

# Grace to See Jesus

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[ 0 : 00 ] Yeah, got to reign in all these extroverts. So appreciate the fact that it's hard to get you to separate from yourselves.

It's a great sign of God's grace. I think over our church, how much we love one another and love spending time together. So anyways, if you don't know me and you're new to the church, you're here visiting, checking it out for the first time.

So glad you're here with us. My name is Jesse Kinzer. I am one of the pastors here, and so glad that you're with us. And if you're listening online, glad that you're doing that and wish you could be here.

Hope to see you soon. As Elliot had alluded to during our little moment of prayer, we're in this transition period. And so what we're wanting to do is just have little family moments. And so bear with us if you're new, just about like some updates and what's kind of going on.

And right now things are moving at a bit of a snail's pace. And really it's because we have to wait until, you know, the secretary of state officially says, hey, you are now a organizational entity.

[ 1 : 02 ] And so we've made bylaws and we've sent those in and now we're waiting on that. And yes, that means there is a name. And no, we are not going to tell you what that is yet. All right. We want to reveal that at a later time.

And so right now what we can say is that we've identified a local bookkeeper in our area who's going to help us with finances and help us oversee some finances.

And they're a pretty amazing outfit. They come highly recommended. They work a lot with other churches. And so we're excited about that. And so, yeah, that means once we get the secretary of state stuff in, we get what is called the EIN number and we can get bank accounts and then, you know, we can move forward with some more things.

So that's really exciting. And just so you know, some of what we're going to be doing is keeping you updated along those lines. And also like maybe some needs that kind of surround that, that we may not have been aware of and thought through, but suddenly it's like, oh, we need like help with this kind of thing or that kind of thing.

And so we'll announce that from time to time and drip feed that in. And so, yeah, just be in prayer. It's one of those things like, you know, I'm checking every single day on the secretary of state website, like, is the name in yet?

[ 2 : 14 ] Is it like officially, you know, is it officially like, you know, there and pinged on a search and disappointment every single day. So anyways, pray, be praying with us that that isn't somehow lost in the mail or lost on somebody's desk or anything like that.

And that gets processed soon. That would be great. As exciting as all those things are, it is very excited. It's always exciting to kind of start into a new year.

And, you know, we always come to a new year with fresh excitement and maybe some fresh vision for our lives. And I just want to bring you into something that even in this transition time and thinking about like, man, God, what kind of church are you calling us to be?

What kind of people are you calling us to be for a city, for an area? And so when I close my eyes and I dream with God, kind of the thing that constantly comes up is this idea of God just filling this area with his grace, just flooding it, like abundance amounts of grace.

And how's he going to do that? Well, he's going to do that through people like you and me. And so I see just like, man, a people that are filled with God's grace that are taking it to the places where they work, where they play, where they study, where they do life, their neighbors, all that, the neighborhoods they live in.

[ 3 : 32 ] And they are just conduits of God's grace. They are, they are touch points. They are the fragrance of God that is filling and flooding this area with the goodness and the glory of God.

And that's kind of the dream. But how do we do that? Well, we have to be people that are filled with God's grace. So how does that happen? Well, it means we, you and I, we have to abide in him. It's really what it comes down to. And so all of those things start with that first domino, right?

Are we abiding in God? And in so doing, are we being filled with what John 1 calls grace upon grace? And we're going to be in John 1. We're doing a short little sermon series to begin January. And then we'll be moving on into the book of Philippians, which we're really excited about. And, but this sermon series today is really considering what the with God life is about and what that means. And what we're going to see over the next four weeks is that it, it begins and it continues with us seeing Jesus and believing in him and what all that means and then following him and what all that means and then displaying him and what all that means.

[ 4 : 39 ] But today we're going to look specifically at seeing Jesus and what that means for us. And so John chapter one, verses one to 18, it says this in the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God.

He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life and the life was the light of men.

The light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not overcome it. There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to bear witness about the light that all might believe through him.

He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light. The true light, which gives light to everyone was coming into the world. He was in the world and the world was made through him. And yet the world did not know him. He came to his own and his own people did not receive him. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God who were born not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

[ 5 : 55 ] And the word became flesh and dwelt among us. And we have seen his glory as of the only son from the father, full of grace and truth.

John bore witness about him and cried out. This was he of whom I said, he who comes after me ranks before me because he was before me. For from his fullness, we have all received grace upon grace.

For the law was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, the only God, who is at the father's side.

He has made him known. This is God's word to us. Amen. So one of the things that is evident, there's a lot of things evident in this passage, but I want to draw attention to one of the things that is evident from this passage, is the overwhelming grace given to us.

And the fact that Jesus put on flesh. And what is the grace that he's given to us? What does that mean? It means that Jesus made God knowable and he brought him near.

[ 7 : 06 ] Jesus made God knowable and he brought him near. And we needed that. And you know what? God provided it. And up to that point in history, God was incomprehensible.

He was unapproachable. His glory could not be looked upon. And the only time that people could really get into what is like his manifest presence, not his like presence that kind of permeates everything and all creation in the universe and with everything is held, but his actual manifest presence.

The only time that could happen is one man from one family of one tribe of one nation in one little room, in one temple, in one place could draw near one time a year.

That was it. And that was the high priest on the day of atonement who went into the Holy of Holies in the temple that was in Jerusalem, the place of God's presence. And he did so with trepidation.

He did so not knowing if he was going to come out alive. And then Jesus came. And he made God fully known to us.

[ 8 : 10 ] And he brought God to us. He dwelt among us. He walked among us. He wasn't kind of God. He was God. He was the fullness of God, lacking nothing. He was the fullness of grace and truth.

And we needed both of those things. He was the light that came into the darkness. Light reveals. Darkness covers. But he is the light that can't be covered. He uncovered the revelation of who God was so we could know him.

He revealed God to us, both God's heart and his nature and his character and also his redemptive purposes. In short, Jesus revealed God's glory and his goodness.

And he didn't come looking super impressive like a Marvel superhero. Right? I mean, the description that Isaiah said of him, prophesied about him, he's like, there was nothing about him that was impressive that would make us stop and say like, hey, wait a second.

Who was that? His glory, the way he revealed God's glory was through his life, what he said, what he taught, what he did.

[ 9 : 16 ] Verse 18 that we read tells us that nobody has seen God. And yet Jesus made him known to us.

To fully talk about the glory of the Father revealed through Jesus. Let me be honest. That could be its own sermon series. And man, you get into things like what is being revealed, this incomprehensible God who Jesus revealed to us.

And like, just think about, I mean, the amount of books that have been written just on God's sovereignty. Or the fact that he is eternal or it has always existed or that he is infinite.

Like, what does that mean? What does that look like? How do you explain that? How do you understand that? How do you understand, like, the fact that, like, he is in and of himself, like, fully satisfied and in need of nothing?

How do you understand the depths of his grace and his mercy and all those things? I mean, we could go on and on and on. Needless to say, those who have seen Jesus have seen God's glory and his goodness.

[ 10 : 19 ] And as, again, John 1 calls it, man, it's grace upon grace. It is more grace than you can handle. Now, what is interesting for us today, as we consider all of what it means to see Jesus, is we're going to let this passage guide us.

And you may have noticed that Jesus was repeatedly called the Word, right? Why is that? Well, it's because Jesus reveals life as it should be.

He not only reveals who God is, he reveals life as it should be. And I want to say this kind of hits home for everybody. Whether you've been following Jesus forever or you're here and you're coming and you're wondering, like, what is this all about?

Maybe you're just a seeker or a cynic. Man, we're all in that same boat. We're trying to figure out life as it should be, aren't we? We want to know the meaning of life, the purpose of life.

What is the reason for life? What is the rationale in it? And how do we make it less terrible, right? We are all in the same boat. We're looking for life as it should be.

[ 11 : 22 ] In my 20s, I had Jesse's version of what life as it should be was. And it involved lots of money, lots of loving, and lots of fun. And to my surprise, having those things didn't make my life great.

In fact, they brought a whole new set of problems that I didn't even know existed. And I always thought for myself, I always thought by having those things, I would find that something that I always felt like it was missing.

But after living that life for several years, what I came into was like, actually, I ended up being worse than when I went in.

Have you ever felt empty inside? Have you ever had that feeling where you're just like, man, I feel nothing. I feel emptiness. That's what I felt. But I was told this is how life works.

Having those things was the way to the good life, the fulfilling life, the life of complete satisfaction, life as it should be. And in Jesus's day, people were seeking the same thing.

[ 12 : 25 ] People have not changed. And the Greeks had a word for life as it should be. It was a word called logos, which translated simply means word.

And this logos, this idea of logos, and it refers to the order and design of how the cosmos worked and functioned in harmony.

And so for the Greeks to find life as it should be was to discover what these cosmic principles were and to align yourself to them, to live according to them. But the problem is nobody could figure that part out.

But that's the claim that John is making in today's passage. You and I can't find the logos. The logos has to find you.

And so it says in verse 14, the word Jesus, the logos, became flesh and he came and he dwelt among us. Jesus had to come to us and he had to reveal life as it should be.

[ 13 : 26 ] And this is, let me just say this. This is one of the most scandalous claims Christianity made back then and is still making today. Life as it should be can't be attained by finding the right set of principles to live by or the right life hacks to make your life just a little bit better.

It can only be attained. It can only be revealed in a person. And that person has been revealed and his name is Jesus. See, the Greeks tried to find it through looking at nature and science and trying to discover those things.

And, you know, we kind of followed suit. And scientific pursuit and discovery, it's not a bad thing, but it can only get you so far. You will find order and you will find design in the created universe.

And, you know what, there's some wise principles to live by when you discover those things, like not jumping off of high places because, well, gravity, right? Or setting aside reserves during harvest time because, you know, winter is coming.

We call that savings today. In a sense, it makes those kind of principles a good thing because knowing them and living by them can keep you alive and it could keep you thriving.

[ 14 : 34 ] But the life we are talking about goes way beyond that. It has to do with the quality of life that is abundant and fulfilling. And the Greeks called this kind of life Zoe life.

The Hebrew equivalent word to that Greek word is nefesh. And it's the word that they used for soul. And it's the word used in verse 4 where it says, in him, in Jesus was life.

Not just life, but this Zoe life, this abundant life, this life that is all fulfilling and it can't be compared to at all. This is life as it should be.

And that can only be experienced by that which can fill our souls. You know, I don't know of any poems. Maybe you do. I don't know of any poems written about the transcendent experience of having an impressive Roth IRA.

Or in knowing the Pythagoras theorem. Like, have you ever seen anybody so moved in their soul that they were like writing an ode to any of those things? They may be wise things to have.

[ 15 : 35 ] They may be wise ways to live by. But it's not the kind of thing that brings that Zoe life to the soul. Only Jesus can do that. And that's the claim that John is making here.

And I think one of the biggest reasons for that is because Jesus actually preexisted before all of these created things that we tried to go out and find the fulfillment of life in.

And why is that important for us to consider? Well, if you've indulged in all of the things that this world has to offer. If you've lived by all the principles that nature and science can reveal and still you find yourself unsatisfied, incomplete, and lacking something.

Possibly it could mean that life as it should be can only be found beyond the reach of the material world. Meaning the source had to preexist those things.

Enter verse 1. In the beginning was the Word. In the beginning was the Logos. In the beginning was life as it should be. As it was with God and was God.

[ 16 : 42 ] And what this all means is that life as it should be is a relationship to live in. So before anything existed. Before there were solar systems and planets and earth and plants and animals to eat and light to enjoy and all those things.

Human beings to have a relationship with. Before there was any of those things. There was a life as it should be and it was a relationship. And not just a relationship. It was the relationship.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Jesus came to reveal that relationship to us. And not only reveal it to us. He came to bring us into that relationship with them.

And we get glimpses of this eternal relationship. This eternal never ending Zoe life that preexisted everything. And is going to exist forever and ever on into eternity.

Unending. When the Father speaks to Jesus in the Gospels. We get glimpses of this. It's words like this is my beloved son. In him I'm well pleased.

[ 17 : 40 ] Listen to him. When we hear Jesus speak to the Father in the Gospels. It's with words like him and I are one. I love the Father. Father glorify me and I will glorify that I may glorify you.

Jesus came to reveal the Father. And in revealing the Father he also revealed the relationship. And that is what our souls have been longing for. That relationship is where we find the fullness of life. So then we can confidently say that more than principles to live by.

Life as it should be is a relationship to live in. And to explain how to live in that relationship. Jesus uses words like abide. Which is a bit strong to our ears.

Right? To abide means to remain. It has connotations of faithfulness and consistency. And Jesus and the Father and the Holy Spirit.

[ 18 : 44 ] They have not. They have never stopped abiding with each other. Think about that. That is a truth that has been from eternity. And this means that the relationship for you and me.

Isn't some kind of casual acquaintance. The Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. They know each other perfectly. And they invite us to know him well. The Father, Son, and Spirit.

They love each other. They love each other perfectly and unceasingly. As is their love. So too do they rejoice and glory in each other. One person says, man, when you look at the Trinity.

It's this beautiful dance of unceasing joy and delight. And glory and worship and love being poured out to one another. And it never ends. And you know what they do?

Is they invite us into that eternal dance with them. This is the revelation of the relationship that Jesus made known by becoming flesh and dwelling among us.

[ 19 : 42 ] These have been the relational practices of the Trinity from before time began. That's what they do. Which tells us something important about the relationship. Living in this relationship calls you to certain relational practices.

Relationship is something you're in, yes. But it is also something you do. Relationship requires the practice of doing certain relational things.

Like showing up. I show up for my kids and my wife all the time. And you know what? They can't get enough of me. And I don't blame them. I cultivate my relationship with Haley by learning what is going on in the world.

I speak to her. I ask her questions. I ask her, how are you doing? And I listen. Those are relational practices that I do to learn her heart. To learn who she is.

To discover who she is. To discover what is going on in her. Because I care about those things. And it promotes intimacy. Just like hugging and kissing. Which are also fun relational practices.

[ 20 : 47 ] That can lead to other fun relational practices. Like Scrabble and Yahtzee. Joking aside. The point is, the point I'm trying to make here is relationships require the practice of spending time together.

What are ways that we can practice our relationship with God? How do we show up? How do we learn who he is? How do we learn his heart?

We do it in the ways that he's made himself available to us. It's time spent in the Bible. It's time spent in prayer. It's time spent in worship. It's time spent in silence and solitude with him.

Just wasting time with him. And we do those things. We're called to do those things on our own. And when we come together in context. Like small groups.

Community groups. Or on Sunday gatherings. Like what we're doing today. But it's also what you can do when you wake up in the morning. Or maybe at a different time. At lunch time in the evening.

[ 21 : 51 ] And you just get time alone with him. And that is how God shows up to us. And how we show up to God. And now I want to say this. That sounds amazing. But also when it comes to these kind of practices.

There is a real danger that we have to be aware of. So that we can avoid it. And relational practices can subtly shift into rigid rules. And that's a big problem.

Because it's the problem that Jesus addressed with the Pharisees. Here are some evidences for when we kind of slip into rigid rule Pharisee mode. Well I didn't read my Bible the last two days.

I'm probably not a good Christian. Or maybe that's why I got a flat tire. God was punishing me. Or I'm so mad at myself. I couldn't focus during my prayer time again.

What's wrong with me? Why can't I do this well? God I'm so sorry. Or I feel so embarrassed. I ran out of things to pray before the 10 minute timer went off.

[ 22 : 51 ] Lord I promise I'll try harder next time. When you start thinking those things. When those things are like little thoughts that creep into your head.

Or when you feel shame or guilt. When you skipped a relational practice for a day or two. What you've done is you've turned practices into rigid rules.

Now I want to say this. Speaking for myself. The Bible has been one of the most meaningful and substantive ways that I've related to God over the years. And so what that means is my relational practices has been overwhelmingly devoted to reading and studying the Bible.

And less time in prayer. And I do want to say this. In the last few years that's really shifted. The amount of time I spend in prayer has significantly increased.

Not because God's word has suddenly become insufficient to me. But prayer is where God is meeting me in significant and profound ways. But if relationship is kept through rigid rules. [ 23 : 53 ] And I would struggle to allow that shift to happen. I would say no, no, no, no. I got to keep doing what I've always been doing. My relationship is dependent on me making sure I have one hour of time with God in the word every single day.

Or maybe even worse, I might project my rigid rules onto you. I don't care if you connect best through God through songs of worship or prayer.

You better be reading your Bible and studying like I do and the amount of time I do. That's making, what that is, that makes the rule more important than the relationship.

To say it another way, it's disconnecting the practice from the relationship. And just watch out for that shift. Right?

And also, don't use these dangers, these pitfalls. Don't use it as an excuse. Well, like, I don't want to do the wrong thing, so I'm just going to not do anything at all. That's not the answer. All right?

[ 24 : 57 ] Just watch out for that shift. The practice needs to be for the sake of the relationship. Now, you might ask, okay, but what is at stake if I don't practice?

Am I kicked out of the relationship? No. But when you don't practice the relationship, you miss out. And this isn't a guilt trip.

This is just a good thing to know. I don't, I'm not here to make you feel bad or pile on anything, but I also don't want you to live in naivety. God won't love you any less if you don't do these relational practices.

But you will miss out on knowing how deep and wide and high and perfect and unchanging his love for you is. And there's another thing that you'll miss out on.

When you spend time practicing seeing Jesus, he will begin to reveal you to yourself. And as much as we need to see the fullness of God's glory and his goodness, which Jesus came to reveal, we also need to discover the truth about who we are in actuality.

[ 26 : 08 ] Not the person that we project to the world, but the person that is hidden within. That sometimes we don't even know ourselves because we're not very honest with ourselves all the time.

But the beautiful thing about living in grace upon grace in this life is that God is not surprised about any of that stuff. Any of the sin that's lurking deep within our hearts, the way it's bent and it's broken and it's a little bit corrupted.

And he is gracious enough to take our whole lifetime to slowly work through those things. It's the process. It's the patient, slow progress of sanctification.

And if you're like me, some of those things in our hearts, some of those things are stuck in there like gunk on a 30-year-old frying pan, man.

It is like, okay, it's going to take some time. It's going to take some work for God to get in there and like really help me out, help us out. But you know what?

[ 27 : 08 ] He loves you so much and there's so much grace that he is in it to be in it with you and work it with you and be patient with you and bring you through all of those things.

You know, when Jesus reveals you to yourself, it can be a little bit shocking and a little bit scary. Maybe I'm the only person that's happened to. And you can wonder if God is really going to keep us in the relationship when you're just like, oh, man, I knew I was kind of bad.

I didn't realize I was that bad. Is God really going to keep a guy like me, a girl like me in that relationship? He is.

And here is how we know that. Before we ever saw him, he saw us first. And still he drew near. And that is grace upon grace, friends.

That is overwhelming grace. Jesus didn't come to a people who had it all together. He didn't come to the righteous. He came into a world of desperate sinners.

[ 28 : 16 ] He came into a world of harsh legalists and arrogant moralists. He came for the rebel and the self-righteous. He came for you and he came for me.

And he came to offer the same thing to all of us. I am here. Come and see life as it should be and join me in it.

As the band comes up and we look to respond. In a moment, we are going to take communion. And I want to say, if you're here and you are not yet a follower of Jesus, before you come to the communion table, come to Jesus.

Come and see what he did to save you. Come and see the son of God who died on the cross for your sins. Come and see the son of God who defeated death for you.

In him, by faith in him, your sins are forgiven. And everlasting life is guaranteed.

[ 29 : 19 ] In a moment, there's going to be an opportunity for you to respond. And I would urge you today. Today. Man, don't leave. Today is the opportunity. Today is the day of salvation.

God is giving you an opportunity. He is calling you. And there's going to be a prayer that you can pray in response to that. Respond and be saved. Put your faith in him.

Follow him. If you know, if you're already a follower of Jesus, God is calling us to respond how?

Let's grow together as his people.

Let's be a people that practice our relationship with God. Both individually, but together as well. If you're looking for practical ways, I'm going to send some resources about Bible reading options, about prayer.

And that'll come through email this afternoon. If you're on CCB, you'll get it. Let's be a people committed to responding to Jesus's invitation to come and see.

[ 30 : 27 ] Let us be a people that are being filled with grace, that are living the life that is grace upon grace. Overwhelming grace, abundant grace. Grace that is never running out, that is never in short supply.

And as we're that people filled with the grace of God, we can go and give it to others. Go and be his people that fill his city with his grace.

As we sit and we ponder and we come to him. And coming to the table is an opportunity even now to come and see.

What are you seeing when you're coming to the communion table? What are we seeing? We're seeing his body broken for us. We are seeing in the cup his blood shed for us.

The redemption of our sins. The blood of a new covenant. The blood that said you can be in relationship with me. And by this, you can be in relationship with me.

[ 31 : 31 ] He came and he made a way. Let me pray. Let me pray. And when I'm finished, go to the table. Bring the bread and the cup back. And maybe if you want to, spend time with God.

Speaking with him and responding to however he's leading you. And then when you're ready, you can take communion. So Father, I pray that you would come. As we come, Jesus, to your table.

The invitation to partake in the sign and symbols of your everlasting love. Your sacrifice for us.

I pray, Holy Spirit, that you would come and draw near to us. And make these things so real and so beautiful and so good. That we'd be stirred in our souls as we take communion today.

Of how amazing this relationship is that we have in you. Help us to see you more clearly. Amen.