

The Scandal of Grace

Grace is uncivilized and rebellious. We make rules for it and it breaks them. Grace is a constant embarrassment to the prim and proper religiosity of the squeaky clean. It is what Brennan Manning called "the furious longing of God."

Grace doesn't tiptoe around puddles in its shiny new shoes but slogs ankle deep through the stinking muck of the pigpen to raise up the poor souls who've tripped over temptation and face-planted themselves in the rotting mud.

It doesn't hire Private Eyes to sniff out the backstories of potential recipients to ensure there's no improprieties that might disqualify them from full acceptance, but tramps through alleys and divorce courts and rehabs and prisons to press into unworthy hands an invitation to live for free under God's roof.

Grace doesn't sit cross-armed behind its desk and tsk-tsk you from across the room when you blush to confess your darkest secrets, but wraps its arms around your quaking body and lets your tears and snot drench its shoulder as it whispers, "I love you. I forgive you. You are mine."

Grace is lacking in taste and propriety. The same loving lips that kiss away the tears of a repentant whore will turn right around and kiss the lips of a humble queen. The same hands that scrub the vomit out off the clothes of a drunk will shake hands with the teetotaler. It's never learned the difference between a shack and a mansion. Grace doesn't know why the color of skin makes one sinner more or less in need of forgiveness than any other.

Grace doesn't give a rip if you're a high school dropout or a Ph.D., a felon or a cop, a virgin or a porn star. You're all guilty of leading lives of rebellion in which every intent of the thoughts of your heart is only evil continually. You're all equally dead in transgressions and sins. You're all equally condemned by the law of God and sentenced to life in the prison of death.

Yet there stands Grace, the anti-Santa, doling out gifts to bad boys and girls. It throws open its door to holler, "Come one, come all. Fools and wise men, penniless and powerful, Pharisees and publicans. You've all got a seat at my table."

Grace is karma's worst nightmare: we get the exact opposite of what we deserve.

Grace is the God who was born in a barn, swaddled in rags, in the cold darkness of a world too lost even to know it needed finding.

Grace is the God with a motley crew of former tax-gougers, terrorists, and blue-collar fishermen at his heels.

Grace is the God with such poor taste in friends that his detractors labeled him a glutton and a drunkard, a sidekick of sinners.

Grace is the God who loved them all, loved them unto death, even death on a cross.

Hanging there on that pulpit of death, grace preached his love to our world, forgave us, and demonstrated once and for all that he is a God with no peers. He would rather die than experience eternity without us. For the joy set before him, he endured the cross, for he has no greater joy than the liberation of the captive, the resurrection of the dead, the adoption of us as his sons and daughters.

Grace—the uncivilized love of God in Jesus Christ—is far from dead. It is wild with life. Bury it beneath the dirt of legalism and it'll explode from the tomb with a defiant smile of love. Stuff its mouth with moralisms and it'll spit them out to proclaim absolute to the world. Grace cannot be stopped or shut up or shamed into a corner.

Grace reigns triumphant in the scarred but resurrected body of Jesus Christ. That grace is yours. And nothing and no one can take it away.

The above article is from Chad Bird's blog: <http://www.chadbird.com/blog/2017/8/9/grace-is-karmas-worst-nightmare>