



“Grace – Full”

Christmas Day

Wednesday, December 25, 2019
The Reverend Elizabeth E. Frey
Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania

Isaiah 62:6-12, Titus 3:4-7, Luke 2:1-20

Perhaps it will come as a surprise for you to hear that I am not the most graceful human that walked this planet. Klutz is a good word to describe me. As a child, my ballet teacher relentlessly told me that I wasn't full of grace like a ballerina should be. No wonder I quit ballet before going to pointe. I also have poor hand-eye coordination. Once in a championship flag football game, I failed to catch the ball for a touchdown. It bounced off my forehead. But we won the game despite my inability to be a graceful football player.

Now I might not be graceful, but today is a grace-filled day. It is Christmas. It is the day we celebrate all of creation being flooded with grace as God was born into human flesh. In the numerous times that I have read John 1 or the Prologue as it is known, I never paid much attention to the word *grace* in these famous words from John's Gospel. Maybe I was distracted by the cosmic nature of John's language, the mysterious way he talks about the origin of the Word, or even the abrupt entrance of John the Baptist into the story. But grace is important to John's Gospel, even if the word appears only four times and only here in the Prologue.

You see for the author of John – in the beginning of this Gospel – we hear how grace takes physical form. We hear how grace becomes a human being. Or in the words of Silent Night, “Son of God, love's pure light, radiant beams from your holy face with the dawn of redeeming grace;” we hear how grace appeared in this world. In the human birth of Jesus, grace is no longer just a word. Grace has meaning. Grace comes down from God and lives among us. Christmas – the incarnation – fills our world, fills us with God's grace.

Now the word *grace* might not appear anywhere else in John's Gospel, but this is *the* grace-filled Gospel of our Bible. I say this because after the Prologue that proclaims “the dawn of redeeming grace” in the birth of Jesus Christ, we continue to hear about grace throughout this Gospel.

Throughout John's Gospel, we experience what grace looks like, what grace tastes like, what grace sounds like, what grace smells like, what grace feels like. John's Gospel is a sensory experience of God's grace. This Gospel proclaims that no matter who we are, every human being can and does experience the grace of God in some way. It just might take different forms as John's Gospel goes on to show us.

Well, grace looks like Jesus walking on water, meeting us in the middle of the storms in our lives.

Grace tastes like the superabundance of fish and bread. It tastes like the body and blood of Jesus as he meets us at the table of communion. It tastes like the bread of life that fills us so that we are never hungry and never thirsty.

Grace smells like a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard. The smell fills the whole house with its fragrance and envelopes us in its warm embrace. The smell even soaks into our clothes and our skin.

Grace sounds like the invitation to every one of us to "Come and see!" To "come and see" who this Jesus is. Grace sounds like Jesus claiming us as his own, as God's beloveds: "All mine are yours and yours are mine." Grace sounds like Jesus telling us, "I love you."

Grace feels like the waters of baptism being poured onto our heads. Grace feels like the kind, gentle hands of our savior washing our dirt-caked feet and wiping them dry with a towel.

Grace is a word, but as John's author shows us it is also an experience. It is an experience that is lived again and again in many ways with many senses. Grace immerses us because of the incarnation of God into our world. Grace infuses us because the Word became flesh and lived among us. Grace fills us because of today, but not just today. Grace fills us every day.

So, I may not be the most graceful person as I move about this world as a klutzy, discombobulated person. But I am grace filled as I experience God's grace in surprising and amazing ways every day because of the incarnation of God into our world. And you are also grace filled. No matter who we are, God meets us in our humanity. God loves us. God fills us with grace. Amen.

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