

## All Age Worship 12<sup>th</sup> June 2016

**Bible Reading** : Galatians 1:13-24

### Talk

Muhammed Ali picture – who knows who this is?

In 1972 and Ali was interviewed by journalist David Frost and he was asked,

"What would you like people to think of you when you're gone?"

In response, Ali said:

"I'd like for them to say he took a few cups of love.

"He took one tablespoon of patience, one teaspoon of generosity, one pint of kindness; he took one quart of laughter, one pinch of concern.

"And then, he mixed willingness with happiness, he added lots of faith and he stirred it up well. Then he spread it over a span of a life time and he served it to each and every deserving person he met."

What do we think of that? Is that a good epitaph?

I heard that interview this week, and I was with him all the way until that last phrase where Ali says, "he gave it to every deserving person he met."

And I was struck by the word deserving.

Should we only be kind to the deserving? (Maybe talk to the person next to you – what do you think?)

**Competition.** Who can jump the highest? Anyone want to take part? Can you touch this balloon?

See how high they can get. Prize for whoever can jump the highest? Let balloon string out till balloon is near the roof.

Can anyone reach it now?

Here at St John's we have been studying a letter that Saint Paul wrote to a group of Christians in a place called Galatia. In Galatia lots of people had become Christians who weren't from a Jewish background. Some of the Christians who **were** from a Jewish background were telling them that they had to obey all the Jewish laws in order to be proper Christians. They had to do certain things in order to be acceptable to God.

In this letter Paul is saying, "No! That's not true! You don't need to obey all the Jewish laws to be a put right with God, to be a Christian. You just need to believe Jesus died for your sins, and ask his forgiveness."

What we do for God doesn't save us.

It's what Jesus did for us that saves us.

Nothing we do could ever be enough to bridge the gap between us and God.

So instead of us trying work our way to God, like us jumping to try and touch the ceiling, God came to meet us in Jesus.

He came down to our level.

And that's **grace**.

I wonder how you would define grace if someone asked you?

Dictionary: courteous good will

NT - God's extraordinary, undeserved love and favour towards us when we deserved the opposite. It includes the idea of being saved or delivered from condemnation.

"For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast."

The Bible says that we know what love is in that while we were still sinners Jesus died for us.

In other words, we didn't have to clean up our act in order to be acceptable to God. His love for us is unconditional.

The Bible also says, in Psalm 103, "God doesn't treat us as our sins deserve".

Instead he lavishes his love upon us.

Philip Yancey puts it like this: There is nothing you can do to make God love you more And nothing you can do to make God love you less.

We can't earn God's love.

We just have to receive it.

That's what Paul had discovered.

He says in v 13, "Before I became a Christian, I was violently persecuting the church." And he was. He was going around putting Christians in prison, or having them stoned to death.

Then what happened?

Anyone know?

He was on the way to Damascus, and Jesus knocked him off his horse! There was a blinding light from heaven, he heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me!" and to cut a very long story short, God showed him that he had been wrong all along. All his religious practices could never earn him a place in heaven.

It was Jesus, dying on the cross for him, that meant he could be saved.

And so Paul says in Galatians 1:15 “God called me *through his grace*, and was pleased to reveal his son to me.” Paul describes himself as the worst of sinners, yet God chose him, and then gave him an incredibly important job to do.

It was God who took the initiative.  
It always is.

He did in my life. I became a Christian when I was 21, and to be honest my life was a bit of a mess at that point, and I was doing all sorts of things that weren't very godly. But God came and met me where I was. I didn't have to sort everything out before I could become a Christian. I just asked Jesus into my life, and he then helped me sort things out. That's grace.

How do we receive God's grace?

Well the story in the gospel illustrates that.

We just need to recognise our need.

When we humble ourselves, and ask for God's help, he is quick to give it.

But if we are full of pride and a sense of our own importance, or our own goodness, as the Pharisee was, we miss out on grace.

So that's God's grace towards us.

The challenge then, when we have been on the receiving end of God's grace, is to show the same grace to those around us.

And Jesus models that for us.

Jesus was full of grace.

He spent a lot of time with people who his society thought were undeserving. He showed them love and compassion, treated them with dignity. He forgave those who hurt him.

He didn't treat people as their sins deserved. He showed them grace.

His desire is that his followers are also full of grace.

And I think this lady is a good example of someone who shows grace.

(Queen Elizabeth)

Some of you have seen this book, the Servant Queen and the king she serves.

The queen is a strong Christian.

She knows she has received grace, and is sustained by God's grace.

The media tend to ignore that aspect of her life, but if you listen to what she says, especially in her Christmas day

speeches, she often talks about how Jesus came to serve and to give his life for us.

And who can tell me what the first line is of our national anthem? (Ask)

God save our **gracious** queen

Churches should be havens of grace. Fountains of grace.

Grace flows from God to us, and through us out into the community. (fountain slide).

One of my prayers for us as God's family here at St John's is that we will understand God's amazing grace towards us, and that we will show that same grace to one another, and to our community.

Let's pray