**Justifying Grace – Greg Inboden**

**[^ blackscreen ]** Please join me in The Prayer to the Holy Spirit – found on Pg. 48 in your Worship Books

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in us the fire of your love.

Send forth your Spirit, and we shall be created.

And you shall renew the face of the earth.

O God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit did instruct the hearts of the faithful, grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy your consolations.

Through Christ our Lord.

AMEN.

YOU MAY BE SEATED

**[^]** Drivers Start Your Engines! Every motor sports race begins this way. Paul says that our **[^]** life is like a Race. Every race has a starting point. Our race/life **[^]** begins here. Our Christian life begins with saying yes.

The title of this talk is **[^]** JUSTIFYING GRACE and my name is **[^]** Greg Inboden.

1. **[^] God offers us a relationship of unconditional love and grace.**
2. In the beginning **[^] God created the world, the cosmos, and all things in it—including human beings—**and God saw that it was good .
3. While wrong choices separate us from God and diminish our spiritual lives, as in the case of the separation of the prodigal son from the loving father, God’s gifts of love and grace are greater than all our wrong choices .
4. Because God created us in God’s image and designed us for a living relationship with God, nothing else can satisfy our soul—not money, sex, or power.
5. The **[^] central theme of the Bible is the story of God calling us back into the relationship** for which we were created.
6. **[^] Jesus called people to accept the relationship God offers them**

(Matt. 11:28). “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.

(Luke19:9) Jesus said to Zacchaeus, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham.

1. **[^] God offers us a personal relationship** of self-giving love,

**[^] not a system of rules and regulations.**

1. **[^] Our acceptance of the relationship**
2. **[^] Justifying grace is at work in the moment we say yes to the relationship God offers us in Christ. [^] Our acceptance changes everything.**
3. In the story of the prodigal son, justifying grace is evident in the prodigal’s turning away from his misery and returning home. Likewise, we are restored to an eternal relationship with the One who knows and loves us better than we know and love ourselves .
4. Using the analogy of courtship, when we accept God’s grace, we say yes to the One who has been wooing and pursuing us, desiring a relationship with us. As in courtship, saying yes changes the nature of the relationship completely. Love has won, and “yes” makes the beginning point of a lifelong commitment to marriage and a shared life. The commitment to this human relationship resembles our eternal commitment to Christ and the church.
5. **[^] Responding to grace is an act of faith**. We cannot do anything to merit a relationship with God

(Rom. 3:23-24) 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.

(Eph. 2:8-9) 8 For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God— 9 not by works, so that no one can boast.

1. **[^] Salvation is both instantaneous and continuous.**

**It is correct to say: [^] I was saved by grace, [^] I am saved by grace, and [^] I will be saved by grace.**

1. In scripture, **[^] this spiritual experience of justifying grace is also known as salvation, healing, conversion, having one’s sins forgiven, and being born again. \*\*personal witness (be Brief)!!\*\***

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1. **[^] Justifying grace is clearly seen in the cross of Christ.** He gave his life to prove God’s love for us

(Rom. 5:6-8) 6 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. 7 Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. 8 But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1. Jesus’ sacrifice for us on the cross restored our relationship with God (symbolized by the vertical line in the cross).
2. Christ also restored our relationship with our neighbor (symbolized by the horizontal line in the cross)

( 2 Cor. 5:18-20) 18 All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. 20 We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God.

1. **[^] Conversion continues as we keep saying yes to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior.**
2. **[^] God’s activity and our response**
3. **[^] Justifying grace is a double acceptance.**
4. **[^] God said yes to us in creation** **and** again **in the cross**. Christ died for us while we were yet sinners, thus proving God’s unconditional love and acceptance of us.

(Rom. 5:6-11) 9 Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through him! 10 For if, while we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life! 11 Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received reconciliation.

1. **[^] We say yes to the relationship God offers us in Christ.**
2. **[^] God addresses our intellect; we respond in faith.** Faith is a reasonable response to God’s revelation

(Eph. 4:20-24) 20 That, however, is not the way of life you learned 21 when you heard about Christ and were taught in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. 22 You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; 23 to be made new in the attitude of your minds; 24 and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

1. **[^] God appeals to our will**; by grace **we are free to choose.**
2. God does not dictate our response; it is a free decision, an act of the will.

(Rev. 3:20) Jesus says 20 **[^]** Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me.

1. Christian faith is an act of trust and self-denial; we take up the cross and follow a crucified Lord.
2. **[^] God touches our hearts; we respond with love and enthusiasm.** However, we do not depend upon feelings or trust in our emotions.
3. **[^] God calls us to be disciples of Jesus Christ; we respond with trust and obedience**

(Matt. 11:29-30) 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”

1. **[^] Saving faith is the foundation of obedience and good works, not the result of them.**

(John 14:15) 15 “If you love me, keep my commands.

1. The disciples experienced the life-giving grace of God and invite us to receive it as well.
2. The mission of every believer, once he or she has accepted God’s grace, is to **[^] join in God’s mission and make disciples of Jesus Christ** (Matt. 28:18-20). 18 Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”
3. **[^] Spiritual disciplines are a faithful response to justifying grace**; as we follow the spiritual practices of Christ, we become more like Jesus.

This – Justifying Grace – is the starting point of your life’s journey with God!

Saying yes starts your engines! The race is on!

1. **[^] Introduction of agape**
2. One way God moves us to the point of acceptance, healing, salvation, or conversion is through the **[^] loving acts of other Christians**
3. This kind of God-love is called agape, the Greek word for **[^] God’s unconditional, gracious love**. We **[^] can** **never earn** or deserve God’s love; **it is a gift** of grace.
4. **[^]** During **this weekend**, Christians will express unconditional love to you in sacrificial ways by praying, serving, and performing others acts of agape—so that you will know more clearly how much God loves you.
5. Emmaus communities from across this nation and around the world have sent letters and other forms of communication to let you know about this agape love. \*\*ask ALD to share some agape from other communities\*\* **[^ blank slide – after sharing first letter ]**

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**Scripture References**

Matthew 11:28

Luke 19:9

Romans3:23-24

Ephesians 2:8-9

Romans 5:5-8

2Corinthians 5:18-20

Romans 5:9-11

Ephesians 4:20-24

Revelation 3:20

Mathew 11:29-30

John 14:15

Matthew 28:18-20