

**God's Amazing 'Making-Right' Grace**  
by Greg Smith-Young (Elora-Bethany Pastoral Charge)  
*Second in a series, "Amazed in God's Grace"*

Romans 3:22-26; 5:1-2; 5:6-11

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Please read the Scripture by clicking [here](#).

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You've probably seen some of the damage, especially in the Bahamas, unleashed by Hurricane Dorian. It's hurricane season. We know they are coming. Meteorologists plot their path. People anticipate them and do their best to prepare. Still, hurricanes are catastrophic.

They are atmospheric storms. We are all battered by other "storms" too. You, me, all of us. Today, tomorrow, and all those yesterday behind us. Everywhere and always. Of course, on many days the sun shines. But even then it's storming. I'm talking about what goes on in our lives, and in lives around our world.

We are caught in storms. We make storms ourselves. I'd even say we're good at it . . . if it wasn't so bad.

We know so much these days, yet at root it's a terrible mystery. We can do so much these days, but we can't stop them the storms, or stop inflicting them. Inequality and persistent poverty. Us-verses-them antagonisms, supremacy, subjugation. Families torn, trusts abused, commitments forsaken, betrayals. Climate chaos. Stricken families, and neighbourhoods, and nations, violated and grieved. Things are not right.

Storms rage within us, and we lash out. We stir up ingredients of selfishness, bitterness, laziness, fears, greeds, desires, scars. We spin our own monsters. They break free. Or we unleash them. They rampage over us and from us. We bear responsibility, and we lose control. We are not right.

Like hurricanes, we can't say exactly where each storm will go or land. Nor the precise damage it will do. But we know they happen, and we leave wreckage.

It's not right. But there it is. We are stormed.

Except! . . . God.

II

God loves. Loving is what God does, always. Nothing God does comes from anything but God's love.

God loves with grace. What does that mean?

“Grace” means God acts with love, and it’s unexpected. God surprises us!

“Grace” means God acts with love, and it’s undeserved. God loves the unlovely!

“Grace” means God acts with love without condition. No matter what we do or fail to do, God cannot love us more. Nor will God love us less.

“Grace” means God acts with love first. Last week I talked about God’s going-out-to-get-us-in grace. Theologians call this “prevenient” grace. “Prevenient” means “coming before.” It’s God’s love for us before we know God loves us, before we know anything about God, before we know of God, even when we’ve rejected God. It’s God’s love that runs out to get us runaways, searches far to find us, scours dark corners to retrieve us.

God’s grace is Jesus, in the story we heard last week, knowing this guy Zacchaeus is up a tree hiding, and getting him down. That’s God’s going-out-to-get-us-in grace.

Unexpected, undeserved, unconditional, always first: God’s love is grace.

### III

When God gets us, though, what does God do with us?

God loves us. God loves us with grace. This does different things in us. I want to focus on one today.

God makes us right. Jesus gets Zacchaeus down so Jesus can bring salvation to his life, making him right.

Theologians call this “justifying” grace.

Justification. We use that word when you’re writing on a computer. You can have each line ending on the right side at a different spot, depending on the number and size of the words. Or, you can have the computer subtly adjust the spacing between letters and words so each line aligns to the right margin. Then it’s justified. It’s lined-up right.

God lines us up right.

We need God to. Try as we might, we can’t make ourselves right. Human experience shows us coming up with all sorts of ideas and ideologies to make people right, to make the world right. We end up making things worse.

God justifies us. God makes us right.

It’s God’s character, to make things right. God loves us and our world, and so God grieves all that is wrong. It’s God’s power, to make things right. God alone can this. With love,

poured out graciously, God does it.

Now get this. When you put your trust in God and what God has done in Jesus, you realize something. God has already justified you. God has already declared that you are all right.

It's not that God says, *"Yes, someday we'll get your life together, and then you'll be fine."* Sure, we are all works-in-progress. Yes, God has much more to do with each of us. But God doesn't say, *"I'm waiting for you to be good enough for me."* God says, in Jesus, *"I am already more than good enough for you."*

Trust Jesus, and you know you're justified. Trust Jesus, and you know what God thinks of you.

#### IV

Now, God knows, far better than we do, that those storms still rage. The storms around, battering us, and the storms we conjure up inside, breaking us. Those storms spawned by un-love: our un-love of each other, our un-love of ourselves, our un-love of God's creation, our un-love of God.

In Jesus, God stepped into the storms. He took the full force of their destructive power. Gracious love.

Jesus, who is perfectly right, took onto himself all that is wrong, all that is ragged and unjustified . . . he took it on himself. The condemnation of everything that destroys all that he loves, he took onto himself. He became wrong, to make us right. Gracious love.

When your storm is battering you and bringing you to your knees. . . . When, yet again you've failed, and you lie beaten and broken with self-inflicted wounds. . . . Don't forget what God thinks of you. You are all-right. God has made you right. Gracious love.

When you're standing in a storm, trying to make a difference in our world, our community, your family (because that's what we do when we're following Jesus). . . . And you're getting nowhere, nothing's working, it's getting worse. . . . Don't forget what God thinks of this world, and all our relations within it. It's all-right. God is making it right. Gracious love.

God's not waiting to see how it all turns out. God is not waiting to see how you turn out. God has already decided. It's all-right. You are all-right. God has made you right. That is God's power, and so it is God's declaration and God's promise, because of God's love.

God's amazing making-things-right, gracious love.

Amen.