

Series: “AMAZING”

For Message: John 20:1-10, Romans 3:24, 4:16, 6:23, 10:13; Ephesians 2:8-9

Message Title: “What is GRACE?”

**READ JOHN 20:1-10 DURING OPENING WORSHIP SET (Live)! = Early on Sunday morning, while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and found that the stone had been rolled away from the entrance. <sup>2</sup> She ran and found Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one whom Jesus loved. She said, “They have taken the Lord’s body out of the tomb, and we don’t know where they have put him!” <sup>3</sup> Peter and the other disciple started out for the tomb. <sup>4</sup> They were both running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. <sup>5</sup> He stooped and looked in and saw the linen wrappings lying there, but he didn’t go in. <sup>6</sup> Then Simon Peter arrived and went inside. He also noticed the linen wrappings lying there, <sup>7</sup> while the cloth that had covered Jesus’ head was folded up and lying apart from the other wrappings. <sup>8</sup> Then the disciple who had reached the tomb first also went in, and he saw and believed—<sup>9</sup> for until then they still hadn’t understood the Scriptures that said Jesus must rise from the dead. <sup>10</sup> Then they went home. <sup>1</sup>**

Introduction: HAPPY EASTER EVERYONE! IT’S RESURRECTION DAY! The TOMB is EMPTY and WE SERVE a RISEN SAVIOR! Think about the POWER of GOD that KICKED IN to OPEN the GRAVE and BRING a RESURRECTED JESUS!

WELCOME to BMZ CHURCH! Today = WHY we NEED an EMPTY GRAVE...

See if YOU can COMPLETE these COMMON PHRASES for me:

- “If it sounds too good to be true...IT PROBABLY IS.”
- “We make money the old-fashioned way...WE EARN IT”
- “There’s is no such thing as a...FREE LUNCH”
- “God helps those who...HELP THEMSELVES”

EVERYTHING about the American way of life teaches us you ONLY GET what you EARN. You MAKE your BED ... you LIE in it! WE WORK HARD for WHAT we GET. We Value WINNING. WE Value EFFORT & SWEAT. WE tell our kids, “YOU GET WHAT you DESERVE” in life. “If it’s to BE, it’s UP to ME!” “If you want SOMETHING done RIGHT, DO IT YOURSELF!” THIS IS the AMERICAN WORK ETHIC. The ONLY PROBLEM: GOD does NOT WORK on the AMERICAN WORK ETHIC.

GOD, INSTEAD, OPERATES in GRACE MODE. GOD’S ETHIC is ... **PSALM 145:8 = <sup>8</sup> The Lord is merciful and compassionate, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. <sup>2</sup> CIRCLE “MERCIFUL.”** The BIBLE repeatedly says God is a GRACIOUS GOD, who LOVES to BLESS people WHO DON’T DESERVE it!

So, HOW do you DEFINE GRACE? There are lots of definitions of GRACE: 1) “God’s LOVE in ACTION.” 2) “God Giving me what I NEED, NOT what I DESERVE.” 3) “Grace is the BEST DEAL you’ll EVER get!” 4) I like this: “Grace is the FACE God WEARS when He LOOKS at my FAILURES.”

<sup>1</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). <http://www.tyndale.com> (In 20:1-10). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>2</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). HOLY BIBLE: New Living Translation (P. 145:8). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

WE SING of AMAZING GRACE, BUT I've discovered many Christians (OFTEN MYSELF), ALTHOUGH we know we're SAVED by GRACE, WE DON'T ACT LIKE IT.

In fact, WE spend MOST of LIFE thinking and ACTING LIKE we've EARNED God's FAVOR BY our GOOD DEEDS. We think God is a PARENT in the SKY, IMPOSSIBLE to PLEASE with a CLIPBOARD and PEN watching your every move. *"That was good!" "That was bad!"* We think IF we DO GOOD works, God's going to say: *"Good girl!" "Good boy! You got it."* But if you BLOW IT, we think God's up there going, *"Forget it! You're out!" "Try harder!"* GOD says, *"I'm DONE with YOU! You're WORTHLESS."*

IF that's HOW we THINK, then, WE THINK WE EARN our SALVATION ... INSTEAD of LIVING in RESPONSE to SALVATION ... A LIFE that says, ***"THANK YOU FOR the GIFT of FORGIVENESS and SALVATION!"***

Now, when we learn these TRUTHS about GRACE WE'LL TALK ABOUT OVER the NEXT FEW WEEKS, it'll be the MOST LIBERATING thing you've EVER EXPERIENCED! Because we can be CHRISTIAN, and NEVER REALLY LEARN TO LIVE BY GRACE!

We're going to EXAMINE GRACE and HOW it AFFECTS our DAILY LIVES, HOW GRACE HEALS, SUSTAINS, TRANSFORMS, and AFFECTS our ETERNITIES.

**So ... We're doing "AMAZING (Grace)" because we CAN'T UNDERSTAND GOD until we UNDERSTAND the concept of GRACE. The more we UNDERSTAND GRACE, the MORE we're going to be DRAWN to GOD.**

My GOAL in THIS SERIES = WE will NOT JUST LEARN about GRACE, but we will EXPERIENCE it, we'll FEEL IT! WE will LEARN to ENJOY God's GRACE in our lives.

LISTEN = ALL our BELIEFS about God are WRONG (there is an EPIDEMIC of WRONG BELIEFS in AMERICAN CHURCHES) until we GET GRACE RIGHT! GOD is GRACE. GRACE is GOD. If we DON'T GET GRACE, we DON'T GET GOD!

Today, I want us to start with the foundation which is ***"WHAT IS SAVING GRACE?"*** Another way of asking ... ***"WHY DO WE CELEBRATE EASTER?"***

Sometimes, we NEED to be REMINDED of what a GOOD DEAL we got when GOD placed US into HIS FAMILY. TODAY, I want us to look at **FIVE ASPECTS of SAVING GRACE.** This is sort of like asking, ***"HOW is it you KNOW for SURE you're going to HEAVEN when you DIE?"*** The ANSWER is built on an ACROSTIC – "G.R.A.C.E." **GOD'S Gift to ME**

Since we live in an American culture of WORKS (Rugged Individualism ... "I can HANDLE IT!"), most people you talk to SINCERELY BELIEVE that the way you GET to HEAVEN is by EARNING IT. Like, you've got to be GOOD ENOUGH so that when you DIE, God is OBLIGATED to SAY "OK, COME ON IN!"

If you asked 100 people, ***"How do you get to heaven?"*** You'd get a lot of DIFFERENT ANSWERS. BUT THEY'D ALL be SUMMARIZED, ***"You EARN your way to HEAVEN."*** ***"Do MORE GOOD things in life than BAD things and if your GOOD PILE is higher than your BAD PILE, GOD will LET you IN!"*** It's based on works, NOT GRACE.

**ROMANS 3:24 = <sup>24</sup> Yet God freely and graciously declares that we are righteous. He did this through Christ Jesus when he freed us from the penalty for our sins.** <sup>3</sup> It's FREE. It's a GIFT! As a KID, your parents wrapped you BIRTHDAY GIFT and GAVE it ... did they say, ***"HAPPY BIRTHDAY! We hope you ENJOY this GIFT ... BTW, it COST \$40.00 ... We'll be TAKING it out of your PIGGY BANK. HAPPY BIRTHDAY!"***? NO!

WHY do we think our HEAVENLY FATHER would DO THAT to US? God offers the GIFT of SALVATION! You can't EARN it. You can't BUY it. You can't WORK for IT!

The fundamental DIFFERENCE between CHRISTIANITY and OTHER religions ... **Christianity is the only religion BUILT on GRACE!** Christianity ... GOD GIVES, as a GIFT, SALVATION. OTHER RELIGIONS are based on WORKS. ONE (1) WORD -- "DO".

IF you SUMMARIZE CHRISTIANITY in ONE WORD: "DONE". The WORK was DONE on the CROSS by JESUS. HE PAID your ADMISSION FEE to ETERNITY in Heaven. He PAID for your SINS. It's DONE. WHEN Jesus DIED, he said, "**IT is FINISHED.**" NOT, "**I AM FINISHED.**" JESUS IS STILL ALIVE. Jesus said, "**IT is FINISHED.**" WHAT is "IT"? SALVATION! FORGIVENESS and our ENTRANCE into God's Kingdom was DONE for us BY JESUS! HAPPY EASTER! Second LETTER is "R." GRACE...

### **RECEIVED by FAITH**

... RECEIVED by FAITH! See, "FAITH" UNLOCKS the GIFT of ETERNAL SALVATION. JESUS SPOKE of "FAITH" OFTEN ... "**Your FAITH has made you well.**" OR, he'd say, "**Where is your FAITH?**" "**Don't you have any FAITH?**"

We're simply SAVED by GRACE through OUR FAITH ... **EPHESIANS 2:8-9 = <sup>8</sup> God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. <sup>9</sup> Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.**<sup>4</sup> (MEMORY VERSE) OUR PART is BELIEVE! God takes care of the rest.

And because SALVATION is a GIFT, WE DON'T GET TO BRAG ABOUT IT! You know what it would take for us to be able to BRAG about it ... We'd have to be RESPONSIBLE for our OWN SALVATION ... EARN IT!

Think about this ... IF we could WORK our way to HEAVEN, can you imagine how MISERABLE it would be? "**Well, I got here because I did this!**" "**Oh yea, well I'm here because I did that!**" We'd all be trying to "ONE UP" each other by what WE DID on earth. I'm PRETTY SURE that would NOT be ANYTHING LIKE HEAVEN!

God says, "**IT'S FREE!**" So, you CAN'T BRAG about it. You can ONLY be GRATEFUL FOR IT! Listen ... **ROMANS 4:16a = <sup>16</sup> So the promise is received by faith. It is given as a free gift.**<sup>5</sup> God gets ALL the CREDIT. That's WHY we come here EACH WEEK and PRAISE Him. He DESERVES our PRAISE / HONOR / GLORY for WHO He IS and WHAT He's DONE! It's our WAY of THANKING Him for ETERNAL PARADISE!

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Letter pertaining to GRACE is that GRACE IS... "A"

### **AVAILABLE to EVERYONE**

AVAILABLE to EVERYONE! BTW, that means EVERYONE! God does NOT PLAY favorites. REGARDLESS of STATUS ... SIN ... FAMILY history ... SECRETS ... THINGS you do NOT WANT ANYONE to KNOW. DOESN'T matter IF you're RELIGIOUS, or whether you HAVE NO Religious BACKGROUND at all.

Let's FINISH verse 16 ... **ROMANS 4:16b = And we are all certain to receive it, whether or not we live according to the law of Moses, if we have faith like Abraham's. For Abraham is the father of all who believe.**<sup>6</sup> Let's break that down ... Who LIVED under the LAW of MOSES? The JEWS / HEBREW people. They were given the LAWS, the TEN COMMANDMENTS, and were EXPECTED ... They were CHOSEN to TAKE His LOVE and LAWS to the WORLD. That's why they were called God's "CHOSEN PEOPLE".

<sup>4</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Eph 2:8-9). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.  
<sup>5</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Ro 4:16). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.  
<sup>6</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Ro 4:16). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

JOHN 1:17 = <sup>17</sup> *For the law was given through Moses, but God's unfailing love and faithfulness came through Jesus Christ.* <sup>7</sup> The LAW tells me when I DO wrong. It's GODLY, MORAL STANDARDS we MESS UP! GRACE says, **"Here's how to get back on track!"**

Now this TASK has been expanded to EVERYONE who puts their FAITH IN JESUS. God says, **"It's for EVERYBODY!"** ROMANS 10:13 = <sup>13</sup> *For "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved."* <sup>8</sup> GREEK Translation = "EVERYONE"! Does NOT say: **"Really GOOD, Really RELIGIOUS or Really SMART people will be saved."** EVERYONE!

The SAD PART: Way TOO MANY think they are GOOD ENOUGH to get into heaven ON THEIR OWN. You may have done GOOD THINGS in life, but if you think THOSE THINGS ARE going to get you into heaven, FORGET IT! HEAVEN is PERFECT and YOU'RE NOT! The ONLY WAY you GET IN is by... Receiving God's GIFT to you ... By FAITH ... Available to EVERY PERSON! The next letter in our ACROSTIC is "C" ...

### **COMES through JESUS**

GRACE COMES THROUGH JESUS CHRIST ... ONLY! You may ask: *"Why ONLY through Jesus Christ? Because JESUS PAID THE PRICE OF ADMISSION. NOBODY ELSE did. On the CROSS, He PAID the PRICE for YOUR ADMISSION into God's KINGDOM.*

Listen...GRACE is FREE... NOT CHEAP! It COST JESUS CHRIST His LIFE. Every time you SIN it's like YOU putting a NAIL in JESUS WRIST or FEET. ROMANS 5:15b = *even greater is God's wonderful grace and his gift of forgiveness to many through this other man, Jesus Christ.* <sup>9</sup>

In the Bible, a favorite EXPRESSION for somebody who has ACCEPTED God's GRACE is **"IN CHRIST"**! That PHRASE is used OVER 120 TIMES in the NT! It REFERS to ONE who has ACCEPTED / SURRENDERED TO JESUS CHRIST.

To ILLUSTRATE... This CARD represents MY LIFE. This BIBLE is CHRIST. In MY LIFE are MANY THINGS I've DONE to DISQUALIFY me from getting into HEAVEN... lots of things that have RIPPED UP my life. Things I'm ASHAMED of I wish I could UNDO. There are HURTS I wish I could REMOVE from YEARS AGO. PEOPLE I'VE HURT... WISH I could TAKE IT BACK, but it's TOO LATE. THOUGHTS I have that are NOT GODLY! I'VE RIPPED UP MY LIFE and OTHERS have RIPPED it UP TOO! HURT by OTHERS... a mess!

I look at MY messed up, BROKEN, DAMAGED, and SCARRED life. There's NO CHANCE of ME getting into PERFECT HEAVEN. The Bible says JESUS TAKES my life with all the SCARS / MISTAKES / GUILT / SIN / PAIN / REGRETS and WHEN I COME to JESUS and SURRENDER to HIM as SAVIOR and LORD, GOD PUTS ME IN CHRIST.

When I'm IN CHRIST, can you SEE my IMPERFECTIONS? ... things I'm ASHAMED of? ... THINGS that have RIPPED UP MY LIFE and that I'VE RIPPED UP? NO! ALL you can SEE when I'm IN Christ is JESUS CHRIST!

**When God TAKES all the TORN PIECES of MY LIFE and PUTS me IN His SON, with EYES of GRACE, God ONLY SEES the PERFECTION of JESUS CHRIST!**

Listen ... GALATIANS 2:21 = <sup>21</sup> *I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.* <sup>10</sup>

HOW, if you could get to heaven on your own, then Jesus was the craziest LUNATIC who ever lived. The CROSS was a WASTE! If you could GET INTO God's KINGDOM any OTHER WAY, Jesus would NOT have wasted His TIME and SUFFERING in coming TO DIE FOR US!

But there's NO OTHER WAY! You either get in, IN CHRIST, or you don't get in at all!

<sup>7</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Jn 1:17). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>8</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 10:13). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>9</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ro 5:15). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>10</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation* (Ga 2:21). Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

The FINAL LETTER pertaining to GRACE is “E”. GRACE...

### **EXTENDS for ETERNITY**

The results of God’s GRACE go on forever! GRACE is the gift that KEEPS ON GIVING! ROMANS 6:23 = <sup>23</sup> *For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.* <sup>11</sup> CIRCLE “ETERNAL LIFE.” ETERNAL LIFE is a GIFT from GOD through the DEATH and RESURRECTION of JESUS! But there’s one catch, you must ACCEPT IT! IF you get a GIFT and DON’T UNWRAP it, it’s USELESS.

Peter Drucker, known as the “*Father of American Management.*” He’s QUOTED daily by business gurus around the world. He’s WRITTEN DOZENS of BOOKS. When asked WHY he became a Christian years ago, he replied, “*When someone first explained GRACE to me, I realized I was never going to get a better deal.*” You’re NEVER going to get A BETTER DEAL than what we’ve talked about today. In fact, it’s your ONLY HOPE! And it’s FREE!

Hear me on this ... *what you’ve just heard is the most vital information you will ever hear when it comes to your eternity!* **G-R-A-C-E**

Some of you thinking, “*With MY PAST, if I come to God, I’m going to feel JUDGED / CONDEMNED. It’s going to REMIND ME how much I’ve BLOWN IT. God’s going to say, ‘I TOLD YOU SO’ about 10,000 times.*” BUT NOTHING could be FURTHER from the TRUTH!

JESUS said, “*I didn’t come to condemn you! I came to SAVE you!*” IF you EXPECT to COME to CHRIST and be filled with GUILT and SHAME, you’ve MISSED the BOAT. You did NOT LISTEN. YOU DON’T UNDERSTAND GRACE!

ISAIAH 30:18 = <sup>18</sup> *So the LORD must wait for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion.* <sup>12</sup> It’s GOD’S NATURE to BLESS UNDESERVING PEOPLE. GOD’S NOT MAD at you NOR waiting to ZAP YOU! God’s AMAZING GRACE is right HERE and right NOW! That’s WHY God BROUGHT YOU HERE! What are you waiting for?

IF YOU have NOT DONE THIS BEFORE, maybe today ... EASTER ... is your day to ask FORGIVENESS / BELIEVE / START a Relationship with JESUS as Savior and LORD. ETERNITY is at stake. JESUS did NOT DIE for NOTHING! Would you consider that today?

Now, I want to draw your ATTENTION to your CONNECTION CARD ... in the NEXT STEPS is our BMZ Annual Spiritual Survey. As you can imagine, as the SPIRITUAL LEADER HERE, I like to know how WE / YOU are doing ... take the SPIRITUAL TEMPERATURE of who is here and EASTER is a good time to do that. Will you all HELP ME OUT PLEASE?

We would love you to just be HONEST... NO one is going to CALL you, LOOK DOWN on YOU, or give you a STAR or anything ... just trying to GAUGE where we are SPIRITUALLY ... it’s CONFIDENTIAL! You have an A, B, C, and D there ... please MARK where YOU ARE in YOUR FAITH this MORNING. What the letters stand for:

**A = ALREADY a BELIEVER** ... Prior to today ... I have a DATE of REPENTANCE / SURRENDER when I moved from DEATH to LIFE. Please mark “A.”

**B = BELIEVING TODAY** ... maybe you just did (Or are READY to) ask God to FORGIVE your SINS and BELIEVE Jesus is Who He says He is ... Mark “B”.

**C = CONSIDERING** ... I’m not there yet, but I’m LISTENING and LEARNING. We try to make BMZ a SAFE PLACE to EXPLORE your FAITH. Considering? Please mark “C.”

**D = DON’T THINK I’LL EVER BELIEVE!** “*My Mom made me come and I really don’t believe in this stuff and I never will...*” IF that’s you, that’s OKAY ... we hope you’ve felt WELCOME ... Please CHECK the ONE that pertains to you... Let’s Pray!

<sup>11</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Ro 6:23)*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

<sup>12</sup> Tyndale House Publishers. (2013). *Holy Bible: New Living Translation (Is 30:18)*. Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers.

PRAY! (Letters “B” and “C”)      SALVATION PRAYER ... *Dear Lord Jesus, I know that I am a sinner, and I ask for Your forgiveness. I believe You died for my sins and rose from the dead. I turn from my sins and invite You to come into my heart and life. I want to trust and follow You as my Lord and Savior. In Your Name, Jesus. Amen.*

Next Steps:    *I will memorize Ephesians 2:8-9*  
*Attend, as much as possible, the “AMAZING” Series*  
*Participate in BMZ Church Annual Spiritual Survey*  
*A [] B [] C [] D []*

## Hosting (Closing)

HEY, it has been a GREAT DAY here at BMZ... Glad you've been here with us!  
In a moment, we are going to RECEIVE the OFFERING so please take this time to finish COMPLETING any information.

- Or NEXT STEPS on your CONNECTION CARD (**FULLY FILLED OUT!!**)
- AND when our ushers come around to RECEIVE our OFFERING
- You can drop that card in the offering basket.

### **IF you are a First-Time Guest with us today**

• We are so glad you joined us ... And we have a GIFT for you.  
It's this book "**UNSHAKABLE**" and it's at the BACK TABLE / By the DOORS...

- all you need to do is **HIT "SEND"** your COMPLETED Connection Card

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As our ushers GET READY to come forward

- I just want to remind you ... STEWARDSHIP is DISCIPLESHIP ... we RECEIVE an OFFERING EVERY Sunday BECAUSE it's BIBLICAL ... AND it HELPS us GROW in our FAITH!
- STEWARDSHIP VERSE ... **ROMANS 6:23 = <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. <sup>13</sup>**
- FIRST of our EARNINGS go back to the ONE who Blessed us in the first place! That's why WE/I do Automated Giving! I get paid ... the TITHE comes OUT FIRST!
- God's plan for BUILDING His Church was through TITHING and GIVING of the FOLLOWERS ... Share the GOOD NEWS! To REFRESH OTHERS!
- As Developing Followers of Jesus Christ, WE need to KNOW what the BIBLE says about GIVING ... NOT just what we THINK it should say.
- **MONEY is a HEART ISSUE.** And GOD wants what is BEST for your HEART! Listen, if GOD LOVES US so much that HE is willing to GIVE UP His OWN SON FOR US, WHY would GOD LEAD us ASTRAY in FINANCES?! USHERS ...
- NEXT WEEK: **Anyone Tired? Ever have moments you think you just cannot go on? Next Sunday = 4 Proven Steps to Keep Going when you Want to Quit...**

*"Truth without Grace is Fundamentalism (Brutality). Grace without Truth is Sentimentalism (Hypocrisy)."*

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