

Extravagant Grace in Your Life

John 1:14-17

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"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, 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." (John 1:14–17, ESV)

Our theme last week, this week, and next week is Extravagant Grace, one of our Core Values. We are talking about this subject because it is a beautiful part of the story of this church, and it is something that speaks powerfully. There is something that is just right about treating people with the same grace that we have been treated. Extravagant Grace is God's idea, and it is what Jesus did. He gave selflessly. He served us extravagantly. And His followers are called to do the same. The argument is so clear:

"These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full. "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:11–13, ESV)

This kind of selfless service is valued and commendable even by people who do not know how connected it is to the life of Jesus and the gospel. There is just something right about this kind of selfless service of others. For instance, this Monday is Veterans Day, and the reason that this day is on the calendar is because of the extravagant grace of those who have served all of us.

The selfless service of others is really what the church should be all about. No one knows more about receiving extravagant grace than we do. It makes sense that the church of Jesus Christ would be experts at extravagant grace, doesn't it?

Extravagant Grace and the Gospel

Last week we linked our understanding of extravagant grace and the gospel. Let me review what we learned.

I shared with you our Elders' definition of this important Core Value:

We desire to be a community of believers who treat others with the same extravagant grace that God has lavished upon us. We yearn to demonstrate this grace through our church culture and our lives in a way that is transparent, real, and helpful. We are blessed to be a blessing to each other, the city of Indianapolis, and the world.

And then we saw how connected this idea was to the gospel and the role of the church in the world. From Romans 5 we observed three things: 1) Sinners need grace, 2) Jesus brought grace, and 3) Grace wins! The bottom line of last week was for you to see that we live in a broken world – a place marred by sin – and the church, through the gospel, has the answer. Jesus can fix the problem of our sin, and then we can be the kind of people who bring grace to people as they experience the effects of sin in the world. In other words, we *are graced to give grace*. And the gospel serves as the foundation for this kind of mindset and action.

There is a direct connection between extravagant grace and the gospel.

The Fullness of Jesus

Today I want to connect the fullness of Jesus to your life. I want you to see the personal implications of the overflow of Jesus' life into yours. I want you to see the connection between the fullness of Jesus' life and fullness in yours.

My main interest is in verse 16 where it says, *"from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace."* So what does the fullness of Jesus mean?

1. He is fully God

The Gospel of John is a very important account of the life of Jesus. It is probably the best gospel to read if you are trying to figure out who Jesus is and what it means to receive eternal life through him (i.e., John 20:30-31). Chapter one is foundational to the message of the entire book, and John starts with language that sounds very much like the opening chapters of Genesis.

"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 any thing 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." (John 1:1-5, ESV)

Notice the focus on Jesus equality with God, His creative power, His possession of life and light for mankind, and the fact that darkness was not able to overcome it. Sinners need grace. Jesus brought grace. Grace wins.

2. He is full of redemption

Verses 9-13 are a great summary of the gospel – that Jesus came into the world, was rejected, and anyone who receives Him becomes a child of God by the supernatural work of God.

"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, 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." (John 1:9-13, ESV)

3. He is full of glory

The next verses (14-17) are our main focus, and they serve as a summary of what we have just heard. John tells us that *“the Word became flesh and dwelt among us”* – that Jesus took on Himself full humanity. And in that humanity John and the other disciples saw *“his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”*

John’s point here is not just that Jesus had some kind of glory. Rather, it means that the glory of Jesus was the very glory of the Father. God’s glory was the Son’s glory. Whatever the Father possesses in glory, the Son also shares and displays.

4. He is full of grace and truth

Verse 14 identifies the nature of this glory that Jesus possesses, and it is a glorious combination of divine grace and truth. It is one thing to be gracious or another to be truthful; both are important. But it is another matter to be full of grace *and* truth. One of the things that makes you stand in awe of God’s glory is the powerful communication of the truth about who God is and who we are. In fact, a step in conversion is coming to full agreement with what the Bible says about God and us. But there is also something equally powerful about the powerful communication of grace – that God is ready and willing to treat us in way that we do not deserve.

No one possessed the powerful and beautiful combination of grace and truth on the earth more than Jesus. He embodied the amazing combination of these amazing realities. He was full of grace and truth.

Now this is what John 1 tells us about His fullness, and it relates very much to the redemptive work of Jesus. The fullness of Jesus is who He is, what He does, and what we are able to see in Him. John’s aim is to help you “see” who Jesus really is. As Jesus will tell Nicodemus in John 3, *“unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom.”* So the aim of John’s gospel is for you to receive the grace that comes from the fullness of Jesus. The fullness of Jesus becomes the basis for the giving of grace.

The Apostle Paul echoes John’s sentiment about the fullness of Jesus, and we learn about a few additional aspects of Jesus’ fullness in the book of Colossians.

5. He is full of divine authority

In 1:19 we read *“for in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell,”* and this statement serves as a summary of what Paul says previously:

“For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent.” (Colossians 1:16–18, ESV)

Jesus is full of the authority that comes with being the Son of God. He is Lord! In Philippians 2, Paul says that one day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. He is full of divine authority.

6. He is full of all wisdom and knowledge

In Colossians 2 Paul points the Colossian church toward Christ as the ultimate source of wisdom and knowledge: *"...to reach all the riches of full assurance of understanding and knowledge of God's mystery which is Christ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge"* (Col. 2:2b-3). The Colossians were starting to turn away from the centrality of Christ. They began to search for truth in philosophy, empty deceit, and human traditions (Col. 2:8). And Paul's solution was to bring them back to the fullness of Christ:

"See to it that no one takes you captive by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the world, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority." (Colossians 2:8–10, ESV)

Their "fullness" was tied to His "fullness." In Colossians it sounds like "you have been filled in him" but in John it sounds like "from his fullness we have received grace upon grace." This is important because as you look at the beauty of Jesus in the scripture, you are not just beholding the beauty of Jesus; you are also beholding the fountainhead of the blessings that are extended to us.

The fullness of Jesus is amazing in and of itself. But it is even more incredible when you see Him through this lens, realizing that He was blessed to be a blessing – that His fullness overflowed and filled those are called His children. When you see Jesus in the Bible it is not just that He is amazing – He is all that! But it is that His fullness became our fullness. From His fullness, we have received grace upon grace.

Our Fullness in Jesus

So what does this "grace upon grace" look like? How are we connected to the fullness of Jesus? Let me show you a few of the implications of the fullness of Jesus for the lives of those who are the children of God. Let's see how grace upon grace looks.

1. We receive spiritual blessings

Every spiritual blessing that we receive from God – forgiveness, atonement, justification – are all because of the work of Christ.

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love he predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will," (Ephesians 1:3–5, ESV)

Every spiritual blessing we have is because of our relationship with Jesus. We are blessed in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6). God has treated us with eternal kindness, but it is only because of Jesus.

2. We are given the Spirit

Jesus has not left us alone or without assurance that His promise is real. He has given the Spirit without measure (John 3:34), and this Spirit is the down payment of our future inheritance, our helper and our comfort.

“In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.” (Ephesians 1:13–14, ESV)

What a gift the Spirit is! He is the one who indwells, sanctifies, convicts, assures, instructs, and empowers those who are the children of God. It is by the Spirit that we win the battle with sin (Gal. 5:16), and it is the Spirit who bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God (Rom. 8:16).

3. We are given spiritual gifts

Closely connected to the fullness of Jesus and the role of the Spirit is the way in which God pours out spiritual gifts on His children. By the term “spiritual gifts” I mean the way that the Spirit empowers us to serve and glorify God in the world. Spiritual gifts are linked to the victory of Christ.

“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ’s gift. Therefore it says, “When he ascended on high he led a host of captives, and he gave gifts to men.”” (Ephesians 4:7–8, ESV)

Those gifts include God’s calling on particular people to serve the church – like the apostles, prophets, evangelists, and pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11), but it also includes gifts like prophecy, serving, teaching, exhortation, generosity, leadership, and mercy (Rom. 12:6-8). So, if in the course of your life you are led to do something for someone else, and you see the blessing of God upon that activity, know that it is because of God’s grace to you. It is yet another overflow of God’s grace to you.

4. We can grow into the fullness of Christ

What is God’s goal for your life if you are a follower of Jesus? God’s ultimate aim and His relentless passion is make you more and more like Jesus. In other words, God’s aim in the fullness of Jesus is to have you grow into the fullness of Christ.

In other words, God wants to change you! And it is an overflow of grace that He makes that happen. God’s aim is to move you from where you are to where He wants you to be, and Ephesians 4 tells us that the purpose of the giving of spiritual people in your life is so this can happen.

“to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the

stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.”
(Ephesians 4:12–14, ESV)

Have you changed since coming to a relationship with Christ? Do you have different motives, new desires, and new attitudes? That is God fulfilling his goal of making us into *“the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ”* (Eph. 4:13).

So when you read about the *“fullness of Christ”* you need to see that not just as a statement about the glory and beauty of Christ. You need to see that as a precursor to what God wants you to become. His fullness, His righteousness, and His victory over sin is what God desires to do for you. As you look at the beauty of Jesus, you must think: *“this is what God wants me to be!”*

5. We are filled with the fullness of God

There are more aspects to this fullness, but let me highlight one more. It is found in Ephesians 3:16-19. Notice the connection between riches, Christ, and the fullness of God.

“that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.” (Ephesians 3:16–19, ESV)

The point of this passage is that out of the overflow of divine generosity, God wants His children to know the love of Christ so that they can be *“filled with all the fullness of God.”* What does this mean? I looked in a number of commentaries to discover what is going on here, and it seems that Paul is saying that there is ultimate satisfaction, joy, and completeness in the fullness of God. It likely means complete restoration and wholeness.

If this is right, then Paul is suggesting that by knowing Christ you have found the greatest thing in the world. It means that you have been blessed with the ultimate gift and that your life takes on new meaning. It means that you have been brought from condemnation to forgiveness, from brokenness to wholeness, from judgment to acceptance, from bondage to freedom.

It means that everything is different because of the fullness of Jesus and the fullness of Jesus in you. That is why the Bible so often talks about what it means to be *“in him.”* We were crucified with him, buried with him, and raised with him. We were made alive in him, forgiven in him, and been given promises in him.

Everything we have is *“in Christ.”* And that is why Paul made this incredible statement in 1 Corinthians 4:7 – *“What do you have that you did not receive?”* And the answer is incredibly obvious: *“Nothing!”* Everything that we have in life has been a gift from God through the fullness of Jesus.

That is why John 1 is so important: *“from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace.”*

Seeing Life Fully

So how does this relate to extravagant grace? Well, I hope it is fairly obvious, but let me make it very clear. Receiving grace upon grace from the fullness of Jesus should become a new lens through which we see the world. By understanding the way in which we have been lavished with the grace of God, it ought to motivate us to see everything differently.

Understanding the overflow of God's grace into your life causes you to see the failures of others and the needs of other differently. When you grasp the extent to which you have been "graced," it changes what you see in the world. And it also changes what you are willing to do.

The problem is that we too easily slip into a pattern of living where we forget about the beauty of what God has done in our lives. We no longer see the world through a lens of grace. Our time, our relationships, our families, and our money can seem to be things that we deserve or things that are just a part of a normal human life. But that is not the orientation of the fullness of Jesus!

Everything we have is a gift! Everything! And when you see life this way, it changes what you see in the world.

I wanted to illustrate this in a way that will be memorable and transformative. A few of Elders have donated some money today in the hopes that you'd be motivated to see the world through different lens this week. There are 70 seats marked with a dot on the floor, and we would like to give you something today in the hopes that you turn around a give it away to someone in need this week. You are going to be given a gift, and we want you to invade our community with an orientation to look for needs. You have been given a gift, and we want you to see life through a lens of extravagant grace. Pray for God to show you a need and then meet that need. And when you do, we would love for you to tell the story of what God did through that experience through our website at www.yourchurch.com/ExtravagantGrace.

And to the rest of you, I'd love for you to consider looking at the world differently too. Even though you did not receive an envelope today, I think you'd agree that you have been blessed beyond belief. I would invite you to join these 70 people in looking for opportunities this week to live out the fullness of Jesus.

Let's invade the world this week with the powerful and transforming power of extravagant grace. Let's live out the fact that "from his fullness we have received grace upon grace."

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