

“Walking in Grace”

Psalm 32; Ephesians 5:1-14

November 3, 2024

Introduction

- Having worked in commercial kitchens, I've worked in some places that smelled pretty good.
- But there is one place on earth that I think smells the best in the world.
- When I think of this phrase that Paul uses about Christ's sacrificial act was a pleasing aroma to God I think of one smell.
- Now, y'all know me pretty good by now, can you think of where that place may be?
 - o That's right, it's a Krispy Kreme doughnut store.
 - o I just go in that place and inhale happiness.
- All kidding aside, Christ's sacrificial death was pleasing to God because it reflected the entirety of God's self-giving nature.
 - o The Cross represents the fullness of God's personality.
 - God is self-giving, and in the crucifixion, that self-giving aspect of God reached its apex.
- But there is instruction for us in this verse, things for us to think about and to consider as we move forward.
- In just two brief verses, Paul shows us who we are and how we're expected to live, the rest of the verses of the passage work to support that.
- The two big points that the passage makes is that:
 - o You are a beloved child of God.
 - o As a beloved child of God, we are called to imitate our God with our lives.
 - But saying those things means something beyond just the words that are uttered.
 - Your life and actions are all brought into the light by Jesus Christ in this passage and the call is to live holier, more light-filled lives.
- This morning, we're going to talk about what it means to say that we are beloved children of God who are seeking to imitate him with the fullness of our lives.

We are Beloved Children of God

- You know, I remember when Natalie and I decided to have kids. Really have them.
 - o I remember just how much love there was between us.
 - o I can only hope to imagine the amount of love the Lord must have had in His heart.
 - Because being a parent is hard.
 - You take on everything for someone else's sakes.
 - You really become willing to lay down your life on someone else's behalf.
- You are a beloved child of God, that's not just me talking that's the Bible on multiple occasions.
 - o **John 1:12** – *"Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God."*
 - o **Romans 8:16-17** – *"The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are God's children. Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share in His glory."*
 - o **1 John 3:1** – *"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him."*
 - The New Testament assumes that we are children of God and this passage from Ephesians deepens it, calls us beloved Children of God.
- So, we're children. What does that mean to us?
- **First, it means that our Identity is secure.**
 - o In our day and age, identity theft is a real and ongoing concern.
 - o People can come, take your data without you even knowing it and set up all sorts of accounts in your name.
 - o And while your identity can be at risk in the world, cosmically you have no issues.
 - You are known and loved by God.

- Our belief also means that you know who you are in eternity.
- Remember, other religions believe in reincarnation, the Christian church does not.
 - We believe who you are is a reflection not of randomness but of God's eternal purposes.
 - You are you forever and nothing can ever take that from you.
- Your identity is secure means that you need not worry about the future.
 - God tells us that our inheritance is secure.
 - **Ephesians 1:13-14** – *"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of His glory."*
 - **1 Peter 1:3-4** – *"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade. This inheritance is kept in heaven for you."*
- Having a secure identity means that you don't reduce to your mistakes.
 - You are a beloved child of God means that even when you make errors, God's love remains with you.
 - What a blessing.
 - This is the fullness of GRACE.
 - God did for us something that we couldn't have done for ourselves.
- I want to talk to you about Ryan, a kid I met during Kairos.
 - Ryan was serving 17 years for a series of armed robberies he committed while being addicted to methamphetamines.
 - When I met him, Ryan was quiet and withdrawn, but then he got to know Jesus Christ.
 - He was changed.
 - Now he's a different person, doing different things in the world, all certain that despite his past, he is a beloved child of God.
- **Second, BEING A BELOVED CHILD means our lives are rooted in a relationship of love and trust.**
 - A beloved child doesn't live in fear of rejection, they live in trust.
 - I'll never forget this one cat I had, chunky monkey.
 - She was an outdoor cat that had had kittens and a pretty miserable life.
 - I rescued her and she was always loyal like crazy, she knew she was safe from the world.
 - When the door would open, she would literally run the other direction for a while.
 - We are kind of like that with God when we get it, aren't we?
 - God's love is unwavering which means that we can take to Him everything in our lives, the good and the bad.
 - I was blessed to have parents that deeply loved me.
 - Probably one of the reasons why I'm still around, to be quite honest about it is that when the darkness came, my parents wouldn't let me go.
 - When you have a parent that loves you, you can go to them, expecting help.
 - I'll never forget feeling called to the pastorate meant that I needed someplace to live while I redid school.
 - My parents provided me that space and that food and allowed me the opportunity to change careers.

- You have that kind of relationship with God, even though you don't know it.
 - o God is on your side and wants to see you live a brighter, more light-filled life.
 - Take Him the things and concerns of your life and see how things change for the better.
- You are never alone, your Father is always watching, always loving you in your life. That's what it means to being in an ongoing relationship of love and trust.
- **Finally, being a beloved child of God means that our worth is determined by God's love, not by any other thing in this world.**
 - o Sometimes we get to comparing ourselves to others, it's natural if largely unhelpful.
 - Your worth isn't determined by your checking account, the number of friends you have or by anything else other than the fact that you are God's child and NOTHING can ever take that away from you.
 - I have a friend who once jokingly said that his worth was determined by his frequent flyer status, no kidding.
 - o I wanted to hit him saying that his worth was far greater than that.
 - He is a BELOVED CHILD OF GOD.

As beloved children of God, there is the hope that we will live our lives in reflection of that awareness. Paul tells us simply that in order to be a fragrant, Krispy Kreme offering to God, we must imitate Him.

Awareness of God's Character

- To imitate God, we must first understand His character.
- Paul's call to imitate God as beloved children invites us to become deeply aware of God's love, mercy, and holiness.
 - o Recognizing God's kindness, forgiveness, and patience helps us see what it truly means to live in His likeness.
 - o This awareness fosters a longing in us to align our actions and attitudes with the qualities of God we observe, such as compassion, humility, and grace.
- This is where Jesus becomes so important for us to model.
 - o Again, you can go directly to the sermon on the Mount in the fifth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew to get a sense of what this life might look like.
- Key elements in looking at God's character are:
 - o Humility
 - o Love
 - o Self-sacrifice
 - Jesus Christ expressed Himself clearly in these ways.
- We live in world infatuated with pride.
 - o Isn't it interesting to note that our Lord provides us with a radically different way of processing life.
 - Instead of it being all about us, our desires, our aims and dreams it's supposed to be about God and other people that we love more than ourselves.
- This awareness leads us to another.
- **Awareness of Our Influence on Others**
 - o Imitating God makes us aware of the impact our lives have on those around us.
 - o As we strive to mirror God's love and compassion, we become examples of His nature to others, whether they realize it or not.
 - o This awareness can inspire us to act with integrity, knowing that our actions may be the only "reflection of God" some people encounter. It emphasizes that our lives are a testimony, encouraging us to live in a way that draws others closer to God.
- We are called to live Holy lives dedicated to our neighbor, Jesus makes this clear in the Gospel of Matthew where He tells us this:

- **Matthew 22:37-39** – *“And He said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’”*
- **Awareness of Our Need for God’s Help**
 - Attempting to imitate God can make us aware of our own limitations and our dependence on His grace and strength.
 - This awareness drives us to seek God’s guidance through prayer, Scripture, and the Holy Spirit.
 - Realizing that we cannot fully imitate God on our own reminds us that spiritual growth is a collaborative process where God continually shapes us into His likeness.
 - This dependence helps us remain humble, acknowledging that our ability to imitate God flows from His power working within us.
- To be like Jesus is to be humble and humble people know that they always need help from God.