous and incomparable riches of God's grace working mightily in this world.

Exodus 34:6 “The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and **abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness.**”

Ephesians 2:6-9 “God raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the ages to come he might show **the immeasurable riches of his grace** in kindness towards us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— not the result of works, so that no one may boast.”

When we think about God's abundant and immeasurable grace, we should recognize that God's grace is also in other people's lives.

Second, our grace is responsible grace.

This means that we should respond to God's grace responsibly and accordingly to God's will and plan. That is why God repeatedly commands us through Apostle Paul that we must lead a life **worthy of God** (Col. 1:10; 1 Thess. 2:12), **worthy of the kingdom** (2 Thess. 1:5), **worthy of our calling** (Eph. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:11), and **worthy of the gospel of Christ** (Phil. 1:27). All these phrases point to the same thing: God's grace. If you know God's grace, if you experience God's grace, if you really appreciate God's grace, use your grace from God responsibly

for the people around you. That's why Paul says, "**His grace towards me has not been in vain.**"

Our responsible grace is our obedience. Think about the things that God wants you to do right now. If you are not sure about them, ask God to help you understand what God wants you to do at this time to live a life worthy of grace.

Last but not least, God wants us to grow more, bear more fruit, and be more like Jesus Christ in God's grace.

God does not want us to be strained to where we are now. God wants us to move forward as we honestly reflect on ourselves in God's grace. There is a professor who has taught Christian Communication at Calvin College. His name is [Quentin Schultze](#). He said that the goal and purpose of our lives is our transformation. We are to become more like Jesus Christ. In Methodist terms, it is our sanctification.

Let us read today's scriptures together.

1 Corinthians 15:9-10

"For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace towards me has not been in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them—though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me."

Fred Rogers' Acceptance Speech in 1997

Has anyone ever watched "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood"? Would you please raise your hand? I am one of you guys, too. During my seminary days, whenever I came home for lunch, I would watch "Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood" on PBS while I was having lunch with my wife. This television series was broadcasted from 1968 to 2001. They were created and hosted by Fred Rogers, who was a Presbyterian minister. So many young children and their parents and grandparents had been heavily influenced by his daily 30-minute television show.

As Fred Rogers accepted the Emmy Lifetime Achievement Award, he reminded us of God's grace. He said, "[Oh, it's a beautiful night in this neighborhood. So many people have helped me to come to this night. Some of you are here. Some are far away. Some are even in heaven. All of us have special ones who have loved us into being. Would you just take along with me ten seconds to think of the people who have helped you become who you are? Those who have cared about you and wanted what was best for you in life. 10 seconds of silence. I will watch the time.](#)" It was not an awkward moment at all. People genuinely reflected on those who helped them become who they are now. Many shed tears just thinking about those gracious individuals in their lives. It was a very humble

moment, reminding everyone who were present or watching the show on TV of the grace they had received. After the ten seconds, Mr. Rogers listed and thanked all the people who had helped him to make the Mr. Rogers' Neighborhood program possible in the past years.

His message was clear. You cannot be who you are alone today. There is always grace in your life from God, and you should also be a source of grace to those around you.

Let us pray.

Dear Most Gracious God,

Thank you so much for your presence to be with us today! God, let us be in joy and peace as we confirm your grace every day. God, let us be healed, renewed and transformed in your grace so that we can be your grace to the people around us. We pray in Jesus Christ's name. Amen.