

Safford Church of Christ

3888 S Hwy 191, Safford, AZ 85546

15 November 2015

Topics

A.M. Bible Class:

I will treasure church membership as a gift

A.M. Lesson:

The reign of Christ (1 Corinthians 15:12-28)

P.M. Lesson:

Who do people say that the Son of Man is?
(Matthew 16:13f)

Wednesday:

Two kinds of wisdom (James 3:13-18)

Pulpit Evangelist

Ken Knowlton: 428-3494

Elders

Greg Briggs: 428-8756

John Cunningham: 428-0895

Sunday Bible Class	10:00 A.M.
Sunday Morning Worship	11:00 A.M.
Sunday Evening Worship	6:30 P.M.
Wednesday Evening Class	6:30 P.M.
Thursday Ladies Bible Class	10:00 A.M.

*Great are the works of the Lord,
studied by all who delight in them. Psalm 111:2
Please silence your cell phones and other electronic devices.*

Grace isn't fair, but that's good!

Jack Cottrell, <http://jackcottrell.com>, Oct 9, 2015

Almost everyone develops a "fairness mentality" to some degree. We are conditioned from childhood to respect and seek fairness, otherwise known as justice. We know what it means to deserve (or not deserve) something. Very early in life, kids learn to say, "That's not fair!"

Most of the world, including many groups and individuals within Christendom, try to apply the fairness mentality to salvation itself. The assumption is that only those who are "good enough" go to heaven. Long ago I saw the results of some random answers to the question, "What are your chances of going to heaven?" One person said, "50-50. The older I get, the more I think my chances will improve." Another said, "My chances are kinda slim, maybe 50-50. You have to be more than a nice person. But I'm still in the running." An optimist said, "85%! I don't think the entrance exam will be that tough."

Like many others, all of these folks were obviously assuming that Judgment Day will involve

something like a balance scale, where sins are on one side of the scale and good deeds on the other. One's good deeds must outweigh the bad, perhaps significantly. Only then will we deserve heaven.

The fact is this: the FAIRNESS approach to salvation is futile! James 2:10 says even one sin outweighs all the good we can do. The only way to deserve heaven is to be perfect: 100% good. Even 85% is not good enough, and 50% does not come close.

Here's the deal: when it comes to salvation, forget about fairness! If you want God to be fair with you on the Day of Judgment, you will go to hell. That's what all sinners deserve. If you really want to go to heaven, rather than fairness you must think instead in terms of GRACE. And we must get this through our heads: grace is the OPPOSITE of fairness! Grace means that on the Judgment Day, we will get the very opposite of what we deserve.

In most matters of this world, fairness is definitely a virtue. Children should be taught to be fair, to play fair, and to share fairly. We expect our courts of law to apply justice and fairness. We believe in an honest day's work for an honest day's pay.

But when it comes to eternal salvation, our only hope is grace—and grace is the very opposite of

justice and fairness. Very often, even Christians have trouble accepting this. I heard a Bible college chapel speaker once say, "God will give to those who MERIT it, the blessings of eternal life." No! When it comes to salvation, we must STOP thinking in terms of merit or fairness, and think in terms of GRACE.

Our usual Sunday-school definition of grace is "unmerited favor." This is okay as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough! God's gift of salvation to a sinner is not just unmerited or undeserved; it is the opposite of what the sinner deserves! As one of my early seminary students put it, grace is "favor bestowed when wrath is owed."

Jesus's parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (publican) teaches us the difference between the fairness mentality and the grace mentality (see Luke 18:9-14). First the Pharisee recites his list of good works and his supposed absence of sins (vv. 11-12), with the implicit assumption that he is obviously deserving of God's favor. Then the tax collector prays with the grace mentality. He did not say, "God, be fair with me, the sinner." He said, "God, be merciful to me, the sinner" (v. 13). Only the latter went home forgiven (justified), said Jesus (v. 14).

When you think of the Judgment Day, are you afraid, because you are thinking, "I know I'm not good enough to go to heaven"? STOP IT! Stop thinking like this! Of course you are not good enough! No one is! That's why God has given us GRACE, and that's why we must think in terms of grace!

We must be like the tax collector, and forget the balance-scales idea of Judgment Day. To go to heaven by the balance scale, you would have to live a perfect life. The only balance scale judgment that really works is this: all our sins go on one side of the scale, and Christ's atoning death goes on the other! Only his death can "outweigh" our sins, or "make up for" our sins. And no, that's not fair – IT'S GRACE! *The above article is part 1 of a 10-part series on Grace. It is an excellent study and I highly recommend it. Check it out at <http://jackcottrell.com/>. -ns*

"Taking all the evidence together, it is not too much to say that there is no single historic incident better or more variously supported than the resurrection of Christ." -B. F. Westcott

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, but others Elijah, and still others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." (Matthew 16:13-14, NRSV)

Who do people say the Son of Man is?

Lawrence O. Richards

After years of ministry in Israel, Jesus sent his disciples to circulate among the crowds and listen to what people were saying about him. They were full of praise for Jesus; all identified him with some Old Testament great.

It was a clear case of damning with faint praise. It's as if you or I looked at a portrait by Rembrandt, and said, "Oh, it's a nice picture."

This is almost worse than the religious leaders' open hostility.

And moderns take the same stand! "Oh, Jesus is all right. He was sure a good man, and a wonderful teacher. We've got a lot to learn from Jesus all right. Too bad he was crucified and died before his time."

People can respect Jesus as a good person. But God calls us to acknowledge Jesus as lord and savior. Anything short of worshiping him as Son of God is rejecting him completely.

News:

Fellowship meal today after services.

John Cunningham has cancer and he is considering treatment options.

Tamara Richards was hurt in an accident.

Foree Grove (some may know him) has gallbladder cancer.

Extended prayer list:

Jacey—recovery

Norma Robinson—health

Linda Boling—health

Robin Richards—severe back pain

Tatyana Knowlton—macular degeneration

H.L. Boling—general health and complications from leukemia

Nic and Ani Self—health and personal needs

