

“Thank God for Grace! Prevenient Grace”
Romans 5:1-11
3/10/2019

(Show Title Slide)

Who here likes ice cream?

And there are lots of good flavors of ice cream

What are some of our favorites?

(Show Ice Cream Slide)

They're all good, right?
(At least most of them)

The Body of Christ is like ice cream

The Body of Christ is great

And the Body of Christ comes in many different and good flavors

Lutheran
Roman Catholic
United Church of Christ
Evangelical
Apostolic
Methodist

Each are slightly different, and good in their own way

And all have Jesus Christ and his Good News at the core

(Show Title Slide)

With all these discussions and votes

in the global United Methodist Church
I've noticed a bit of a fire in my belly

I've found that that I kind of excited and zealous about keeping

The Methodist and the Wesleyan flavor of Christianity
alive and well

And a big part of who we are is all about grace

And sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ
And his forgiveness

The Apostle Paul,

As he wrote to the Romans,

Explaining what our faith was all about

Said in part,

⁶ While we were still weak, at the right moment, Christ died for ungodly people. ⁷ It isn't often that someone will die for a righteous person, though maybe someone might dare to die for a good person. ⁸ But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

– Romans 5:6-8

Ever here that before?

Like before we have Holy Communion?

(Show Communion Slides)

Hear the Good News! Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. That proves God's love for us.

(Show next Communion Slide)

*In the name of Jesus Christ you are forgiven.
Glory to God. Amen!*

(Show Confirmation Slide)

Last weekend a group of our confirmation youth

Went to Camp Koronis for the
Conference-Wide Confirmation Gathering

At the opening session, we heard about God's grace in our lives

(Show Title Slide)

Sure, we've heard and learned that grace is

God's unmerited free gift to us for the forgiveness of our sin
But it's also much more than that

As Methodists, we are unique among Christian denominations

Because believe and act as though there are
four modes of God's grace

Even our hymnal is organized around this understanding

about how God's grace is at work in our lives

Turn to the beginning – page vii

I just want to point out again the DIRECTIONS FOR SINGING

I notice that as I walk out during the last hymn,

Some parts of the congregation are softer than others.

I'm just sayin'...

(Show Directions for Singing Slide)

Let's look at a couple of rules...

Now turn the page.

(Show Hymnal Table of Contents – circles Slide)

See how the hymns are organized by

The Glory of God
Jesus Christ
Holy Spirit

And then, in the Power of the Holy Spirit section

We have

(Show Hymnal Table of Contents – arrows Slide)

Prevenient Grace
Justifying Grace
Sanctifying Grace
Perfecting Grace

Now as I continue,

We need to realize that we believe God's grace is so much more
than just forgiveness of sin

(Show Title Slide)

It is truly God's loving and transforming presence with us

In these next weeks we will hear about these four ways

In which Methodists believe we experience God's grace

We start with Prevenient Grace

⁸ But God shows his love for us, because while we were still sinners Christ died for us.

Christ died on the cross for our sake

And for the sake of our salvation

Before we ourselves came to have faith in Jesus

Before we proved that we loved Jesus enough to serve him

And have him as the Lord of our lives

Jesus died for you and me even before we were born

And that it very significant

Jesus didn't wait to see if we would love him

He acted first

The first mode of grace that we will talk about is Prevenient Grace

Here's how it fits in...

(Show Chick and Egg Slide)

I learned years ago that we can describe these modes of grace

With a little chick in an egg

Long before the chick hatches

The mother hen keeps the egg warm and protected
This is Preventive Grace

And then there is the moment when the chick

First pokes its beak through the egg
This moment in Justifying Grace
We'll hear more about this mode of grace next week

Now, next it is important that the chick does the work

Of breaking out of the shell for themselves
If we don't allow the chick to do this for themselves,
The health of the bird could be affected
For us Christians, this is the work of Sanctifying Grace

And when the baby chick becomes fully a chicken

This is akin to Perfecting Grace... kinda

Another way that Methodists explain grace
is to use the image of an house

(Show House Porch Slide)

Prevenient Grace is the porch of the house,
The place that invites us to come closer
Justifying Grace is the door of the house,
The threshold we go through to enter into the house
And Sanctifying and Perfecting Grace
Is being inside the house,
Living and growing and working
and experiencing being part of a loving family

With that overview, let's dig into what Preventive Grace is

(Show Title Slide)

Prevenient Grace is what prepares us to come to the place
Where we can say "yes" to Jesus
And accept Jesus as our personal Lord and Savior
This is the mode of grace in which God is doing all the work
Even before we respond

And God is at work in many forms.

Maybe its your grandmother or grandfather
who prayed for you before you were even born,
or who brought you to church,
or even just told you're the stories of Jesus
or special bedtime stories
Maybe your mother or father had a similar role

God may have been at work in a friend of yours in high school
Who invited you to their youth group

Maybe some of us have hit rock bottom
And have had a special sponsor who was an example
of a new way to live life in abundant fullness

God may have been at work in that camp counselor at church camp
who shared a story or two about their faith,
or who just simply listened to you
as you were going through a tough time

Or maybe you are someone who just found themselves
in church on a Sunday or a weekday
and met persons who interacted with you
in a special loving way

And God doesn't just work through people in our lives.
God has been there for us, loving us, long before that

As Psalm 139 says,

¹³ *You are the one who created my innermost parts;
you knit me together while I was still in my mother's womb.*

¹⁴ *I give thanks to you that I was marvelously set apart.
Your works are wonderful—I know that very well.*

¹⁵ *My bones weren't hidden from you when I was being put
together in a secret place,
when I was being woven together in the deep parts
of the earth.*

¹⁶ *Your eyes saw my embryo,
and on your scroll every day was written
that was being formed for me,
before any one of them had yet happened.*

¹⁷ *God, your plans are incomprehensible to me!
Their total number is countless!*

— Psalm 139:13-17

God's preventive, preparing grace has been there for us
Before we were even born

And Preventive Grace reminds us of something
that us Wesleyan Methodists just take for granted
and feels natural to us

We believe the God showers his grace on everyone
We believe that God loves everyone

Not just a select few that God
has already predestined and preordained
Not just the portion of people who
call themselves Christian and act in Christian ways

No, we believe the God showers his grace on everyone

How does the Bible verse John 3:16 start out?
For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son

That's why we as Wesleyan Methodists believe and act as though
the Communion Table is open to all,
Not just those who belong to our church
Not just those who "deserve" to be here

We believe the God showers his grace on everyone

We don't have to earn God's love
Because God's love to us is a free gift

How did I say it at Abraham's baptism last week?
All this is God's gift, offered to us without price

Prevenient Grace is the grace of God that is preparing us
For something very special

Prevenient Grace is the gift of God that frees us
So that we are able to come to the point
Of being able to respond
to God's offer of being in relationship with him

Prevenient Grace prepares us to take the next step of
placing our trust in the grace of Jesus Christ
so that we can say "yes" to Jesus

And I can't wait to tell you more about that moment
When share about Justifying Grace next Sunday

Can you tell that I love sharing about this?

I hope you come back next week
When we talk about those special moments
That some people can recall and hold dear
For the rest of their lives

(Hymn

"Amazing Grace"

378)