

“Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, “In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you.” Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.”

Today is the day! Act immediately! Supplies are limited, call now! Okay, reality check, you are listening to a church sermon, not an infomercial. But in many ways, the sales tactics of television advertisers imitates the language Paul is using in today’s Epistle reading from 2 Corinthians. But the thing that Paul is trying to sell you is not some gizmo that will break in a month. He’s selling you something much more valuable. He’s offering you the Good News of Jesus Christ.

Today is the day! Do not receive the grace of God in vain! And the grace of God is this: backing up a verse to 2 Corinthians 5:21—which by the way, is my favorite Bible verse—**“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”** In other words, God the Father made His perfect Son, the worst sinner of all by taking on all the sins of the world. The Father did that so we might be perfect like Jesus.

The grace of God is the truth that Jesus came down from Heaven as true God, He became man and lived a perfect life, He died on the cross carrying all our sins and imperfections, and He rose on the third day to proclaim victory over sin, death, and the devil so that we too might receive His forgiveness and be declared perfect in the Father’s eyes. Today is the day to believe this truth and let it transform you!

But don’t take my word for it, Paul gives us three sales pitches. 3. Today is the day to consider the cost (v. 4–5). Paul writes, **“We put no obstacle in anyone’s way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger;”**

Today is the day! Act now! No cost is too high for this wonderful product! Why? Because the grace of God will win you all these horrible things! Does that encourage you to be a Christian? Would that sales pitch make the church pews fill up and cause the new member classes to be booked solid for months?

Actually, yes. I remember in high school when the Nintendo Wii came out, my friends and I camped out all night in front of the local Target to be one of the first ones to own a Nintendo Wii. With great endurance, a sleepless night, and hunger I waited for that video game console. Why? Because in my teenage brain, nothing was more important than getting that shiny new toy.

The Wii is now collecting dust somewhere in a box at my house, but the point still stands. Paul’s sufferings prove the worth and truth of the grace of God. If Paul knew his message was a lie, why would he go through all these hardships? For him, the Gospel was worth so much more than getting a designer purse or a state-of-the-art gaming console.

Paul is telling the Church in Corinth as well as you, dear Christian friend, “today is the day to consider the cost of the Gospel.” Do not receive the grace of God in vain! Your Heavenly Father is more than a 911 call to use in an emergency. Jesus is more than a get out of jail free card. The Holy Spirit is not a warm fuzzy feeling. Following Jesus always leads to the cross, you may lose finances, reputation, and friendships, but the Gospel is totally worth it.

Today is also Father’s Day, and we consider the cost of fatherhood. Perhaps the list Paul gives is not too far off the mark: **great endurance, afflictions, hardships, calamities**—it takes serious grit to raise a family in good times and bad—**beatings, imprisonments**—hopefully those don’t apply, but perhaps our fathers lovingly disciplined us—**riots**—how many times have we revolted against dad?—**labors, sleepless nights, hunger**—as a young father myself, I know well the sleepless nights and hunger that come from raising infants and preschoolers. Sometimes dinner comes around and you’re so busy feeding the kids you only get cold leftovers! Thank you, fathers for all you do for us!

Next, Paul has a second sales pitch. 2. Today is the day to consider the grace. (v. 6–7) **“but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: ...by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left;”**

Even though with it comes sacrifices, the Gospel is a true gift. It brings with it real peace, real love, real truth, and real power. The message of the cross is not just a message of a pie in the sky when you die, Jesus wants to walk alongside you even today to give you the strength you need to live day to day.

Today is the day to consider the grace of God. That’s why God didn’t just leave us a book and send us on our way. Certainly, the Bible is powerful, and I recommend it to anyone who wants to get to know Jesus. However, all of us need a church home. A local church is where these gifts of God’s grace are dispensed.

The Church is the place where we encounter Christ through the Word preached, through Holy Communion wherein we receive Christ’s body and blood under bread and wine for forgiveness, life, and salvation. The Church is a family who supports one another and cares for one another. Let me please find you a church home if you don’t already have one. I want you to be at a local church where you can receive this grace of God. Faith Lutheran Church is one such place we encounter God.

On this Father’s Day, I want us to consider what a blessing having a father is. For many of us our dad is the one who showed us purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, and genuine love. Today is a day to thank our Heavenly Father for the earthly father He gave us. For some of us, perhaps that earthly father was the one who took us to church and taught us about Jesus.

Even if your father wasn’t all those things, regardless, you have a Heavenly Father who cares for you. You are a son or daughter of the most High God, and that is

something extremely valuable. When you believe in the Gospel of Jesus Christ, Jesus promises to walk alongside you and give you the strength you need—even the strength to forgive your earthly father. Jesus promises to be present in the Word and Sacraments. Today is the day to consider all the gifts of the Gospel of Christ.

Finally, 1. Today is the day to consider costly grace. (v. 8–10) Paul concludes our reading: “but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: ... **We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.**”

These seem like a bunch of contradictions, but Paul summarizes what it means to be a Christian. To receive the grace of God in Christ Jesus means in the eyes of the world you are going to be an impostor, unknown, dying, punished, sorrowful, poor, and as having nothing, but in the eyes of God you will be true, known, alive, always rejoicing, rich, and possessing everything. Today is the day to consider costly grace. It is costly because it will involve worldly suffering, but it is grace because you will have every heavenly blessing bestowed on you.

The Lutheran pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer understood this costly grace. He writes concerning costly grace: “Such grace is *costly* because it calls us to follow, and it is *grace* because it calls us to follow *Jesus Christ*. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner.” *Cost of Discipleship*, page 45. Bonhoeffer practiced what he preached and he would die at the hands of Nazis for his attempt to overthrow the Nazi regime.

The Lord may not be calling you to fight Nazis, but He may be calling you to speak the truth in love in the public square about who we are. Costly grace involves proclaiming that God has created us male and female, and intends that marriage is between one man and one woman. Costly grace involves teaching We are all born in sin, and we commit sinful acts. This is true no matter our gender, race, or socioeconomic background. Costly grace involves saying no to the temptations of the world, the devil, and our sinful flesh which promise health, wealth, and prosperity, but ultimately cannot deliver. Costly grace involves following Jesus and giving up pet sins, even if it means we suffer in the short term. Costly grace means following Jesus because in Him alone we have purity, forgiveness, and eternal life.

“we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. ...Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” TODAY IS THE DAY TO RECEIVE CHRIST'S COSTLY GRACE. As long as you still have breath, it's not too late. Thank Jesus for all that He has done for you and consider where He may be leading you next. Amen!