

April 29th 2007: Baptismal Service for Sarah and Serena: Acts 8:26—40

This morning I want to share....2stories of God's Grace.....and to do that.....

Need first to explain....what God's Gift of Grace is:

And very simply it's Almighty God.....reaching down to a world that has rejected Him

- Has broken His perfect laws.....
- Has even crucified His Son

And offering us His love.....His forgiveness.....His power and purpose for this life

And an eternity with Him in a perfect existence.....when this life is over

- **It's Grace because its absolutely free**.....we don't deserve.....

..and we will never avoid the punishment that we do deserve for....**without it**

Yet it's also a GIFT.....that each individual must receive for themselves....by giving control of their lives into the hands of Jesus

And it is then becomes obvious..... that they have received it.....

Because of :→

- their desire to worship....and to learn more about Him....with other believers
- Changes in their lives and attitudes....as God the Holy Spirit works within
- And a willingness to stand before others...as Sarah and....and to say
I now belong to Jesus

- **The first story of Grace is about:→** GRACE THAT CAME LOOKING

We find it in Luke chapter 19 and its about a man named Zacchaeus

Luke 19:1-4 says.....

Here was a man....who I feel.... had used his disadvantage in life.....
to his material advantage.

- **His disadvantage was that he was short**....and seeing that it's esp mentioned
Presume that he was unusually short
Been one of those kids who never grew
Always picked on.....even by the girls
Considered a weed...Never included in the games...
Always the butt of some joke...Hurtful remarks

So how did he use his disadvantage.....to his material advantage ??????

Well I reckon....when he became a man.....he realised....one way...own back

→**He was** already despised by many....because of his size

So why not go the whole hog.....Work for the hated Romans

Become a tax collector.....fleece the peasants....insulted him

Size didn't matter....when....power of the Romans.....behind you.

- **So Zacchaeus became**....not just a tax collector....But a Chief Tax collector
..... a very wealthy man....with power...position and lots of money...
and the friends that came with.....

So in a sense Zacc had it made

He definitely didn't need to suddenly get a conscience

Or to join himself with someone like Jesus.....whowas against Rome...

But Zacchaeus was curious.....That's why he climbed the tree to see Jesus go by

And God's Grace...in the form of Jesus.....came looking that day for Zacchaeus

And Jesus looked into His face.....and into His heart

And that Grace.....that undeserved favour

made Zacchaeus realize how much he needed forgiveness

And that day he received it....His life was changed

- He immediately gave away half...to the poor

And then used the rest to pay back 4 times over....all the many he had cheated

But most importantly....He stood up for Jesus before his friends...Called Him his Lord

And perhaps today...God's Grace is here looking for you

Offering you an eternal life line.....A way to begin life again

Offering you the gift of forgiveness....The touch of the Lord upon your life.

The Second Story is About Grace Discovered

It's the story that we had read to us...And its just so different story of Zacchaeus

This story is about a visitor to Jerusalem from Ethiopia

A high ranking official.....he was also a seeker after the true God

Brought up in his own land.....to follow after their gods...he had found no satisfaction

So he had gone to Jerusalem....There to worship the God of the Jews

He was seriously looking for God's Grace

- **While there**So moved was he by what he discovered about God.....

He purchased.....at no small cost.....The scroll of Isaiah

Then on the way home through the desert.....he turned to a passage about suffering

About someone who through their suffering.....could somehow cover the sins of others

By their sufferings.....they could give relief to the sorrows of others.....

And I sense that this eunuch.....this castrated male.....**This** used human being

Knew a lot about suffering.....about sorrow.....about personal sin

And when Philip joined the chariot.....and the Ethiopian asked him in Acts 8:34

Is the Prophet talking about himself or someone else?

It was a cry from his heart

Because if indeed.....it was someone else the Prophet was referring to

Someone who could lift his sorrows.....soothe his sufferings...cover his sins

Then that was Someone....the Ethiopian needed to know about.

- **And there in that chariot**.....Philip began with that very passage of Scripture....

And told him about Jesus.

And the seeker.....discovered the Gift of God's Grace

And He opened his heart and life....to the message of Jesus

He discovered Jesus Christ as the Saviour he had been looking for.....

and his life was changed

- **He had been on a journey**....looking for God's Grace

And God arranged it.....so that he could find it.

And that may well be the story of someone here

You too have been looking for God's Gift of Grace....God's help in your pain

Your suffering.....Your sense of going nowhere....Achieving little

And today...God reaches out to your heart.....Offers you the way to know Him

As your Lord and Saviour

- **So it was that there...**

in that chariot he became a Christian.....and his first thought was to declare

.his trusting in Jesus.....to the servants and others with him.....by being baptised

Over 2000 years later.....it's the same thing.....happening here today

Sarah and Serena have received the gift of God's Grace

They too have been changed from within

For they have someone else who is Lord of their lives.....and that is Jesus

- **They are far from perfect**.....Some of you know that better than others

In fact they are more aware now...of their failings.....Than they ever were before

More aware of the attacks of the evil one.....

But they are not trusting in themselves but in Jesus

And by this act of baptism.....they call upon you to do the same

To look to God with a responsive heart.....

To receive the Grace of God...His gift to you.

Programme for 29/4/07: Baptism of Sarah and Serena

Kirsten begins

71 The Potter's Hands

10 Awesome God

1 Power of your love

Keith

Announcements.....Offering

83 Depending on your righteousness

Puppets

21 Shout to the Lord

Bible Reading: Acts 8:26-40

Prayer.....Rain

40 O Lord you lead me

Message

542 yellow I am a new creation

Baptism *Baptismal Song is 29 O LORD your Tenderness*

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