Ladies pleas turn to page 48 in your purple worship book and join me in the prayer to the Holy Spirit.

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.

I began going to church regularly when I was about 14 years old with my grandparents. I liked to spend weekends with them so when they began going to church I also had to go. Now I’ll confess…I liked going not so much because I liked church but because we always went to lunch at Frisch’s after church. The church we attended had an invitation every Sunday if you wanted to come forward you could. Now I was a shy introverted kid so there was no way I ever planned on going up in front of everyone. But one Sunday I found myself standing up and going forward. I remember thinking, what the heck are you doing? As I walked the congregation continued singing, “Just as I am, without one plea,   
but that thy blood was shed for me, and that thou bidst me come to thee, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.” I remember thinking that song is about me.

This talk involves the action of a loving God, doing for us what we could not and would not do for ourselves but it also involves the action of the one who has been offered this gracious gift and returning His invitation thus justifying, making right, the one who is invited to receive it... That's you and me.

The name of this talk is Justifying Grace and my name is Pastor Shawn.

Justifying Grace tells the story of how an individual accepts the relationship that God offers to each of us. **Note that I said the relationship of unconditional love and grace that God offers to us**. It is God who has taken the first step and provided a way through which each of us can be in a personal relationship with Him. Each of us needs to remember that from the very beginning all that God created was good. That included the relationship He had established with the first man and woman.

That relationship was shattered when the first couple made wrong choices that went against or disobeyed God’s will for them and as a result it brought about separation from the One who truly loves us and it as well diminished us as humans.

Out of God’s grace and because we are created after God’s image and likeness to be in a relationship with Him, **NOTHING** else will satisfy us, save a relationship with Him. Thus **the central theme of the all the Scriptures is the God who made us and loves us calling us back into a relationship with Him**. At the pinnacle of this, God sent His Son, Jesus the Christ, to show us that relationship and calls us to accept that personal relationship that He offers us. There are two passages of scripture that speaks of this and they are the Gospel of Matthew chapter 11 verse 28, that is Matthew 11:28 and in the Gospel of Luke chapter 19 verses 1-10, that is Luke 19:1-10.

In the Prevenient Grace talk you heard this morning you heard about the God who is in constant pursuit, doing everything He can to show you just how much He loves you and your need for Him by revealing how lost and powerless you really are and then to offer you a new relationship, a new beginning, through His Son Jesus Christ.

So God out of His grace and graciousness offers us this relationship through His Son Jesus Christ and justifying grace is at work in the moment that we say yes to that relationship and it then changes everything.

It is out of God’s grace, His unmerited favor, that He has reached out to us and reaches out to us through His prevenient grace and brings us to the cross of His Son to show us our sin and to offer us forgiveness and to declare us righteous in His sight. **A significant part of God's justifying grace is** **our turning around, our awakened awareness, our eyes being opened to our own sin that stands between us and God.** And we are then justified, made right by God when we respond to His offer through Christ.

In order for each of us to be justified in God’s sight we first must see that we are inadequate to please God, please others, to face our problems and to change our own lives. In many ways it is like an individual who has an addiction. They cannot begin to recover until they admit that they are addicted. And until they do they cannot begin to recover. We do the same. It begins by us seeing ourselves as God sees us.

The apostle Paul paints for us a picture of this inadequacy in one of his letters that he wrote to the Roman Christians. In Romans chapter 3 verses 10-18, that is Romans 3:10-18 it says that there is no one righteous, or right before God, not even one. In fact no one even understands God’s holy nature and because of their sinful nature no one seeks after God. For all have turned away, they have all together become worthless, there is no one who does well as God defines good, not even one.

Paul in another part of this letter to the Christian Romans again in chapter 3 verse 23, that is Romans 3: 23 says the same thing but in a little different way, "For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God". In other words we all fall short of being the people God created us to be.

And because of this we stand condemned by a Holy God that demands justice for the wrongs committed but at the same time desires a relationship with each person that has ever or will ever come into this world. But due to our sin do not seek the relationship that He so desires.

Paul drives this point home when he says in Romans chapter 6 and verse 23, that is Romans 6:23, "For the wages or payment for sin is death, but here comes the grace of God, “but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

In order for God to satisfy His justice in regards to our sin, which broke the relationship He so desires with us, He sent His One and Only Son, Jesus the Christ. One of the most familiar passages from the Bible speaks of this in John’s gospel the third chapter and verse sixteen, that is John 3:16" For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son and that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life". Let’s look at that a different way. I’m going to say that verse differently as an example and then I’d like you to repeat it. For God so loved Shawn that he gave his only Son so that when Shawn believes he should never parish but have everlasting life. Now let’s repeat that but use your name. For God so loved \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ that he gave his only So that when \_\_\_\_\_\_ believes she should never parish but have everlasting life.

We’ve each painted ourselves into a corner of separation from God but God had a plan to recover us from that corner we find ourselves in and bring us back to Himself. And He did it by becoming human and entering into the same world that we live.

Once again I refer to the apostle Paul in his letter to a church at Corinth. It is Second Corinthians chapter 5, verse 21. That is 2 Corinthians 5:21 "God made Jesus who knew no sin, who did not sin to be sin for us, so that in Him we might be made the righteousness of God in Him."

In other words Jesus Christ who was pure before a Holy God took upon himself our sin and in exchange He gave us His right standing before God. This whole process of seeing ourselves as God sees, acknowledging our own sin and accepting God’s gift of salvation through Jesus is both instantaneous and continuous. You can say**: I was saved by grace, I am saved by grace, and I will be saved by grace.**

Remember the hymn I started with? Here’s the second verse, “Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot, to thee whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come, I come.” It’s Jesus who cleanses us of our sins.

Another way of looking at this is that justifying grace always is equal to the cross. For it is at the cross that Jesus gave his life to show God’s love for us. One of the passages from the Bible that really touches my heart is found in Romans chapter 5 and verse 8. That is Romans 5:8, " God commended His love toward us, in this way, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." What a gracious God to sacrifice the very best He had to pay for what our sin has done through His Son Jesus Christ.

As you look at the cross you will see both a vertical and horizontal component to it. On the vertical piece where Jesus hung and sacrificed his life we see that this sacrifice restores our relationship with God. As you look at the horizontal piece where Jesus had his arms outstretched you will notice that his sacrifice restores our relationship with one another.

The picture that I have painted thus far is this: God created us to be in relationship with Him but sin has broken this relationship. God’s justice must be satisfied because He is a Holy God. The wrong has to be paid in full. And out of God's grace, His unmerited favor, he sent Jesus His Son to do for us what we could not and would not do for ourselves to pay for the penalty of our sin through the sacrificing of Him on the cross.

God has done all that He can do to make things right between Himself and us. He has paid for our sin through the sacrifice of His' Son's life. We have a choice to make. We have to respond to the gift that God has given to us.

In the Book of Acts chapter 7 verse 30, that is Acts 7:30, Luke writes, “God commands that all people everywhere to repent, to turn from walking away from God and to now turn and walk towards Him, to turn way from our sin and to accept the offer He has made us through His Son Jesus Christ." This repentance that is spoken of in this verse means a change of our minds and our wills that first agrees with God’s assessment of ourselves as being sinful and to accept with no conditions the sacrifice of Jesus Christ as payment for our sin.

God offers each of us the opportunity to return the invitation, to say yes to His offer. And when we turn away from our sin and accept the offer of Jesus Christ we are immediately made right in God's sight, in other words we have experienced His justifying grace.

When we say yes to God’s offer in Jesus Christ a conversion takes place in our hearts and it continues as we continue to say yes to Jesus every day. This saying yes enables us to:

Understand ourselves better, acknowledge our need for Christ, understand God better, seek God’s will in our lives and to practice essential spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible-reading, meditation, and obedience as we give God our will.

Thus it is our faith in the work of Jesus' sacrifice that justifies us, makes us righteous in God's sight. Again the apostle Paul says it well in Romans chapter 3 and verse 24. That is Romans 3:24

"And are justified freely by His grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ." It is by grace through faith that we are saved, not by our own goodness or good deeds, that we are justified in God's s and in exchange He gave us His right standing before God.

Remember this Justified simply means "Just If I’d Never Sinned”

The result of us being justified by God's grace is that now we can be at peace with God because our relationship has been restored, God has forgiven us, and in God's sight we are as righteous as His very own Son, Jesus Christ.

As you have heard me share with you this afternoon this appeal is very reasonable, I hope that the words that I have shared have touched your emotions, but thankfully responding to God out of faith is not based on your feelings. And the wonderful thing is that God does not twist your arm or usurp your will because God's appeal to you is born out of His unconditional love for each of you.

It is God's grace that enables you to bring about change in your life and when you say yes to

God, to His offer, it will be necessary for you to continue to grow in your relationship with God by spending time with Him, listening and talking to Him and by reading His word. You will hear much more about this during this weekend.

Do you remember that shy kid at the beginning? When he walked up that day he accepted Jesus. In that very moment he was justified…just as if he had never sinned. The final two verses of that hymn conclude this way, “Just as I am, thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon, cleanse, relieve; because thy promise I believe, O Lamb of God, I come, I come. Just as I am, thy love unknown   
hath broken every barrier down; now, to be thine, yea thine alone,   
O Lamb of God, I come, I come.” God’s love breaks down the barriers of separation to receive, welcome, cleanse, and relieve of us our burden of sin.

Let me close by sharing another example of His justifying grace with you.

I simply want to say that God loves you. Let me say it again, God loves you. No matter what you have done, God loves you. No matter who you have hurt, God loves you. No matter how many times you have fallen, God loves you.

Do you and I deserve it? Do we deserve this incredible gift called His justifying grace? Not really, but God in His unconditional, unending love, has offered it to us that we may have the opportunity to dwell, live with Him for eternity.

God takes you just as you are!

One of the many tangible ways that you are experiencing God's grace this week is through the prayers and support of so many. Others who have taken this walk that you are on this weekend have given countless hours of their time, because this walk means so much to them as they have been touched by God’s grace.

These expressions of their grace that I have in my hand are just a few of the words of encouragement that they would like for me to share with you at this time. I would like to read just a few of them and they will then be posted for you to take a look at during this weekend. [Read the Agape letters.] DeColores