

“DRAW THE CIRCLE WIDE, RIPPLES OF THE SPIRIT”
“Ripples of Grace”

In times of fear and uncertainty, people tend to make their world smaller, to draw their circle smaller, draw lines in the sand and create rules and laws that make it clear who is in and who is out. Last week, we saw how Jesus was amazed by the faith of someone “outside” the faith and community. Paul reminded us we have been adopted as beloved children of God and heirs with Christ. This week we will focus on the “Ripple of Grace” that occur when Jesus draws the circle wide. Grace and generosity come gushing out of the lives of those who have experienced the love of God in Christ. May you see this grace in all the ripples of your life this week. Pastor Cindy

Things I’d like to remember from today’s sermon: **“Ripples of Grace”**

Daily prayer: *We come as a motley people from a motley world, seeking that abundant love which does not count our follies or number our sins. Help us to delight in your free grace more than birds love the air and fish love the sea. Give us an eager desire to worship you wholeheartedly, and to serve you without conditions or selfish expectations. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*
(@Bruce Prewer)

This week’s sermon may be viewed at <http://sundaystreams.com/go/firstwichita>

Study Guide

Monday, June 24, 2019 Romans 5: 1-5

Paul has been using Abraham as an example of faith as someone with faith, but who never sees the fulfillment of the promise. As followers of Jesus, we are part of that circle of faith that goes back thousands of years. Even though Abraham could not see how wide the circle would become, he had faith that God would do what God had promised. Paul notes that faith, is what strengthens those who follow Jesus to face difficulties and problems. The love of God is at work in the hearts of those who believe because of the Holy Spirit. The circle widens by the power of love and grace and its ripples reach out farther than we can know. *Today, spend some time in prayer and ask God for the strength to face whatever problems might be at work right now in your life. Feel again God's love at work in your heart today.*

Tuesday, June 25, 2019 Luke 7: 36-39

This is one of those stories of Jesus where he widens the circle discomforting those around him. Jesus went to a religious leader's house for dinner. As he was eating, a woman came and as she was weeping, she wet Jesus' feet with her tears and poured expensive oil on them. She wiped and cleaned his feet and kissed them. But the host was horrified, what kind of man was Jesus to allow such a woman to touch him, if he was the son of God Jesus would know she was a sinner. First, women didn't eat dinner or socialize with men and certainly didn't make a spectacle of themselves around learned and religious leaders. The circle is clear in this passage, there are some who are welcome and some who were not for a variety of reasons. *As you think of those circles of exclusion, where do you see similar circles in our society? In your own life?*

Wednesday, June 26, 2019 Luke 7: 40-50

Jesus is very perceptive. He can tell that the religious leaders and his host were uncomfortable, so he told a story. The story was about debt and forgiveness and who was more appreciative of the forgiveness. It was obvious, it was the one who was forgiven most that is the most grateful. Jesus turned the story to the woman and notes that she did, what his host did not: she made sure his feet were clean after his journey. The host provided no way for Jesus to clean his feet. Hosts would anoint their guests with perfume. The basic hospitality of the day was not offered, but a woman overwhelmed with guilt offered her gifts to Christ. She was forgiven. The religious leaders were scolded and scandalized. Jesus drew the circle wide to include her in the beloved children of God when others drew the circle to exclude her. She experienced grace and the ripples moved out from there. *Are you like the woman who know loves much because you have been forgiven much? Do you experience this same grace in your life? How do the ripples of grace emerge from your life into the lives of others?*

Thursday, June 27, 2019 Luke 8: 1-3

The eighth chapter of Luke began with listing the women who were "bankrolling" Jesus ministry. Jesus had begun to travel with the twelve and these women who had been healed and who had means to provide for the ministry. This notation by Luke is short, but stunning. Women were providing the monetary support for Jesus ministry; not their husbands or fathers, the women themselves out of gratitude and grace. Luke shows how Jesus draws the circle wide and enables women, in particular, to live out their calling and to show their faith. The ripples must have been huge. *How do you draw your circle wide through the grace you have received in Jesus? How is the grace you have received made real through your time, your talent, your treasures and your tithes? How are new people made welcome and are accepted by your acts of faith in drawing the circle wide?*

Friday, June 28, 2019 Psalm 5:1-8

I invite you to read this Psalm in several different translations. The point the psalmist is making is that all of us long to enter God's presence because of the faithful love and grace we receive. Whether we are religious leaders who have become hypocritical in our understanding or sinners deeply aware of our flaws and brokenness, we all long to experience those ripples of grace and the love we receive in Christ. *Today, say a prayer that you might experience grace. Then ask how you can live out the grace you've received, so that you might draw the circle wide for others to receive it as well.*