

Grace Upon Grace

by Thaddeus Barnum

The sermon emphasizes the importance of trusting in Jesus and receiving the gift of salvation through his sacrifice on the cross, rather than relying on our own efforts or deserving to be saved.

Duration: 31:00

Scripture: Matthew 3:2, Matthew 6:33, John 4:10-29, Romans 3:23, Ephesians 3:5-6

Topics: "Grace"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher focuses on the concept of sin and the need for a savior. He refers to a well-known verse in Romans chapter three, verse 23, which states that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. The preacher emphasizes that this applies to everyone, regardless of their position or actions. He highlights the importance of recognizing our sinfulness and the need for salvation through Jesus Christ. The sermon also touches on the conversation between Jesus and the woman at the well in John chapter 4, highlighting Jesus' initiation of the conversation and his conviction of her sin.

Transcript

Almighty God and Father, we come before you to give praise and honor for what you have done, what you have done in your Son, Jesus Christ. And I pray that you would minister to us from your Word by your Spirit this morning as we come before you. Know us, hear us, and pierce us in Jesus' name.

Amen. I would like it if you'd turn to your Bibles to John chapter 4 and we are taking up this continued dialogue with the Lord Jesus Christ and this woman at the well. This is the extraordinary epic moment in Jesus' life where he has come to meet this Samaritan woman at the historic well of Jacob.

And as we're progressing through this morning, I am coming to that point in the text which is the most difficult because it faces in us and it faces for all time the oldest religion that has opposed the gospel of the Lord from the beginning of time. I say the oldest religion. If you go back to the preachers of the last 2,000 years, they will say over and over, all of you see multiple religions, but in the eyes of God, there are two.

There are only two. There have always been only two. His and the one that comes from us.

And although the one that comes from us is multiple, the same premise undergirds it. And that premise dominates our thinking. It's how we were born.

It's how we think. It's the nature of the fallen mind. And it's a religion I have found very difficult to confront, not just in the world, but in the church.

It's a religion being preached in the name of the Lord in the church. And it's believed upon amongst Christians. And I say mature Christians.

And it's only known and only revealed in the time of testing. And here it's confronted straight on by the Lord Jesus and by this woman. What happens in this text is extremely important.

We've looked at a couple of factors. The one that Jesus initiated the conversation with her, which was against cultural barriers to that. He spoke of the kingdom of God.

He moved the conversation, not just in politeness and the things of the day. He moved to talking about the kingdom of God. That's what missionaries do.

We move the conversation, not just out of the common, but into the things eternal. So he moves the conversation out of water to the water of life. He's a missionary.

The third thing he does is rather than giving her the water of life, he convicts her of sin. This is an unpleasant moment. He looks at her and says, go call your husband.

She responds. I have no husband. He said, you're right.

You are so right. And then he exposes her heart. She's had five.

And today she lives in immorality. The one that she lives with is not her husband. And that the Bible calls immorality.

And so there she stands. And upon receiving that word, she immediately deflects to the religious topic of the day, the debate of the moment, anything to deflect from the piercing eyes of the Lord, seeing us as we are. She deflects to the topic of the day.

Where do we worship? Here at the mountain in Samaria or in Jerusalem? This is the great debate. And it's here that Jesus has a choice. And this is the choice that is so bothersome.

He could leave it at that. You, dear woman, are a sinner. I have come as a missionary.

Repent. I personally like that way. It's got that little Baptist element in it that no, no, John, the Baptist element.

He chooses to do something unprecedented. And for most of us wrong. He chooses to reveal the secrets of the glory of the mysteries of God to her.

He had not even done it with his twelve. The Old Testament had never revealed what he chose to reveal to her. As the scriptures in the New Testament say, these things were hidden from ages past and now made known through the apostles.

By the Lord Jesus Christ, he reveals to her, he imparts to her, he entrusts to her the glories of the revelation of God. Does the president of the country go out on the street of wall of the White House and pick a commoner and speak to the commoner, the mysteries of the federal government, the CIA, the Pentagon? Does the CEO of a company take somebody at the lowliest position in the company and reveal

the strategies of tomorrow? What is he doing with that woman? Telling her that he knows who she is. She's immoral.

She's adulterous. She's a sinner. In that day, listen to this.

She's a woman. You know, in the synagogue of that day, the seminaries of that day, even up to this day, it's men who handle the word of God, not women. So funny.

Usually when I say that, I get a reaction, but that is the way it's been historically. It's men who handle the word of God. The women do what they do.

The men do what they do. He's revealing it to her. She's a Samaritan.

Great divide from the days of Solomon on the day when the kingdom divided between Israel and Judah, Israel became idolatrous and the Jews held to the faith of Judah, the covenants. And Jesus says this, you don't know the God we worship. Salvation comes from the Jews.

And yet he tells a Samaritan woman this. He's identified that she's a sinner. She has a reputation back in town.

That's why she's come alone to the well and she's branded as an outcast. Why has he chosen to honor her? Because that's what he's done. He has chosen to name her with the highest distinctions of value and esteem and grace and mercy, compassion upon her.

What is the revelation? The first time the Bible ever says these words, God is spirit. This is a big topic. We're not going to take it up today.

This is big topic. This is the word incorporeal. This is the word he is without body, without body.

He is unlimited. He is everywhere. He is the creator of space.

He is outside of space. Therefore, he is everywhere. There is no place you can run that he is not because he is spirit.

Father is spirit. Son, holy spirit from eternity, from endless ages. He is giving to her this unbelievable mystery.

One, God is spirit and two, God is incarnate. I am he. He had not even told the disciples that they had not yet even figured this out.

He declares he is Messiah, the coming one. Paul phrases it like this, beyond the mind, in Jesus, all the fullness of deity dwelt in bodily form, limitless, confined in fullness, and he chose her. Anybody who's anybody would say, wrong move.

Why is it a wrong move? Because there are those of us who are deserving to hear this, not her, not a woman, a man, not a Samaritan, a Jew, not a sinner, but us who are blameless, righteous. Those of us who don't have a reputation in town, but who are distinguished, respected, and worthy to receive the revelation. And that's the structure and system that we are born in.

There are those of us who are deserving. We are not like her. That's what's happening in this text.

There's an outrage here amongst us in our structures, in our systems, because the Lord breaks them down. He tells her what he should have told us. We are not like her.

And that's where this other religion begins to pop its ugly head. It's real. It's alive.

And I believe it's here in the midst of us. There are some of us who believe we are good. This is the oldest religion that is known to man.

When Cain came before God in the beginning of the Bible, he brought his best and he said, this is enough to atone for my sin. He brought the labor of his hand. Why? Because there's a belief inside of fallen us that believes we are good, that what we do is good.

We are doing our best to do our best, and therefore it is pleasing to God. This is the most dangerous and most difficult of all the doctrines that are here. And I'm telling you, it's inside of us.

When is it known? It's known in the time of testing. And it has always scared me. I have watched it mostly at funerals, where I have been with Christians who have been longstanding Christians, and this person has died.

And up comes the preacher, and up comes the wake and the conversations, and out go the eulogies, and there is one premise. This person was good. This person did good things.

This person is therefore in heaven. And that's what I hear. I hear it all the time.

I hear it amongst the Christians. I hear this. Not long ago, I was with an elderly woman who had been in the church for many, many years, and an elder in the church.

And she got into her upper years, her senior years, and she received from the hand of her family the worst betrayal of the worst kind. And it broke her. It was the most severe pain she had ever encountered in all her life.

As betrayal often is, it pierced her heart so that she was completely wasted by this hurt. And in my presence, as we were ministering to her in her pain, she said, I don't know why this has happened. I have lived a good life.

I have been a moral person. I have chosen the right path. There it was.

At the end of the day, in the most severe trial of her life, I don't get it because I am good. I have lived a good and moral and decent life. Why has this happened to me? And there it is.

It is a stronghold underneath the human constitution. We believe we are good. We believe our kids are good.

We believe our families are good. We believe at the end of the day that we are going to be accepted by God based on our goodness. We believe that deep down here.

Even the person who is suffering extreme problems of self-esteem believe at the end of the day. I hear it all the time. When we die, we will get to heaven.

We were holding a conference one day and we were asked to lead the conference and not many people came. I didn't associate those two points together, but you clearly did. You remember Dan, he was

formerly on our staff.

So it became an intimate time together. And so I began to, we began to lay out the uniqueness of the Lord Jesus Christ and who he is. Everybody loves this topic.

Ah, the Lord. If you're a Christian, you love this topic until we came to this point, until we came to this point and this man stood up and lost his temper publicly. Do you know why? Because somebody he deeply loved died without Jesus.

And the idea of their loved one, not being in heaven became the outrage of his heart. And he opposed us. He opposed me.

I understand why he opposed me. We've got a very basic religion. Love God, do good.

That's the religion. That's it in a nutshell. Live moral, live decent, live good, do good, raise up your family.

When we all die, we go to heaven. That is the gospel of the day. And it's been the gospel for all these years from the beginning.

When Cain said my way, it's called deserving. We believe we deserve this. And at the day of death, we put our trust in whatever innate goodness and the things that we have done.

And we die quote in peace, believing that we can stand before the almighty God on our own. I do not know how to break this. This gospel comes from the pit of hell.

Why do I say that? I say that because of Galatians 2 21 that David read for us this morning. If you've got your Bibles, it's sitting right in front of you. Galatians 2 21.

If you don't have your Bibles, it's still in Galatians 2 21. It's right here. The glorious passage of 220.

I am crucified with Christ. No longer I who live. Christ lives in me.

Life, which I now live in the flesh. I live by faith, by the face of the son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. Look at 21.

I do not nullify the grace of God, for if righteousness comes to the law, what does that mean? It means this. If I can find my rightness before God by what I do and by who I am, then did you get that? If, if I am able in myself in who I am and what I have done to live a right life before God, if that is possible, then here are the striking words of Galatians 2 21. Christ died needlessly.

The Bible that David said for no purpose, some of your Bibles in vain, we eliminate the purpose and point of the cross. You don't need a cross. You have another savior.

Who is that savior? You, you are your savior. You and who you are, you and your goodness, you become your own savior. And we say it to the person who died, they were a good person.

They lived a good life. They're in heaven. Now we are saying in those words, Jesus died in vain.

He came in vain. He did not need to come. We do not need a savior.

That's why it's not just a belief contrary to the gospel. It's a belief that opposes the gospel. It mocks what Jesus did on Calvary.

It mocks the salvation. The reason he came to die for us, that we might live. Why? Because listen, this is why people hate the gospel.

You are no different than that woman. There's a belief out there. I love this analogy.

It's always worked for me. Here comes the bus and people get on the bus and then the door closes. There are some people who are right there when the door closes.

And there are people way, way, way, way, way, way, way, way back who are nowhere near the entrance of the bus. Those who are in have been saved by the blood of Jesus. Those who are out, the first person that stands there is the moral person.

The good, the upright, the blameless, the holy, the righteous. And they look back at that impoverished woman at the well. I'm not like her.

I'm not immoral. I'm not adulterous. I'm not a sinner.

I'm not an outcast. I'm not a hopeless person like that. That woman who has lived like that.

And she looks back and said, you didn't get on the bus either. Well done. You, you got right up to the door and went to hell with me.

Congratulations. Maybe there's a, there's a gradation hell somewhere where I get a lower part and you get a higher part, but you're not with him. But you see what our mind does.

We structure everything around our own system of what it means to live in this world before God. The issue is, are you on the bus? That's the issue. And that issue has been that the Lord has given to us this, this, this understanding that we need a savior, that we are no different than that woman.

You and me, no different. For this reason, I turned to Romans in chapter three, in the most extraordinary text the gospel can ever know. It's found in Romans chapter three.

And it's found in verse that most people actually know by heart. If you've ever done any memorization, it's one of the first ones anybody will remember verse 23 for all. And, and of course the keyword here is all.

This means that there's no gradation between the first person who missed the bus and the last person who sits in the great immoralities of life. All have sinned all for short of the glory of God. All of us do.

What does the next verse say? Key verse of this whole gospel of Romans being justified, meaning be made right as a gift by his grace through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus. Listen to it again. Justified as a gift by his grace, by his grace, through the redemption, which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in his blood through faith.

That's what happened on Calvary's Hill. His body upon that cross, bearing our sin, that blood come to atone for our sin by faith to receive by grace. It's a gift.

It's all a gift. Grace upon grace. It's a gift.

The Lord gives this gift to us through his son. It's a gift, not because we've deserved it, but because he has given it. It's the difference between trusting us and trusting him.

Trusting what Jesus did for us. Trusting Jesus. Trusting what he did at the cross.

Trusting him. Trusting his name. It's not trusting us.

And at the end of this, this is the most amazing part about grace. It says to us that we are undeserving. This is not the gospel we're hearing, hearing in America today.

We're hearing the opposite gospel, that there is something inside of us. We are a people that have lost our way. We are trying to find value and esteem.

We're really working hard on relationships because relationships are pointing to our greatest failures in life, because inside we know that there are problems inside of us. And so we're trying to work on, and we want our preachers to tell us that there is something inside us that is good, that we can work on. And then you come to some stupid church in a middle school, and here it's the exact opposite.

It's the exact opposite. Give up. Completely give up.

Are you trying to live a good, decent life? Give up. This is the whole wonder of the gospel. That woman at the well is alone, completely isolated by life, by circumstance, by situation.

But she's got inside her an understanding that the big people in town, all those big men with the big houses and the big money and the people of respect and have found their way in life don't have. She knows something. She's not good.

If she was, she would be trying to work and coming down to the well with her friends. She doesn't have friends. Why? Because her friends know her.

She's been married five times. The one she's living with is not her husband. She's immoral.

She's adulterous. She's a sinner. She's an outcast.

That's who she is. Praise the Lord. I am not like her.

No, no. Praise God. I am like her.

Why? Because my sins, though you don't know them, which is why I don't have a reputation, aren't, Bill, are known before the Lord. And in terms of him, I am an outcast. In terms of him, I'm a stranger to the covenant.

To him, my sins have barred me from the glory of God. This is why the whole working my friends, you and I spend an entire lifetime, all of us do trying to get into that place where in society we are accepted. Most people run their entire existence just trying to be accepted so that when we get accepted, which we never believe, by the way, but when we try to get there and finally get there, we thank God for it because we wanted it for so long to say there's something inside of me that's right, that's good, that's accepted, that's deserving.

I should be the one that Jesus says this to, not her. And yet he comes to those who are undeserving and he lavishes upon them grace upon grace upon grace upon grace. I don't know what you believe, but I

know that you're not going to know what you believe until you're tested with this.

I cannot tell you how many times Christians who are mature do not know this simple, simple truth today. They get to the casket and they hear in their, in their ears, the people around them saying he or she was good and we have no response. Do you realize in those statements we are saying, Jesus, you are no longer needed.

We are blaspheming his name when we say this. We are spitting on the cross in those words. That's what we're doing.

No, this person was not good. This person was a sinner. There's only one testimony going to the grave.

It is Jesus Christ and him alone. Do you trust in Jesus? I'm sorry about your loved ones. I'm sorry about the argument.

I'm sorry you're mad that, that it's not the other gospel, but it isn't the other gospel. If you only knew it was this gospel, you would run to your loved one before they died and say, please trust in Jesus. He has come.

They have showered. He has showered his love. The father has sent the son.

Trust in Jesus. When you write your gravestone, don't say was good. Say trusted in Jesus.

There's no other hope. There's no other possibility. There's no other way.

And that's why Jesus at the tomb of the woman is such a powerful story. I am he. Into this woman's heart comes the, comes the mystery of the ages.

The boys who are getting food in town have not yet known what she now knows. He lavished grace upon her. Why? Because he's God.

Because in mercy, he rescued by grace. We have been saved through faith, not of ourselves. It's not because of works so that none should boast.

That is the gospel. But do you believe it? Have you trusted in Jesus? Do you believe it? Or are you hearing the whimsical nature of the gospel that's being preached in America, but because your ears are not trained, you don't know this truth. I literally had one person say to me, you don't look at, don't mess me up.

You guys, you Christians have all your particular gospel and all your ducks in a row, all your little doctrines in an order. Love God, do good. That's the key.

If you believe that, then you spit on Jesus. It's a lie. And that lie is in many of us here today.

When you come today to the table, that is the sign of grace upon grace, upon grace, upon grace, upon grace, upon grace. You do not deserve this. But thanks be to God.

He has loved us with an everlasting heart. Thanks be to God. That door right now of the bus is still open.

There will be a day when that door closes. Like the day that the Lord closed Noah's Ark and no one else could get in. The Lord will close that door.

Today that door is open and it's only opened saved by grace, by the name of Jesus. Dear friends, are you trusting in you? Is the religion of your friends and family trusting in you today in your hearing? I say to you, there is a Savior who has come. And at the time of my death, I put my trust in Jesus.

What he did on Calvary's Hill, that we are rescued and saved, justified and made right by faith in him. Today, Lord Jesus, I pray by the grace of your Holy Spirit, you would root out, root out of us this stronghold that possesses our minds. It possesses our hearts.

It has actually established our identities. It has made us have prejudice over other people and count ourself more worthy of life than others, more worthy of your love. Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon us.

Forgive us our sin. Root out of us this principle inside us that trusts in us and not you. Open our hearts.

Help us to fall upon our faces and say, Lord Jesus, thank you for what you've done. Praise you for what you've done. Your name is a strong refuge, a strong tower, and we trust in you today.

Help build our identities, Lord, that we trust in you and you alone. Bring us to that place, Lord Jesus, and there let us celebrate and give thanks for what you have done in Jesus' name. Amen.

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