

*No wonder
they
crucified
Him*



FIFTH MONDAY OF LENT
DEVOTIONAL

APRIL 4, 2022

Today is the fifth week of Lent.

Take a moment to pause and breath in and out slowly.

Intentionally.

Rest in and welcome God's grace-filled presence.



Welcome God's grace-filled presence...We've said that at the beginning of each reflection on our Lenten journey.

But have you ever reflected on what grace really means? How would you define grace? How does it complement or is it different from mercy?



One of the reasons I so love the story of *Les Mis*, by Victor Hugo, is because it helps us see a life transformed by grace.

In the late 90s movie version of this classic tale, the main character Valjean has recently been paroled from prison and stays as a guest in the home of a priest.

During the night, the temptations come and Valjean helps himself to the priest's silverware but not before forcibly striking the priest who is investigating the middle of the night noises – knocking him out cold, as Valjean escapes in the night.

The next morning Valjean is brought back to the priest, this time in handcuffs and is looking at a life in prison for theft.

But in a plot shaping twist, the priest confirms Valjean's versions of events told to the soldiers – of having received the silverware as a gift from the priest and is released.

As Valjean tries to comprehend what is happening, he hears the priest share with him and the soldiers how relieved he was that they brought Valjean back because he forgot to take the silver candle sticks worth an additional 2000 francs.

Inviting the soldiers to some refreshments, the priest, now in a private conversation with the bewildered Valjean shares,

Valjean, don't forget – don't ever forget. You promised to become a new man.

“Promise.” Valjean stutters out. “Why are you doing this?”

With hands on Valjean's shoulders, looking him in the eyes with a resolved stare the priest responds, “Jean Valjean, my brother, you no longer belong to evil. With this silver I've ransomed you from fear and hatred. Now I give you back to God.”

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If you were in Valjean's place what would be going through your heart and mind?

To what extent do you believe this would shape how you lived your life the days following?

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Many of us may have the understanding that grace happened once the priest said, “Yes I gave him the silverware as a gift.”

Because it was in that moment Valjean was not getting what he deserved.

He deserved to be punished for not only hitting the priest – causing him harm – but for also stealing the silver.

But that wasn't grace being extended by the priest – that was mercy.

Grace became visible when the priest not only absorbed the pain and loss, to Valjean's benefit, but then in spite of the personal pain and loss, he gave him the additional candle sticks as well!

That's grace. That's the radical, mind blowing, love filled kind of action that God does for us through Jesus.

Jesus has absorbed our pain, our guilt, our sin at – the cost of his very life.

And then in return and in addition to giving his life, Jesus enables us through the Holy Spirit, to transform our lives into the lives we were created to have as well! That's grace in its most beautiful form.

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As you listen to this week's Scripture, hear how the Apostle Paul describes this dynamic grace of God extended to us through Jesus.

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SCRIPTURE

EPHESIANS 1:1–6, 8–10 & 1 CORINTHIANS 15:10

¹ Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. ² You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world...³ All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger, just like everyone else.

⁴ But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, ⁵ that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God's grace that you have been saved!) ⁶ For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus.

⁸ God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. ⁹Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. ¹⁰ For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.



How do you think God is inviting you to respond to this week's Scriptures?

Prayer of excited gratitude?...Mending a broken relationship?...Inviting a friend or family member to consider the loving reality of God's grace? ...Dig deeper in the Scriptures to grow in your understanding of grace?



Growing up, my understanding of grace was only half complete.

I understood grace as an amazing one time act that Jesus did for me, when I invited Jesus into my life.

I had received God's grace –past tense after that point.

But is this the reality of Grace as understood and seen in the life of Christ and the rest of the New Testament?

When you look at Jesus' life and when you read the rest of the New Testament, grace seems something so much more dynamic, interactive and alive.

I think it could be said that for Jesus and others in the New Testament, grace was a state of being – a state that is directly tied to our abiding – partnering – with God in the everyday moments of our life, in the here and now.

The problem I had is that I viewed grace as a noun.

Something I received when I invited Christ into my life or something I receive from God when I sinned.

And as a noun it's static and stayed in my life.

But as we just heard from the Apostle Paul grace is anything but static and stayed. It's living and as such I'm invited to live by grace as a verb.

As a verb grace is active and empowers us to live the life God is giving us to live.

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God's grace in your life....how have you experienced it? As a noun – static and stayed or as a verb – something that is dynamic and transforming?

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As you listen again to today's Scriptures, listen for the grace as a verb dynamic the Holy Spirit longs for us to embrace for ourselves.

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In these final moments today, share with Jesus where you would like to experience more of His transforming grace – grace as a verb in your life.

As you close your time with Jesus share your gratitude with Him for the sheer gift of your relationship – asking Jesus to help you actively share the gift of God’s grace to those around you.



CLOSING AFFIRMATION
JOHN 6:66–69 (NLT)

⁶⁶At this point many of his disciples turned away and deserted him. ⁶⁷Then Jesus turned to the Twelve and asked, “Are you also going to leave?”

⁶⁸Simon Peter replied, “Lord, to whom would we go? You have the words that give eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe, and we know you are the Holy One of God.



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