

Mark 6:1-13
July 4, 2021

Grace and peace be with you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Happy Inter-Dependence Day! Yes – I said Inter-Dependence Day.

I know. I know. It's Independence Day in the US, but every day in the Church is Inter-Dependence Day. We are dependent on God for grace, and God is dependent on us to spread that grace to the whole world, which makes us inter-dependent.

It doesn't matter who we are or what we have, God gives us God's grace and then sends us out to share that grace with others. Happy Inter-Dependence Day!

We celebrate that today, tomorrow, and every day after that, as it has been celebrated every day before this as well. We are Inter-Dependent on God and one another in spreading God's grace around the world.

Just think about the people in your life who have shared God's grace with you. Would you know God's grace if someone hadn't of shared it with you? Probably not, because grace is relational.

And what about all of the times you have shared God's grace with others? You may not have even realized you did it, but it made a difference in that person's life.

In 2018, I volunteered at the ELCA Youth Gathering in Houston. I was a service companion and we took the youth to do service projects. I had taken a group to work at a thrift store that would give their items to people in need for free without any questions.

I was so busy getting the physical labor done, that I didn't really think about the spiritual impact that day would have on the youth. We did do conversations and a debrief in the bus, but I really didn't expect the event to have changed the youth that much, but later that night I came to realize just what an impact those volunteer hours had on the youth.

I was walking around the Astro-Dome before the evening worship began and one of the youth leaders from the service project stopped me. She said that two of her girls came crying to her. At first I was worried, then she said that the one said, "Until this moment I didn't understand what grace is." The other said, "I didn't know what hope is."

That was the best news I heard all week. In doing that ministry project, they were changed. They became one with God's grace and they were filled with hope.

In doing, we become. In experiencing grace, we become grace experienced. And so Jesus sends his disciples out to go and do without any things. The disciples are totally dependent on God's grace, and dependent on God's grace they are able to perform miracles.

God's grace is enough for us. In doing, we become. When we trust in God, people are changed. Happy Inter-Dependence Day!

On Tuesday, I started a Tai Chi –Chi Guang class. The class instructor asked me before I started if I had ever learned to play an instrument, to which I answered affirmative and went on to list all of the instruments and added that I had done dance as well, which was more information than he wanted.

He asked, "Were you able to play the piano very well when you first sat down at the keys." I said, "No," and thought I'm still not very good at it. He then said that he asks all beginners to commit to three months of instruction before we give up or go off on our own. It takes time to learn new skills.

In experiencing, we become experienced, but the good news for us is that grace isn't that complicated. It doesn't take months to learn, although it's nice to come and re-experience it regularly. But, once we experience grace, we get it. It happens instantaneously and it's not hard to live a grace filled life.

Grace is simply an attitude – an attitude of inter-dependence. Grace isn't dependent on what I alone can do or what I have. Grace comes from God and then pours out through us to others. It's inter-dependent and once we've experienced it, we can't turn back.

A popular saying at the seminary is - "God doesn't call the equipped. God equips the called." That's grace. Because you are sent, you are equipped. In our relationship with God, God gives us everything we need, and in Baptism, we have all been sent – every one of us.

In today's readings, neither Ezekiel, the disciples, nor Paul were really prepared for what God had instore for them, but they were sent. They were sent despite who they were and what they had. They were sent anyway, and more importantly they went anyway. They went. Just being willing to go is huge. Willingness puts grace into action.

So, imagine being Ezekiel, God tells him, “these people are rebellious and will not likely listen to you. They’ll probably beat you to a pulp, but go anyway. Go so that they will know God is there with them. And he went, and they knew God was among them.

The disciples had no idea what Jesus’ ministry was really all about. He hadn’t died and been resurrected yet, so they didn’t know the full story.

And, Jesus had just been rejected by his own people whom he had been sent to, but they went anyway. They saw their rabbi rejected, but they went anyway.

Without any provisions at all, no credit card in their back pocket incase anything went wrong, they went - and they were successful. They were successful, because they went, because they were willing to go.

God will always go with anyone willing to do God’s work. God’s work being any act that is totally unselfish and for the wellbeing of another. We don’t do ministry so that we will get something out if, but because we already have everything – a relationship with God.

We do ministry, because we are inter-dependent with God. We are one in God’s mission for the world.

So, God tells Paul – Go. My grace is sufficient. It doesn’t matter if you are rejected or if someone is a pain in your pa-tuchus – Go. You have work to do. Just go, and he does. He doesn’t give up. And if anyone might have given up, it would have been Paul. He was constantly locked up and beaten to a pulp, but he never stopped until the day he died. Actually we might say he never stopped as we continue to read his letters.

God’s grace is sufficient, not just for Paul, but for us and all of creation as well. That’s the peace in Christ we have to share with the entire world, and so we continue our internet presence today to reach as many people as we can to tell them that God loves them just as they are, so that they can be set free to live God’s grace for the sake of others as well.

Happy Inter-Dependence Day!

With God, we can share the good news of Jesus’ death and resurrection everywhere we go. Nothing can destroy God’s love – not sin nor death. God is always loving us, and God is doing that through other people – family, friends, and strangers alike, because we are inter-dependent.

Through the Holy Spirit, we are able to be like Jesus, shutting out the naysayers and constantly going forward. Like Paul we do not give up because someone is a thorn in our side. Like Ezekiel we have a mission to do and it really isn't dependent on whether or not anyone wants to hear it. And, like the disciples going without any provisions, it doesn't matter what things we have, because grace isn't a thing – it's relationship.

Grace is relational. Grace makes us inter-dependent with God and one another.

So, Happy Inter-Dependence Day, week, month, year, decade, lifetime, century, millennium, and eternity!

Thanks be to God. Amen.