

growing
hope



Easter Resources



Pre-Easter Service



Topic:	Restoring Grace
Main Point:	Grace restores us into relationship with God
Intended Response:	Confidence in being acceptable to God through Christ's grace
Key Verse:	Luke 22:54-62 (Peter's denial) John 21:15-17 (Peter's restoration)
Activity:	Consider having a fish and bread barbeque after church

Introduction

Song

Amazing Grace
John Newton

We have just sung the famous song *Amazing Grace*. It is a classic Christian song, known around the world, that sums up the Christian experience so well. This Easter, we are going to take some time looking at what is so amazing about grace.

Grace

The phrase "what's so amazing about grace" was coined by the famous Christian author Phillip Yancey. It's the title of one of his many books. *What's So Amazing About Grace* is one of the best-selling Christian books of all time, it sold over 15 million copies.

When Phillip Yancey was asked to define grace, he said:

'I don't even try. Jesus talked a lot about grace, but mainly through stories. I remember once getting stuck in Los Angeles traffic and arriving 58 minutes late at the Hertz rental desk. I walked up in kind of a bad mood, put the keys down and said, "How much do I owe?" The woman says, "Nothing. You're all clear." I said I was late and she smiled, "Yes, but there's a one-hour grace period." So I asked, "Oh really, what is grace?" And she said, "I don't know. [They must not cover that in Hertz training classes.] I guess what it means is that even though you're supposed to pay, you don't have to." That's a good start to a definition.'

Grace for the Christian is not being condemned by God and not paying the prices we are meant to for our sin.

When we talk about **restoring** grace, we mean it is how God restores us to being the person He created us to be. It is talking about the transformative power of God's love in someone's life.

Amazing Grace, the song, was written by a former slave trader, John Newton. The first verse talks about the restoration in his life made possible by grace.

He was wretched - but now he is saved.

He was lost - but now he is found.

He was blind - but now he sees.

All these are complete opposites!

He was restored to being found by God, able to see God, and being saved by God. An utterly transformed person, by God's grace.

Readings

Reading 1: (Luke 22:54-62)

Peter disowns Jesus, after he is taken for trial and execution

Reading 2: (John 21:1-19)

Peter is restored, after Jesus' resurrection

Sermon outline

Point 1: The low point

- ▶ Peter's denial of Christ, three times, when he was terrified, after Jesus was taken into custody, was a low point.
- ▶ Jesus had predicted it. Peter had said he would never disown Jesus. But he didn't understand what would happen to Jesus, or how it would affect him. God has plans for us we don't always understand, and knows our weaknesses better than we do ourselves.
- ▶ After Peter had denied Jesus 3 times, he remembered Jesus' prediction. He realised what he had done. The bible says he "wept bitterly".
 - Have you cried those tears? The tears at your absolute lowest point? When you have betrayed those you love, when you have done a terrible thing, the thing you swore you would never do. Those tears hurt, they are desperate, they can be without hope.
- ▶ Once we hit this low point, grace is the only way forward. Grace is the promise of God that you never need to be stuck at the low point. There is always hope, always a way back to God.
- ▶ God knows you, He already knew you would be there, at your lowest point. God is unshockable.
 - How do you feel knowing that your low points will never catch God by surprise? He knows us so deeply and intimately that when we sin and fall short He knows. And yet He still extends to us grace.

Point 2: The short way back

- ▶ Blink and you will miss Peter being forgiven. Restoring grace is not slow, elaborate, or hard to access. Once you realise you need it, just ask God. It's right there. God is longing for us to know His love and be made new.
- ▶ When did forgiveness happen in this story? We can't know for sure, but there are so many points Jesus extends grace.
 - Maybe Peter had already understood and accepted Jesus' forgiveness by weeping his bitter tears and remembering Jesus' words.
 - Maybe it was the sheer fact that Jesus came and found him. As soon as Peter saw Jesus was on a beach at the shore of the lake where he was fishing with other disciples, he jumped out of his fishing boat and ran through the water to him. He wasn't at all unsure or shy. He had lived with Jesus for three years. He was known by Jesus. It's still true of being a Christian, the longer you know Jesus, the more sure of his love you become.

Aussies will understand Jesus' epic act of forgiveness: He lit a fire on the beach, A.K.A. fired up the barbie. No words needed! Actions often signal forgiveness louder than words.

- Maybe grace was restored as they shared brekkie? Jesus laid on the tucker, a giant catch for them to eat, as he had when they fed the 5000. That generous, delicious fish barbie was the taste of grace.
 - Was it after sharing brekkie, as they sat by the fire? Jesus asked three times if Peter loved him. The fire would have reminded Peter of the fire he sat next to on the night Jesus was taken to be crucified, when he answered three times that he never knew Jesus. Jesus gave Peter the opportunity to say three times he loved Him, to wipe out the three denials. Grace is about God giving us an opportunity to respond to Him.
- ▶ Everything about this story, everything Jesus did, smelt deliciously of forgiveness, of love, of restoring grace. Peter barely spent a moment feeling unloved, and we shouldn't either.
 - ▶ Jesus also wasted no words telling Peter it was OK. He gave Peter a job, not words: "feed my sheep" "tend my sheep".
 - ▶ Jesus restored Peter, and showered him with grace.

Point 3: The long path forward - living the restored life

- ▶ Jesus compared people to sheep without a shepherd. It moved and motivated Him. He didn't blame them for being lost and misled, He had compassion for them. *(Matthew 9:36)*
- ▶ Later Jesus taught the disciples that He was that shepherd, and that when you are one of Jesus' sheep, nothing will ever snatch you away from him. *(John 10:28)*

- ▶ As part of his restoration, Jesus instructs Peter to be the shepherd of the sheep too. Peter was commissioned to lead Jesus followers and to help them to live lives that are saturated in grace.

- ▶ Jesus knows that ultimately Peter will die for his faith, he will be martyred. But grace has restored him, nothing can snatch Peter away from life with Jesus. Not even death.

- ▶ The life of restored grace is to be a channel of God's grace in the world. The Salvation Army vision of being saved to serve is right here, in Jesus' teaching about a life restored by grace.
 - So how will you go out this week knowing that if you come to Jesus and admit your failings that He will restore you with grace.
 - Each of us has a God-given job to do. To live out a life that is restored to right-relationship with God and to help others to do the same.

Opportunity to accept God's Grace (altar call)

We are going to take a moment to pause now and offer an opportunity for you to accept God's grace.

Like the writer of *Amazing Grace* says, are you someone who is wretched, lost and blind?

Would you like to accept God's grace and be found in God's grace, saved by His grace and be able to spiritually see?

[Provide a space in your service for people to respond to God's grace.]

Conclusion

We hope you have been encouraged tonight as you have heard about the grace that is held out to us by Jesus. No one is beyond His restoration.

If you would like to chat to anyone about this, please feel free to come and speak with one of our ministry team.

Good Friday



Topic:	Growing in Grace
Main Point:	Growing in grace is an ongoing work of the Spirit in our lives
Intended Response:	Confidence of acceptance by Christ's grace
Key Verse:	Luke 22:54-62 (Peter's denial) John 21:15-17 (Peter's restoration)

Introduction

Sing:

Jesus Paid It All

by Sovereign Grace Music

When we have been given grace by Christ through His forgiveness we want to make sure that we keep growing in grace. Growing in our understanding of this grace, never getting complacent and sharing grace with others.

Readings

Reading 1: Luke 23:26-43

The crucifixion of Jesus

Reading 2: 2 Peter 3:18

Growing in grace

Sermon outline

Point 1: Act of grace

- ▶ You might be thinking, “Grace, what a weird topic to be talking about as we remember Jesus’ death today”.
- ▶ The cross doesn’t seem like a particularly grace-filled place. It was harsh environment, exposed on the top of a hill. There were jagged, splinter-filled crosses erected to hang criminals on. That doesn’t seem like a place where grace is.
- ▶ And yet, as Jesus was hung on a harsh wooden cross on the hill at Calvary we see the ultimate distillation of God’s grace.
- ▶ Jesus sacrifice on the cross is the single biggest act at the centre of history that shows us the staggering scope of God’s love for us. It is the ultimate act of grace.
- ▶ Every sin that needed payment was in that moment on the cross dealt with. Jesus arms spread wide is Him saying to any who come to Him “it is paid”, “your debt is dealt with”.
- ▶ On the cross, Jesus absorbs all evil and all sin.
 - The President of the United States has a sign on his desk “the buck stops here”.
 - Jesus death on the cross is a proclamation to the whole universe “the penalty for sin stops here”.

Point 2: Grace in action

- ▶ Despite the penalty for sin being taken away at the cross we still experience sin, brokenness and evil in the world.
- ▶ The victory over sin and death has been won definitively for eternity, but in our daily experience we still see sin and death. This is due to something that we can call “the now but not yet”. We can experience God promises to us now in this life, but we won’t experience their full completion until Jesus returns – that is the “not yet”.
- ▶ As Jesus fulfilled his destiny by taking our sins on the cross, He modelled how giving grace is not only the act of his death on the cross, but ongoing actions that shape our relationships.
- ▶ Despite his pain and agony on the cross, Jesus took time to spare a thought for the other two being crucified, and promised that the one who asked for forgiveness would be with him in Paradise.
- ▶ Amazingly, He even prayed for those who were responsible for his execution. In Luke 23:34 “Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”
- ▶ Grace in action can be seen in many moments in our lives, it is not just in the ‘big’ moments. We can take a leaf from Jesus book and show grace to others each day.

Point 3: Growing in grace – know and express

- ▶ For us, grace is that act of Jesus, which we humbly accept. We load our burden of brokenness and sin onto him. That is knowing grace.
- ▶ When we know grace it leads us to express grace. Making a series of choices in our lives we make out of overflowing gratitude for God's grace, his love, shown in Christ Jesus. That is expressing grace.
- ▶ Philip Yancey explained part of his motivation for writing his book *What's So Amazing About Grace* this way:
- ▶ "I see grace as one of the great, often untapped, powers of the universe that God has asked us to set loose."
- ▶ Growing in grace is not a good work on our part. Through knowing and expressing grace, it is an increasing surrender of more and more our life to what Yancey called that "untapped power" of God.
- ▶ So how can you grow in grace?
 - Mediate and immerse yourself in the amazing grace Jesus showed you on the cross and the daily experience you have of grace each day as our Lord treats us better than we deserve. This is how we can know grace more and more.
 - Then express that grace!
 - Express grace in your relationships. When we remember how much we have been forgiven it can help us when we need to forgive others.
 - Can you let go of a grudge you have been holding and extend grace?
 - Can you think the best of people and allow them to live up to that?
 - Can you move past getting revenge and give grace to them, rather than what they deserve?
 - What grace filled attitudes can you bring to tough situations in your life?
- ▶ As you live out grace and grow in grace you will be living a spirit-filled, God-empowered life.

Opportunity to accept God's Grace (altar call)

We are going to take a moment to pause now and offer an opportunity for you to accept God's grace.

Have you come to understand Jesus immense sacrifice for you on the cross? Do you want to experience the grace that he lavishly pours out on you when you are forgiven?

[Provide a space in your service for people to respond to God's grace.]

Conclusion

Growing in grace over the course of our lives is a spiritual practice. But when we are assured of our status before God, we can joyfully extend grace to them too.

Easter Sunday Service



Topic:	Sharing Grace
Main Point:	Grace is to be shared
Intended Response:	Resolve to find ways to share grace in the lives of those around us
Key Verse:	John 20:1-18, Acts 4:32-33

Introduction

There was once a conference of people who gathered together to ask what makes Christianity different from all the other religions of the world? Some of the participants argued that Christianity is unique in teaching that God became man. But someone objected, saying that other religions teach similar doctrines. What about the resurrection? No, it was argued, other faiths believe that the dead rise again. The discussion grew heated.

C. S. Lewis, a strong defender of Christianity, came in late, sat down, and asked, "What's the rumpus about?" When he learned that it was a debate about the uniqueness of Christianity, he immediately commented, "Oh, that's easy. It's grace."

How right he was! The very heart of the gospel is the supreme truth that God accepts us with no conditions whatever when we put our trust in the atoning sacrifice of His incarnate Son. Although we are helplessly sinful, God in **grace** forgives us completely. It's by His infinite **grace** that we are saved, not by moral character, works of righteousness, commandment-keeping, or churchgoing. When we do nothing else but accept God's total pardon, we receive the guarantee of eternal life (1 Tim 3:4-7).

Good news indeed. What a gospel! What a Saviour!

This knowledge should give us a real urgency to want to share the gospel with others so that they too can have this wonderful Saviour and experience His grace.

Readings

John 20:1-18
The Empty Tomb

Acts 4:32-33
The Believers Share Their Possessions

Sermon outline

Point 1: The resurrection and grace

- ▶ The resurrection of Jesus from the dead powerfully proves that Jesus is the Son of God. Because Jesus is God's Son grace is available to all who trust in Him for their salvation. The resurrection of Jesus validates His sacrifice for sin, removing sin's sting. "O Death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55).

- ▶ Instead of the sting of sin, there is now eternal life for all who believe in Jesus.
 - "The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Such victorious grace stirs gratitude in the hearts of the redeemed. "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."

- ▶ Did you pick up on the language in that passage about grace? "The gift of God is eternal life...thanks be to God, who gives us the victory." These two terms ("gift" and "gives") are the language of grace.

- ▶ Salvation and eternal life are given to us as a gift. We don't deserve it; it is God's unmerited generosity to us. And therefore the victory that we receive through the resurrection is also ours – not by our works but also gifted to us.

- ▶ A fun little way to remember "GRACE" is to think of it with this anagram "God's Riches At Christ's Expense". God has lavish His love, forgiveness and the privilege of being His family on us.

Point 2: The urgency of resurrected grace

- ▶ Did you notice in the readings that from the moment the tomb is found empty, people who hear about it run.
 - The women run to the disciples
 - The disciples outrun each to see for themselves.
 - From the moment Mary understands, she must share it. She must tell the others "I have seen the Lord"

- ▶ When people grasp the significance of Jesus' resurrection there is an urgency that happens.
- ▶ The Salvation Army was founded with that sense of urgency. The living Jesus is not to be locked in a musty old church, His life, death and resurrection is good news to be shared, to be taken out to the people. It is an energetic task, it inspires enthusiasm.
 - Are you enthusiastic about sharing the amazing gift or grace?
Or have you become apathetic and numb to the amazing news.
- ▶ God's grace shown to us should mean that we overflow with grace. Grace displayed in our lives is the outward demonstration of our love for Jesus. It's about understanding the grace you received and sharing it with others. Sharing grace comes from the overflowing of a thankful heart.

Point 3: Sharing Grace

- ▶ Sharing grace is something you just can't help but do when you are overwhelmed by the grace you have been given.
 - Grace is a little bit like a river if you trace it back to where it began you will find a small bit of moisture oozing out of some mossy area or bit of sand. It then becomes a gentle gush flowing from the foot of the mountain. As it continues it gets wider and deeper, forming a stream, then a river, until it mingles with the ocean. This is grace. It is at first a tiny stream, then swells into a river and then into a whole ocean. It begins with our small understanding, grows as we experience grace in our lives and then swells and expands as we share grace with others.
- ▶ Grace didn't stay locked inside a dark tomb. Jesus stepped out of the tomb, and others experienced grace. It was always meant to be shared!
- ▶ Grace doesn't stay here in this church. It is meant to be taken out from here, carried by forgiven, grace-filled people, who overflow with grace and share it with others.
- ▶ Do you have an urgency to share grace you've been given with others?

Opportunity to accept God's Grace (altar call)

We are going to take a moment to pause now and offer an opportunity for you to accept God's grace.

"The gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord, but thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (Romans)

Do you want to receive this gift? Do you want to have a share in Jesus victory?

[Provide a space in your service for people to respond to God's grace.]

Conclusion

God's saving grace is for all people, "for God so loved the **world** that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him will have life."

We've heard today about the amazing gift that it is, that we cannot earn our salvation, we can't work at getting good enough for God's grace, but when we come to Him, He freely gives us His grace.

What a wonderful God, Saviour and King we celebrate at Easter!!!