

BUMC Weekly Bible and Sermon Study

Sermon: “Centrality of Grace” from the “Core Values” sermon series

Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

Key take-aways from the Scripture

- In this section of Ephesians, Paul discusses how we become separated from God because of our sin but are united with Him through His grace. Note the style in which this section is written, through the use of contrasting what is before and what is to come. For example, vv. 1-3 discuss “You were dead through the trespasses and sins...”, and then vv. 4-10 discuss “...even when we were dead through our trespasses (God) made us alive together with Christ...”
- In verses 1-3, Paul depicts the nature of unbelievers before God’s transforming grace takes hold of them. “You were dead through the trespasses and sins in which you once lived, following the course of this world...” These verses highlight spiritual death as being separated from God due to our sins. The “ruler of the air” and “the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient” refers to Satan. The phrase “sons of disobedience” is a phrase for disobedient people.
- In verses 4-7, we see that God wants to save us and demonstrate His love and grace to us. We have been “made alive” with Christ in a spiritual sense and become saved.
- In verses 8-9, we read that “For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is a gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast.” The NRSV Cultural Backgrounds Study Bible explains, “Already in the OT, God did not choose his people because they were righteous (Deut. 9:5-6). He redeemed them before instructing them how to live (Exodus 20:2); sincere righteousness flows from a transformed heart (Deut. 5:29; 30:6, 14). Although God’s salvation in Christ is greater than this, it clearly reflects the heart of the same God who lavished love on his people from the beginning.”
- Verse 10 concludes this section with “For we are what he made us, created in Christ for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.” In other words, salvation does not come from the doing of humans or our works, but from God and God alone!

Key take-aways from the Sermon

- Core values versus core virtues: values are aspirational and ideals, and virtues are reality. They are values in action!
- In Matthew 23, Jesus saw a contradiction between values and virtues. The problem that surfaces is not with our teaching and preaching, but with our practices!
- The BUMC Core Value that we are concluding this series with is: Primacy of Scripture/Centrality of Grace.
- Primacy of Scripture: The Holy Scriptures are the primary means of revelation. It reveals the truth about God, the truth about us, and the truth about our sin and our need for God.
- *Homo Unius Libri*: a man/woman of ONE Book! It is important to point out that while John Wesley used this term to describe himself, he read other sources for understanding the world. It is critical to read the Scriptures in order to apply it to our traditions, reason and experiences. He believed the Bible could deliver us to the presence of God (see 2 Timothy 3).
- John Wesley also taught the importance of reading Scripture in community.
- Grace (Greek *Charis*) is the primacy of Scripture and the premise of Scripture! It is the remedy to our sin and is the thesis of Scripture. It is undeserved love.
- Today's reading tells us that our salvation comes by grace and not by works.
- God's grace not only saves us from something but saves us for something. It grants to us a life of purpose and enables us to be gracious to others.
- Sometimes we tend to limit God's grace (see Luke 7, the story of Pharisee and the woman at the dinner party with Jesus).
- Grace is the primacy of Scripture. Think: G.R.A.C.E.: God's Riches At Christ's Expense. It is a gift! There is a correlation between grace and gratitude.
- Grace meets us where we are but doesn't leave us where it found us.
- Grace is our value, and when a core value becomes a core virtue the climate of the room changes because we change, and grace becomes us. We become a means of grace that points to Jesus.
- All we need to do to accept God's grace is pray simply "help" and feel our need for God and come into repentance to receive this gift. When we do, grace becomes us.

Questions for Personal Reflection or Group Discussion

- What were your key take-aways from the sermon? How can you apply this to your everyday life?
- What is “grace”? How would you describe grace to someone unfamiliar with the term?
- Read James 2:14-17. How does this reconcile with Ephesians 2:1-10? Does it?
- What does verse 10 tell us about our purpose and the source of our salvation?
- What is the difference between *core values* and *core virtues*?
- Why is it important to read/study Scripture in community (small groups)?
- What is grace? How have you experienced God’s grace in your life?
- What is the correlation between grace and gratitude?
- Read Luke 7:36-50. What does this story teach us about grace?

