

# Through the Eyes of Grace

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October 10, 2021. We may be tempted to see grace as a free pass to mess up forever, but it is so much more than that. The eyes of grace see and love us exactly as we are, and as we can be. The eyes of grace see us with love first, and know and understand our humanity.

Readings: [Hebrews 4:12-16](#), [Mark 10:17-31](#)

\*\*\* Transcript \*\*\*

Imagine that you're talking to two friends about a new movie. "The trailers are really great!" one of them says. "It's funny, it's set in New Zealand, and Nicole Kidman is in it." The other one replies, "Well, I saw it yesterday, and it is funny, Nicole is awesome as usual, and the videography really captures New Zealand. There are some scenes that get really intense, though. It might not a good movie for kids. And be ready for a serious cry and have some Kleenex handy!" Which is most helpful, as you decide if this movie might be for you, or who you might want to see it with? It is much easier to trust someone who has actually seen the movie. They have actually experienced what you are about to experience, and you know that they know what you'll be getting into.

Our passage from Hebrews today has one of my favorite scripture verses in it: "We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one [Jesus] who in every respect has been tested as we have, yet without sin." Like someone who has actually seen the movie, and cried the tears, and gripped the arm on the movie theater seat (or their companion's hand), Jesus isn't just guessing what our human life is like from a teaser. Jesus has been here, lived life as a human being on this earth, and because of that he knows exactly what being human is all about.

This, I think, is one of the most profound things for me about knowing God in Jesus. No matter what happens to us in this life, no matter what griefs, or joys, or surprises, or frustrations, or betrayals, or redemptions we face, Jesus hasn't simply read or heard about it. He has been through it. As a foundation for trust, you really can't beat that.

As if that isn't enough, there is another line in our Hebrews text that might easily slip past, but is no less profound: "Let us approach the throne of grace with boldness..." For anyone who grew up hearing about God's seat on the throne being the vantage point from which he judges who is worthy and who isn't, who's getting to heaven and who isn't, this is a completely different image, isn't it?

We approach the throne of grace. We approach Jesus, who knows what our human life is like because he has experienced it for himself. Not only that, but the God who the author of Hebrews tells us knows us, not just on the surface, but right to the very marrow of our bones. In our time of need, in our greatest woundedness and vulnerability, God is waiting to offer us mercy, not judgment. And when we are genuinely seeking to follow God's call for us, and are stumbling on selfishness or fear or the illusion that there isn't enough to share, Jesus looks on us just like he did that rich young man. He looks on us first with eyes of love. He understands that we get stuck sometimes, and still calls us to be our better selves. He calls us to give all that we are in spite of the fear.

I think sometimes we see grace as a magic eraser, a free pass to mess up forever. But grace is so much more than that. The eyes of grace see and love us exactly as we are, with all the stumbles and mistakes and resistance, and all the fears and selfishness and confusion. The eyes of grace see us exactly as we

are, and as we can be. The eyes of grace see us with love first, know and understand our humanity — and because of and not in spite of that, never give up on us.

On an occasion when I showed up badly at work, my boss rightfully called me out for the attitude I had brought with me. I made my amends and I did what I could to show up better, but I still was absolutely mortified and I felt that I had broken trust in a way that was going to take a long time to repair. I don't remember today what I did, but I will never forget what my boss said to me when we talked about it later. She said that far from breaking trust, the fact that we had faced the difficulty head on and worked through it together actually built trust between us. In that moment, I felt the grace of God embodied, knowing that I was seen and accepted as I was, and trusted to be more fully the person that I could be. It was still not easy.

And the disciples, hearing Jesus talk about how hard it will be to be vulnerable, how hard it will be to give everything like Jesus asked the rich young man to do, to welcome God's kin-dom where the first are last and the last are first, they wonder how anyone can possibly measure up to this standard. The rich young man certainly felt that. Jesus tells the disciples that it will be easier for that camel to go through the eye of the needle than it will be for a rich person to get into the kin-dom of heaven. Jesus in fact tells the disciples that for us on our own, it is impossible.

These are not easy words, in this world that presents so many complicated situations, so many conflicting opinions and options for how to respond to the brokenness around us and live out God's call. Jesus' directive to "sell all you have and give it to the poor" was too much for that young man, and at least for that moment, he left, sad. The consistent call to welcome the stranger, and Jesus telling his disciples that "the last will be first and the first will be last," has very different implications for us when you place it squarely in the context of hundreds of people coming to our border and getting in line, fleeing violence, starvation, and death. The last shall be first, and first shall be last. Following Jesus is about letting go of excuses, taking God's call to love seriously, and embracing the complexities of this world that we live in, even when it is impossible for us.

Seeing that young man — and the disciples, and us today — with eyes of grace, Jesus reminds us all that we are not on our own. Jesus is not talking to just one of the disciples, but to all of them — and all of us — together, telling them that for us living out God's call is impossible, but for and with God and one another, it is possible. Grace reveals itself best in relationship, between us and God, and between us and our companions on this journey.

We human beings don't always embody that kind of grace — in fact, I feel it something of a miracle when we do. But God shares our human experience without sin, without the limitations and the barriers that we as humans face. In Christ, we have a God who knows exactly what it means to be human, and always sees us with eyes of grace. It is with eyes of grace that Jesus calls us to repent from our sin, and to grow and better embody the love of God in the world. In Christ we know that with God, anything is possible.

Thanks be to God.

\*\*\* Keywords \*\*\*

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