

Dear members and friends of St. John Lutheran,

Every once in a while I think it's helpful to contemplate what it means to live in **a state of grace**. Grace, of course, is God's unmerited gift of forgiveness that blankets us, and protects us as we journey through this life.

Today, I thought we'd do this through the use of a short quiz. Please consider the following true-false questions (use a pencil or pen):

- | | | |
|------|-------|--|
| True | False | 1. Living in a state of grace requires that I acknowledge that it all comes from God. |
| True | False | 2. Grace means that God recognizes the good I do, and so credits me with righteousness. |
| True | False | 3. Grace is accompanied by a feeling inside of wellbeing. |
| True | False | 4. Grace comes by learning about Jesus' work on the cross for me. |
| True | False | 5. Grace means that my sin no longer matters to God. |
| True | False | 6. Grace is like a moral compass that directs me on this path through life. |
| True | False | 7. Grace is a precious gift because not everyone can receive it. |
| True | False | 8. We are saved by grace, as long as we strive to accomplish the work that God has for us to do. |
| True | False | 9. Salvation by grace comes through faith in Jesus' perfect life, His sacrificial death on the cross with my sins, and His resurrection on Easter. |
| True | False | 10. Grace and mercy are really the same thing – both save us completely. |
| True | False | 11. Grace comes to each person, because we all have a 'kernel of goodness' in us that merits God's mercy. |
| True | False | 12. Grace combined with God's mercy leads to eternal life in heaven. |
| True | False | 13. Saved people (those with the gift of God's grace) will always show forth their new life in Christ by loving and caring for others. |
| True | False | 14. Once you have God's grace, you can never lose it. |
| True | False | 15. Grace can't be earned, but once you have it, you must strive to never lose it. |
| True | False | 16. God extends His grace once to each person on the face of the earth, and only once. Many are lost because they missed their opportunity for salvation |

If you struggled a little with some of these questions, don't be alarmed. The concept of grace is easily corrupted. Satan, the world, and our sinful self will always try to separate us from the truth about God's grace. Here are some grounding principles for you to remember:

A. **We are saved by Grace Alone**, through **Faith Alone** in **Jesus Christ, our Savior**.

By this, we mean that God's grace can never be combined with anything else – it stands alone. It saves alone. It's **never** God's grace plus my goodness, or my good deeds. It **never** requires that I acknowledge it or strive to maintain it. That would mean that we have work to do to keep it.

B. **Grace is an unmerited gift from above.** God gives it to us **freely**.

Most of us received this precious gift through our Baptism. For those of us who were baptized as infants, this came without our learning about Jesus in a classroom. We didn't ask for the gift. We did **not** have some small amount of "goodness" in us (a 'kernel of goodness') that made God want to give it to us. And as infants we did **not** publicly acknowledge God when we received it. It just came, and we received.

C. Grace is **not a feeling inside**, or **a moral compass** that points us in the right direction.

God's grace comes as a gift – through it we receive a receptive instrument called **faith** that allows us to understand that Christ's work on the cross was accomplished for **me** and for **all mankind!** There are other gifts associated with living in a state of grace, including a desire to please our Lord by keeping His commandments. So, while grace does not mean that we have a moral compass that allows us to be 'good' or 'holy', it does come with gifts that help us to understand and accomplish God's will. Our sin continues to trouble our Lord and hurt us and others. God calls us to repentance, and strengthens us so that sin does not dominate our lives.

D. **Grace** and **mercy** are two different blessings.

Grace is an unearned gift, while mercy is being released from the punishment that we all deserve. We are sinners. God had mercy on us, not wishing for us to die in our sins. His love is so great that He sent His only Son to die for us. Jesus takes on our punishment, and we receive mercy. We don't say grace and mercy combine to provide salvation – remember, **it's grace alone!**

E. **Grace is a gift intended for all of mankind!**

Jesus' death on the cross restored the relationship between God and all people, everywhere. God desires that ALL men be saved, and freely offers His grace to everyone. He doesn't offer it only once, but continues to offer it, as many times as we need it! Yes, it's possible to walk away from the free gift of grace – we can return to a life of sin and death. But we have a faithful Lord who never gives up trying to restore us to Him. God is faithful, but we must not treat God's gift lightly. It is precious!

So, back to the quiz. If you marked them **all false, except No. 9 (which is true)**, you have a perfect score! If you missed a few (or more), don't fret – God continues to work His grace in you!

Pastor Travis