

## Matthew 5: 43-48

“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Within us, among us, before us,  
**CHRIST IS COME TO MAKE ALL THINGS NEW**

<sup>48</sup> “In a word, what I’m saying is, *Grow up*. You’re kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.”

The Message translation

What is “grace”? It is God’s own life, shared by us.

Grace is unity, oneness within ourselves, oneness with God.

Thomas Merton

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.

Saint Paul

We are in week 4 of our series on the BIG WORDS of Christianity, words which can come up in conversation from time to time and words which get thrown around a lot in the wider culture, sometimes in ignorance and with arrogance. We would aspire to use these words intelligently and humbly, hence, this series of sermons to at least give us a foothold in this regard.

We have so far considered the KINGDOM OF GOD, EVIL AND JUSTICE in this series. Today our BIG WORD is GRACE.

I have to think that grace is one of the most spoken words in Christianity, one of the most frequently used words in our prayers, and sermons of course. Interestingly though, it does not show up in the Gospels much at all. Jesus, of course, embodies grace in every aspect of his being, but he hardly uses the word himself. Grace DOES show up ALOT in Paul's letters and in the other documents of the Christian Testament and there are many mentions of grace in the Hebrew Testament as well.

Here's a lovely piece of Bible trivia---the final verse of the Christian scriptures, Revelation 22: 21 reads: "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all." A lovely closing aspiration of our sacred text. It's also an urging to embrace the transformative new birth of interior conversion by which all our prior tendencies to make distinctions among people or groups fall away. I want to suggest to you that this is, finally, what a grace infused life is supposed to be about.

Grace might be the most wonderful word of all, and the most wonderful aspect of all creation. The only word and the only aspect of creation more wonderful would have to be love of course. But grace is right in there. I spent all week reading what lots and lots of wise people have written about grace and I have to tell you this can be very good medicine for the soul. Just immerse yourself in a Google soup of reflections on grace. I posted some of my favorites on the church Facebook page this week.

Of all the BIG WORDS so far-----GRACE is probably the hardest to mis-use. It signifies all manner of goodness and blessing and encouragement and God's favor and the healing forgiveness God extends and the healing forgiveness we extend to one another. Most people know this when they use the word grace or experience grace in their lives. It happens all the time.

An example-----driving down the highway. You move over, you back off, you make room for the person who is not paying attention. They have received grace without even knowing it. And maybe you have extended grace without even thinking about it. My dad was a wonderful guy---but not one to extend much grace when driving!

The problem we can encounter though, the challenge we can experience with grace, is its limitlessness. Grace does not draw lines, it has no circumference. To receive grace is wonderful. Extending grace in the way grace is meant to be extended is the challenge.

"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." That's what a grace infused life is supposed to be about. "The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you all." The writer of the book of Revelation is expressing a radical hope for the movement that would become the

church, a hope that the church would lean into the holy and sacred challenge of a grace infused life of oneness with God in love, and the embrace of all people as God's beloveds.

“Be perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect.” I cannot sense a trace of irony in Jesus' words here. His desire for us is to become grace infused people, as God is grace infused. Pure indiscriminate generosity, indiscriminate regard, indiscriminate attentiveness, indiscriminate compassion.

There is an opportunity for the church here in our cultural context and the conversations we are having. This morning the sun's light shone into the rooms where both Donald Trump and Nancy Pelosi woke up. Into the rooms where both Robert Mueller and Roger Stone woke up.

Pure indiscriminate generosity, indiscriminate regard, indiscriminate attentiveness, indiscriminate compassion.

Grace, for all the ways we seek it and enjoy it and celebrate it, grace can be infuriating to our egoic desire (our self-centered or self-righteous tendencies) to discriminate, to dismiss, to judge.

This is an opportunity for people who name the name of Jesus to #resist speech that divides. This is the primary and central and, to the egoic mind, infuriating assertion of the Gospel of grace-----the sun shines on all. ALL are beloved of God.

And grace infused perfection is not an option. It's a directive to Disciples...it's our life's work.

The immensity and the depth of what Jesus is calling us to undertake, rightly puts us on our knees. On our knees in gratitude, first, for having been summoned to such graciousness.

On our knees in helplessness, second. Where to begin? How to begin? How can this be---this grace infused life?

Saint Paul, bent over by his own sense of helplessness, asked these same questions And God's answer?

My grace is sufficient.

# SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD-GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE

NORTH OAK CHRISTIAN CHURCH-DISCIPLS OF CHRIST

January 27, 2019

In Jesus' Name, Greetings!

Music for Gathering

God to enfold us, Christ to uphold us

**SPIRIT TO KEEP US IN HEAVEN'S SIGHT**

So may God grace us, heal and embrace us

**LEAD US THROUGH DARKNESS INTO THE LIGHT**

Lighting of the Candles

"... we are guarded by your love, sheltered by your grace." Psalm 91

**17 O Worship the King vss 1, 4, 5**

Sharing Christ's Peace

**523 Live in Charity 3X**

The Morning Prayer and Musical Response

Silence

"You bring healing to your people..." Psalm 30

Children's Circle

All children thru 5<sup>th</sup> grade are welcome to come forward. A small outreach offering will be collected for our money jar. Following this time of sharing and prayer, children may attend their very own

"Worship and Wonder" time together in our classroom annex. Child care is offered for infants and toddlers but they are also welcome in the sanctuary.

Prayer for Illumination

Happy are they whom You instruct, those You teach Your ways

**WHEN MANY CARES FILL OUR MINDS, YOUR CONSOLATIONS CHEER OUR SOULS**

THE GOSPEL MATTHEW 5: 43-48

**Glory be to the Father, and to the Son and to the Holy Ghost**

**As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end, amen amen.**

The Meditation "Our Life's Work" Rev. Rob Carr

**We ponder your generosity, Holy Friend, and we are dazzled.**

**Your powerful, bold and reliable presence looms large, larger than fear.**

**And we receive from your inscrutable goodness**

**grace upon grace, gift upon gift, life upon life.**

**Transform our minds, renew our imaginations.**

**Now, at the dawn, our eyes are fixed on you in gladness, Amen.**

Silent and spoken personal prayers of thanksgiving confession, intercession

"Gracious Spirit Dwell With Me" NOCC Choir

The Offering

**Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, Praise God all creatures here below**

**Praise God above ye heavenly host, Creator, Christ, and Holy Ghost**

CELEBRATION OF HOLY COMMUNION

We are Disciples of Christ, a movement for wholeness in a fragmented world.  
As part of the one body of Christ, we welcome all to the Lord's Table as God has welcomed us.

**430 Lo I Am With You**

Welcome to the Table

You love us, Gracious One, more than we can ask or imagine  
**YOU SAVE US FROM THE SNARES OF FEAR, YOU SATISFY OUR EVERY NEED**  
So great is Your loving response toward those who are humble  
**SO FAR DOES YOUR ENDURING STRENGTH UPHOLD US WHO FACE THE DARKNESS WITHIN**

The Words of Institution

Gentle us, Bread of Heaven  
**THAT WE MAY LEARN THE WISDOM OF PURITY, PATIENCE AND PEACE**  
Awaken us to Your Indwelling Presence  
**YOUR TRUTH IS EVER BEFORE US, BY IT YOU SET US FREE**

The Communion Prayer

**The Lord's Prayer**

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever, amen.**

Following the Lord's Prayer, please come forward by rows to receive the loaf and the cup.

The cup is non-alcoholic by choice of the congregation  
Gluten free crackers are available on the table for those who prefer this option  
Children also celebrate communion weekly as part of "Worship and Wonder"

**586 Open My Eyes That I May See**

May you be filled with all the fullness of God!  
**WHOSE POWER AT WORK WITHIN US CAN ACCOMPLISH FAR MORE  
THAN ALL WE CAN ASK OR IMAGINE!**

**TO OUR GUESTS-----WELCOME!**

**SHAPED BY GOD'S WORD AND GRACED AT CHRIST'S TABLE  
WE WALK HUMBLY, LOVE DEEPLY, LIVE SIMPLY, AND SERVE JOYFULLY**

**We are delighted to include you today. Your presence and participation is a gift to us all. We hope you experience among us the warm spirit of our family of faith and the gracious touch of Christ upon your life. Refreshments and welcoming conversation are available after worship in the Community Room just down the hall. More information about NOCC and the Disciples of Christ is available via**

**Facebook and these websites**

**[www.nocckc.org](http://www.nocckc.org) [www.kcdisciples.org](http://www.kcdisciples.org) [www.disciples.org](http://www.disciples.org)**

# OUR LIFE TOGETHER

## THIS WEEK

Today NOCC Youth to Red Wok following worship  
Today 5PM NOCC youth to Park Hill Christian  
Monday 6PM Troop 90  
Tuesday 945AM Men's Bible Group  
Tuesday 6PM Pack 900  
Wednesday 7PM Music Ministry  
Thursday 6PM Girl Scouts  
Saturday 745AM Men's Breakfast at Kate's  
Saturday 9Am Centering Prayer

## UPCOMING

SOUPER BOWL SOUP FEST----SCOUT SUNDAY  
NEXT SUNDAY

INTRODUCTION TO CENTERING PRAYER—LED BY KEVIN KELLEY  
SATURDAY FEBRUARY 9 9AM TO NOON

YOUTH SUNDAY FEBRUARY 10 1015AM  
NOCC YOUTH HOST NORTHLAND YOUTH 5PM

Gracious Spirit dwell with me, I would gracious be.  
Help me now thy grace to see, I would be like Thee;  
And, with words that help and heal, Thy life would mine reveal;  
And, with actions bold and meek, for Christ my Savior speak.

Truthful Spirit dwell with me, I would truthful be;  
Help me now Thy truth to see, I would be like Thee;  
And, with wisdom kind and clear, Thy life in mine appear;  
And, with actions lovingly, speak Christ's sincerity.

Holy Spirit dwell with me, I would holy be;  
Show Thy mercy tenderly, make me more like Thee;  
Separate from sin I would and cherish all things good,  
And whatever I can be, give him who gave me Thee.

Mighty Spirit dwell with me, I would mighty be;  
Help me now Thy power to see, I would be like Thee;  
'Gainst all weapons hell can wield, be Thou my strength and shield;  
Let Thy Word my weapon be, Lord, thine the victory.  
Gracious Spirit dwell with me, I would be like Thee.

