

Sunday, July 7, 2024

## Scripture Reading: 2 Corinthians 12:2-10

*I do not at all understand the mystery of grace — only that it meets us where we are but does not leave us where it found us. —Anne Lamott*

If you are familiar with art history, the Three Graces are well known to you. They were favorite subjects prior to the Renaissance, during the Renaissance and up to the present day. Artists such as Raphael, Rubens, Cranach, Varotari, Moser, Alma-Tadema, Picasso and others worked with the Three Graces. But it was especially Sandro Botticelli who featured the Three Graces in his *La Primavera*, an enormous work that hangs in the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, Italy, who inspired scores of Renaissance painters and sculptors, ensuring that we'd be familiar with the Three Graces today.

The symbolism of the Three Graces goes back to Greek and Roman mythology. The poet Hesiod names them: Aglaia [AH-glai-ah] who represents radiance; Euphrosyne [you-FROZE-eh-knee] represents joy; and Thalia [THAHL-yuh] represents flowering. Together, they constitute an ideal of love, beauty and grace.

But there is another Grace unknown to Hesiod. Perhaps we can call it the *First Grace*. *Gratia Dei*, or in English, Divine Grace, or God's Grace, the Grace of God.

In today's reading from 2 Corinthians, we learn more about *Gratia Dei*.

When the apostle Paul asked God to relieve him from a particular pain he was experiencing, God responded with a strong "No." Instead, God said to the ailing apostle, "My grace is sufficient for you" (v. 9). God's grace was enough; it was all the apostle needed. In fact, God's grace demonstrated God's power in Paul's weakness. Paul's affliction was an opportunity to show off the glory of God! "So I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may dwell in me" (v. 9).

This is an amazing, counterintuitive notion of the First Grace, *Gratia Dei*. This grace points to the glory of God and the power of Christ. The English word that is used most often to describe the First Grace is *amazing*! Erstwhile slave-trader John Newton wrote his hymn hundreds of years ago, but we still sing it today:

*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.  
'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed!*

—Timothy Merrill

*Prayer: Thank you, O God, for your amazing grace. It has both saved me and strengthened me. May I continue in faith to draw upon its resources. In Jesus' name. Amen. Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July!*

*Sara & Pastor Ben Motz*

Week of July 7, 2024

**DAILY BIBLE READINGS:** Sunday: Acts 3-5; Monday: Isaiah 40-42; Tuesday: Isaiah 43-45; Wednesday: Isaiah 46-48; Thursday: Isaiah 49-51; Friday: Isaiah 52-54; Saturday: Psalms 73-75

July 2024						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			



**ANSWERS  
NEXT WEEK**

**DOWN:**

- 1. Musical ensembles
- 3. Liberty
- 4. A binding together
- 5. Big stationary guns
- 6. He's on our nickels
- 7. Legislative authority
- 9. Love of country (adj.)
- 12. City of Brotherly Love
- 14. A system of representative government
- 15. A pronouncement
- 17. State of not relying on others

- 18. The Mayflower sailed from here
- 20. Explosive display
- 21. You might blow out candles on this
- 22. Orbs in the sky
- 25. Regional governmental entities
- 26. This month was named after Caesar

**ACROSS:**

- 2. Faithful
- 8. You can see them on our flag

- 10. Symbol of a nation
- 11. The first states were called this
- 13. A passport is proof of this
- 16. Gala
- 19. Outdoor lunch
- 23. The rules of our government
- 24. The redcoats
- 27. The legislative branch
- 28. It has a clapper
- 29. A once-a-year special day