

**April 29<sup>th</sup> 2007: Baptismal Service for Sarah and Serena: Acts 8:26—40**

**This morning I want to share**....2stories of God's Grace.....and to do that.....

Need first to explain....what God's Gift of Grace is:

**And very simply it's Almighty God**.....reaching down to a world that has rejected Him

- Has broken His perfect laws.....
- Has even crucified His Son

**And offering us His love**.....His forgiveness.....His power and purpose for this life

**And an eternity** with Him in a perfect existence.....when this life is over

- **It's Grace because its absolutely free**.....we don't deserve.....

..and we will never avoid the punishment that we do deserve for....**without it**

**Yet it's also a GIFT**.....that each individual must receive for themselves.....by giving control of their lives into the hands of Jesus

**And it is then** becomes obvious..... that they have received it.....

**Because of :→**

- their desire to worship....and to learn more about Him.....with other believers
- Changes in their lives and attitudes....as God the Holy Spirit works within
- And a willingness to stand before others...as Sarah and....and to say

I now belong to Jesus

- **The first story of Grace is about:→ GRACE THAT CAME LOOKING**  
**We find it in Luke chapter 19** and its about a man named Zacchaeus

**Luke 19:1-4 says.....**

Here was a man....who I feel.... had used his disadvantage in life.....

to his material advantage.

- **His disadvantage was that he was short**....and seeing that it's esp mentioned  
Presume that he was unusually short

Been one of those kids who never grew  
Always picked on.....even by the girls  
Considered a weed...Never included in the games...  
Always the butt of some joke...Hurtful remarks

**So how did he** use his disadvantage....to his material advantage ??????

**Well I reckon**....when he became a man.....he realised....one way...own back

**→He was** already despised by many....because of his size

**So why** not go the whole hog.....Work for the hated Romans  
Become a tax collector.....fleece the peasants....insulted him

**Size didn't matter....when....power of the Romans.....behind you.**

- **So Zacchaeus became**....not just a tax collector....But a Chief Tax collector  
..... a very wealthy man....with power...position and lots of money...  
and the friends that came with.....

**So in a sense Zacc had it made**

**He definitely didn't need to suddenly get a conscience**

Or to join himself with someone like Jesus.....who .....was against Rome...

**But Zacchaeus was curious**.....That's why he climbed the tree to see Jesus go by

**And God's Grace**...in the form of Jesus.....came looking that day for Zacchaeus

And Jesus looked into His face.....and into His heart

**And that Grace.....that undeserved favour**

made Zacchaeus realize how much he needed forgiveness

And that day he received it.....His life was changed

- He immediately gave away half...to the poor

And then used the rest to pay back 4 times over....all the many he had cheated

**But most importantly**....He stood up for Jesus before his friends...Called Him his Lord

**And perhaps today**....God's Grace is here looking for you

Offering you an eternal life line.....A way to begin life again

**Offering** you the gift of forgiveness....The touch of the Lord upon your life.

**The Second Story is About Grace Discovered**

It's the story that we had read to us...And its just so different .... story of Zacchaeus

**This story is about a visitor** to Jerusalem from Ethiopia

A high ranking official.....he was also a seeker after the true God

**Brought up in his own land**....to follow after their gods...he had found no satisfaction

So he had gone to Jerusalem....There to worship the God of the Jews

**He was seriously looking for God's Grace**

• **While there** .....So moved was he by what he discovered about God.....

He purchased.....at no small cost.....The scroll of Isaiah

**Then on the way home** through the desert.....he turned to a passage about suffering

**About someone** who through their suffering.....could somehow cover the sins of others

By their sufferings.....they could give relief to the sorrows of others.....

**And I sense that this eunuch**.....this castrated male.....**This** used human being

Knew a lot about suffering.....about sorrow.....about personal sin

**And when Philip joined the chariot**....and the Ethiopian asked him in Acts 8:34

Is the Prophet talking about himself or someone else?

It was a cry from his heart

**Because if indeed**....it was someone else the Prophet was referring to

Someone who could lift his sorrows.....soothe his sufferings...cover his sins

**Then that was Someone**....the Ethiopian needed to know about.

• **And there in that chariot**.....Philip began with that very passage of Scripture....

And told him about Jesus.

**And the seeker.....discovered the Gift of God's Grace**

And He opened his heart and life....to the message of Jesus

**He discovered Jesus** Christ as the Saviour he had been looking for.....

and his life was changed

• **He had been on a journey**....looking for God's Grace

And God arranged it.....so that he could find it.

**And that may well be the story of someone here**

**You too** have been looking for God's Gift of Grace....God's help in your pain

Your suffering.....Your sense of going nowhere....Achieving little

**And today**...God reaches out to your heart.....Offers you the way to know Him

As your Lord and Saviour

• **So it was that there...**

in that chariot he became a Christian.....and his first thought was to declare

.his trusting in Jesus.....to the servants and others with him....by being baptised

**Over 2000 years later**....it's the same thing.....happening here today

Sarah and Serena have received the gift of God's Grace

**They too have** been changed from within

For they have someone else who is Lord of their lives....and that is Jesus

• **They are far from perfect**.....Some of you know that better than others

**In fact** they are more aware now...of their failings.....Than they ever were before

**More aware of the attacks of the evil one.....**

**But they are not trusting** in themselves but in Jesus

And by this act of baptism.....they call upon you to do the same

**To look to God with a responsive heart.....**

To receive the Grace of God...His gift to you.

**Programme for 29/4/07: Baptism of Sarah and Serena**

Kirsten begins

**71 The Potter's Hands**

**10 Awesome God**

**1 Power of your love**

Keith

Announcements.....Offering

**83 Depending on your righteousness**

Puppets

**21 Shout to the Lord**

Bible Reading: Acts 8:26-40

Prayer.....Rain

**40 O Lord you lead me**

Message

**542 yellow I am a new creation**

Baptism      *Baptismal Song is 29 O LORD your Tenderness*

**11 Shine Jesus Shine**

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