

Advent Series: “Calm and Bright”
Advent 3: LOVE
“Redeeming Grace”
Message by DD Adams
Kemptown Providence U.M. Church
December 16, 2018

The gospel lesson is from John, chapter 1, verses 3b, 5, 14, and 17. “What came into being through the Word was life, and the life was the light for all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t extinguish the light... The Word became flesh and made his home among us. We have seen his glory, glory like that of [an] only son, full of grace and truth... From his fullness we have all received grace upon grace; as the Law was given through Moses, so grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ. This is God’s word for God’s people.”

Please pray with me. Holy God, by the birth of your son Jesus, you made your entrance into this broken world. With your arrival you brought grace upon grace that redeems humanity. We beheld God as an infant, fully God and fully human, wrapped in flesh, and who so graciously desired nothing less but to be “up close and personal” with us all.

Quicken our hearing, clear our thoughts, and remove all distractions as we focus on God, “love’s pure light”. Bless the reading, hearing and understanding of your word today O God. Amen.

The opening of the fourth gospel introduces Jesus as “the Word,” and that Christ’s presence was with God from the beginning. The author doesn’t clearly identify himself, but is thought to be the apostle John, and is called the apostle of love and the one “whom Jesus loved.” John was down to earth and intimate—just as Jesus was up close and personal. Jesus doesn’t stand at a distance, but is always near and alongside us.

When Jesus was born as an infant, this was the beginning of God’s redeeming grace that took the shape of a human. The light of his presence glows and radiates all around; this is love’s pure light. It extinguishes darkness and transforms love—as *we know it*—into a brighter and more pure light.

The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness doesn’t *extinguish* the light. The NIV translates the word *extinguish* as understood or to comprehend. This explains why the world doesn’t understand God’s children.

Oh, we fall and make many mistakes the book of James says, but we get back up and continue walking with God and serving him. The reason we get back up? Well, we know that we know that we know that the light is true and genuine and not fake. When the light found us, we lit up and became a witness for God, but our most convincing witness is that we never let go of God. We continue to worship, serve, and grow into more of what a Christ follower looks like.

Scripture states that “We have seen his glory” and as we continually see and experience this outpouring of light in and on and around us, it en-lightens us. It makes the radiance of God’s light show us the way. And even when we can’t see the way, “Darkness is as light to thee” and we’re . . . led even when we don’t know where we’re going.

God’s light shines on us a love that is God’s pure light and it clings to us like glue! God never moves away from us. We’re the ones that move. Everything around can shake and fall apart, but God is a Rock. Imagine, Jesus’ love for us is so great that as God was in the beginning and created all things, he created humans in his image and has made a home in our heart.

Visualize the pain of the sacrifice of God’s love in the work of Christ? What would the world be like if love’s pure light became the focus of all we do, and say, and think?

We’re made in the image of God, and God loves unconditionally. He’s always giving grace and waiting and praying for everyone. We’re filled with the breath that God breathed into us from the beginning, and he’s always lingering wanting you to acknowledge him, and waiting for you to see the grace upon grace that he pours on you and in you continually.

What is this “grace upon grace”? Philo, in the 1st century was a contemporary of the author of the 4th gospel. He said this (paraphrased). After the

first graces God bestows, other graces are given in place of those graces, and then third graces in place of the second graces—always with new graces in place of the older graces. Yet sometimes different graces; other times the same graces anew.

Here's an interpretation of that. God provides a continuous flow of grace, blessings, gifts, favor, powers, forgiveness, knowledge, understanding, wisdom, healings, protection, and more through God's loving concern. It's more than a salvation grounded on the work of Christ on Calvary. God's grace isn't given to us because of what *we do*; it's about Jesus' "sacrifice of love" for the world.

So, knowing all this what can we say? What's the so what of this message? We're called to nurture relationships that birth, multiply and radiate grace in the world. What is God calling you to *become* on the inside?

To become we have to spend more time being silent. We're already so busy we can't even collect our thoughts sometimes. And to put it quite frankly, we're already educated in the word of God above our level of obedience. How do we get this information and steal the time from all of our doing, to allow God's word to change our hearts and lives?

Fact one. God's love compels us to give to the poor and the marginalized. And from the beginning of Jesus' ministry, what made everyone uncomfortable was who his focus centered on. It was the poor black man, the immigrant, the gay man with AIDS, all those who'd been ostracized in society. Fact two. We have to

step out of our comfort zone to give and love as God does. It's a risk for us, but God extends grace to everyone.

Rejection was a part of what Jesus had to experience because he was fully human and fully God. The way God has chosen for us to make God's love fully visible means we must respond to God's love and love as God loves. I pray we all will live into this becoming who Christ has called us to become.

Please pray with me. God you were not shy to be yourself, living among us, breathing the air you gave us, feeling, teaching, touching and loving everyone. Empower us to live out your love and nurture relationships with you being at the center—for only your grace enables us to do so. May the grace that multiplies your love in our community change lives. Help us be the ones to carry “love's pure light” to others, so they might in turn become that light. Amen.