

SERMON FOR JULY 19, 2020

TEXT: 2 JOHN 1: 3

THEME: GRACE, MERCY, AND PEACE

**3** Grace, mercy, and peace will be with us, from God the Father and from Jesus Christ the Father's Son, in truth and love.

In the name of Jesus:

Grace, mercy, and peace to you in the name of Jesus Christ. I and other pastors have been using this standard greeting as an introduction to the day's sermon for centuries. Personally I have been using this greeting for over 40 years, in my 38 years as your pastor and in the three years when I was able to preach before I became a pastor, when studying at the Seminary. Grace, mercy, and peace. Three simple words, but three power packed words that God Himself empowers when they are proclaimed to you.

Now, many people, when they are finding an excuse as to why they don't attend church services, use the refrain: "I just don't get anything out of church." When someone says that, I wonder what in the world they are looking for when they come to church, for when we each come to church and hear the Good News of what God has done for us, we receive the gifts of God! What more do we need? And yet, when the pastor or any pastor greets you with the greeting: "Grace, mercy, and peace be yours in Jesus Christ," the one

who hears these words and believes what they say actually have so many gifts of God that it is really, when one would consider it, an embarrassment of riches that God gives in these three words.

Consider this: Grace, a word that not only talks about the gifts of God but actually *gives* the best of what God has to offer. The simple word grace means gift. God is giving a gift to you, many gifts in fact. When we receive gifts on special occasions, these gifts are given to us at the gift giver's expense, with no strings attached. It was my granddaughter's birthday last Monday. She received many gifts. She didn't pay for these gifts. The gifts were not given in an expectation that she would have to do something to receive or keep these gifts. The gifts were given out of love.

So too, God, who is rich in gifts, He is the Good Giver of gifts, and the greatest Gift that God gives in that He gave His only Son to be your Savior. God sent His only Son into the world so that by believing in Him you might have life by His name. 1 Peter 2: 24 says: "He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.". God tells us in his Word that He deals with us in love. Without any merit or worthiness in any of us, God desires to forgive

sin, make us right with Him, and give eternal life for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ. Your sins are forgiven as a free gift of God's love for you in Jesus Christ

Along with God's grace God is merciful to you in Jesus. How can we explain mercy? Mercy is showing compassion to someone when it is within your power and right to show anger and punish one who has done your wrong. Isn't this true and deserving for all of us? Each Sunday we ask God for forgiveness, by saying: "I am a poor miserable sinner." Each of us can and should be able to relate to the sinner who beat his chest and cried out to God: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." We deserve nothing but God's present anger and wrath and His eternal punishment. But God doesn't treat us the way we deserve. Instead, He shows mercy, compassion, He forgives instead of punishing, He gives help to those in need.

And so, each of us can go to God in any time of need, for anything that we have need of, because we know that He loves us and He will be our ever present Help in times of trouble. No wonder Jesus invites us to pray in the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, who art in heaven," for God is our Heavenly Father who only desires to give us His good gifts and help us in our times of need. We need not fear God as some taskmaster or as an angry Judge who is just waiting for us to do wrong, so that He can pounce and pay us back with

what we deserve. No! Rather, God shows mercy, He is always willing to help, and earnest desires that we come to Him, trusting that He will hear and answer our prayers and pleas for help, for He wants you and me to believe that He is our true Father and we are His true children in Christ, so that we can come to Him with any request with all boldness and confidence knowing that He loves to hear our prayer and will help us in our time of need.

God's grace and mercy shown to us gives our hearts and our lives peace. And oh, how we need peace. Not the peace that the world thinks about. Peace today is thought of as an absence of warfare and violence, and that most certainly would be welcome today as we witness homicides on the rise in Central Ohio, nations flexing their military muscle, and America's cities are recovering from riots in the streets. But the peace that God gives is a peaceful conscience that rests in Him.

The two things that plaque us today are sin and our conscience. And the devil knows that and seeks to use these things against us. Satan seemingly is always throwing our sins in our face, accusing us not only of things that we have done wrong, but also of things that God has already forgiven. He will remind us of past sins, of the skeletons in our closet, all in an effort to cause us worry, anxiety, and to move us away from God's grace and mercy. He always

tries to drive us away from God and His love for us in Jesus, causing us to doubt God's love and drive us to despair. But Jesus has conquered sin for us, to forgive us and to give us a clear conscience, that we might know that nothing will separate us from His love.

The present world knows nothing about this type of peace. People can talk about peace, but only Christians are equipped to deal with sin, despair and eternal death because you have been baptized into Christ and you now belong to Him. What God gives to you in Jesus is the full and complete forgiveness of your sins and in turn, a joyful, peaceful, and quiet conscience. What God wants for you and what He gives you in Jesus is a good, quiet, peaceful and joyful conscience, that sin will not trouble you in your relationship with God, for He forgives you in Christ. God desires that you find joy in your soul and life, knowing that God truly loves you and is at work now to bring about His good and gracious will for you in your life. God desires that you live in peace, with Him, not as His enemy but as His friend, as His loving and obedient child. And then this peace, which comes from God, is lived joyfully and with confidence. Joyfully, as you share the love and blessings of God with others, thereby loving your neighbor as yourself, and confidently, for you know that God loves you and will provide for your every need.

Grace, mercy, and peace. These three words are more than enough of a reason to come to worship each Sunday. These three words actually give what God wants you to have, His love, His blessing, His help in time of need, and a joyful confidence that you belong to Him and that because of Jesus nothing will ever separate you from His love. These three words sum up our faith, the Christian faith. And so may the grace, mercy and peace from God our Father, in Jesus Christ our Lord, be yours now and forever!

Amen