

**"Grace and Truth"**8-14-11  
9 & 10:45 a.m.

John 1:14, 16-17

Series, *"The Church is Leaving the Building"***PREAMBLE**

The past two Sundays I've been in different Adult groups sharing about the renewed focus on our church mission / vision, "Worship like Jesus, Live like Jesus, Worship like Jesus."

I've really enjoyed it, and meeting some of you in smaller settings.

Next Sunday and the one after I'll be in two more classes:

8/21: 9:00 a.m. upstairs in the Pavilion

8/28: 10:45 a.m. upstairs in the Pavilion

Please choose one and join us!

**OPEN** to John 1 (**PAGE** 1645)

**INTRODUCTION**

New series: *"The Church is Leaving the Building"*

**KEY IDEA:** *Grace builds the bridge... truth walks over*

You may have seen a picture that depicts this: People on one side of the Grand Canyon, God on the other. There's no way for people to cross the distance. We are separated by sin.

In His grace, God builds a bridge over the gap. Jesus crossed the bridge to us, living and speaking the truth, that if we entrust our lives to Him, we can cross over the

bridge to God.

And God has called each of us to be gracious bridge builders so that the truth of Jesus can cross over to people who are far from God.

**READ** John 1:14, 16-17 "The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and Only, Who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

16 From the fullness of His grace we have all received one blessing after another.

17 For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ."

### **1. God Built a Bridge of Grace**

*Grace builds the bridge... truth walks over*

God sent Jesus to us as a human being (grace) so that we could know the truth of His love. (John 1:14, 16)

### **2. Jesus Built Bridges of Grace**

In becoming human, Jesus built a bridge of *grace* to other humans... over which He could carry the *truth* of what it means to have a relationship with the Father, and how to have a relationship with the Father. (John 1:17)

Matthew 11:5 (Jesus describing His ministry): "The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised (*all acts of amazing grace*), and the good news (*truth*) is preached to the poor."

*Grace built the bridge... truth walked over*

Another time, at the beginning of His ministry when He visited the synagogue in His home town,  
Luke 4:16-21 "He went to Nazareth, where He had been

brought up, and on the Sabbath day He went into the synagogue, as was His custom. And He stood up to read.  
 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. Unrolling it, He found the place where it is written:  
 18 'The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,  
 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.' "

Jesus concluded His reading with the words, "to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor" – stopping in the middle of the verse without reading the next line in Isaiah 61:2 about God's vengeance. He was saying that His first coming was a time of grace, not of judgment. Judgment would come at the end of the age. (BKC)

Now, now is these last days before Jesus returns, these days are days of grace, not judgment. *Do you tend to be a grace-giver or a judgment-maker?*

### ILLUSTRATION

"Tony Campolo tells of a time when he was speaking in Honolulu, Hawaii. He lives on the east coast of the United States so his body was six hours ahead of Hawaiian time.

At three o'clock in the morning it felt like nine o'clock to him. Awake and hungry for breakfast, he found himself in a 'greasy spoon' café in the small hours of the morning.

As he bit into his doughnut, eight or nine prostitutes walked in. They had just finished for the night. Their

talk was loud and crude, and it was difficult to avoid listening in.

He heard one tell the others it was her birthday the following day. 'What do you want from me? A birthday cake?' was the sarcastic reply. 'Why be so mean?' she replied, 'I was just telling you. I don't expect anything.

I've never had a birthday party. I'm not expecting to have one now.' When Campolo heard this he made a decision.

When the women left, he went over to the café owner, a guy called Harry.

'Do they always come in here?'

'Yes,' said Harry.

'Including the one who sat next to me?'

'Yes, that's Agnes. Why do you want to know?'

'Because I heard her say it's her birthday tomorrow and I thought we might throw her a party.'

(At first Harry was quiet.) Then a smile grew across (his) lips.

'That'd be a great idea.' A moment later his wife was in on the plot.

(Fast forward...) Half past two the next morning.

Campolo had brought decorations and Harry had baked a cake. Word had got out and it seemed as if every prostitute in Honolulu was in the café - plus Campolo, a preacher.

When Agnes entered with her friends, she was flabbergasted. Her mouth fell open and her knees wobbled. As she sat on a stool, everyone sang 'Happy Birthday.'

'Blow out the candles,' people shouted, but in the end Harry had to do it for her.

Then he handed her a knife. 'Cut the cake, Agnes, so we can all have some.'

She looked at the cake. Then slowly said, 'Is it alright... would you mind... if I wait a little longer... if we didn't eat it straight away?'

'Sure. It's okay,' said Harry. 'Take it home if you want.'

'Can I?' she said, 'Can I take it home now? I'll be back in a few minutes.' And with that she left, carrying her precious cake out the café.

There was a stunned silence. So Campolo said, 'What do you

say we pray?' And they did. Campolo lead a group of prostitutes in prayer at 3:30 in the morning.

When they were done, Harry said, 'Hey! You never told me you were some kind of preacher. What kind of church do you belong to?'

Campolo answered, 'I belong to a church that throws birthday parties for prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning.'

Harry waited for a moment. Then he kind of sneered, 'No you don't. There's no church like that. If there was, I'd join it. I'd join a church like that.'

"Campolo comments: Wouldn't we all? Wouldn't we all love to join a church that throws birthday parties for

prostitutes at 3:30 in the morning?

... anybody who reads the New Testament will discover a Jesus Who loved to party with prostitutes and with all kinds of left-out people. The tax collectors and 'sinners' loved Him because He partied with them. The lepers of society found in Him someone Who would (take their hands).

And while the solemnly pious people could not relate to what He was about, those lonely people who usually didn't get invited to parties took to Him with excitement."

(A Meal with Jesus: Discovering Grace, Community, and Mission around the Table, Tim Chester)

## 2. Jesus Built Bridges of Grace

### 3. Paul Built Bridges of Grace

Paul the apostle built bridges of *grace* to people who were different from him so that He could carry the truth of Jesus to anyone he went to.

He never compromised his faith, his morals, or the message of Jesus. He just met people where they were:

1 Corinthians 9:19-22 **"Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.**

20 **To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.**

21 **To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.**

22 **To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people (*grace*) so that by all possible means I might save some." (by carrying the *truth* of the Good News about Jesus)**

*Grace built the bridge... truth walked over*

### 4. Peter Built Bridges of Grace (Acts 10:28-35)

Peter the apostle built bridges of grace to non-Jewish people by going into their homes, so that he could carry the truth of Jesus to them.

Acts 10:28 **"He said to them: 'You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any person impure or unclean.'"**

He then shared the message about Jesus, and they believed!

Grace built the bridge... truth walked over

### **ILLUSTRATION**

Tell story of Tony and homosexuality: Why grace AND truth are so important.

Tony: raised in the Bay area. His father is Asian, a Buddhist, and his mother is Caucasian, practiced Buddhism to fit in with her husband.

We're out on a horseback ride, he starts talking about spiritual things. I ask him where he is in his spiritual journey. He explains his background, and then says that his first exposure to Christianity was the summer before on this cattle ranch... the owner, his family, and several employees are Christian, and he went to church with them.

He then asked me a question: "Why are Christians so uptight about homosexuals? It's like it's the only thing they talk about."

I got the feeling he'd heard a lot of truth, shared rather unkindly, and hadn't seen any grace or compassion in regards to their spiritual condition.

We had a great talk. I was very gracious and patient in my answers, giving the truth of what the Bible says, the societal changes that many parents and g-parents were very uncomfortable with, etc.

He said, "I can understand that."

Then he started asking me questions about evolution vs. creation; he talked about his girlfriend and how she's OK with him becoming a Christian, and other topics.

Because of his Buddhist background, I was able to share how Jesus was the most unique of the religious leaders, culminating with His claim to be the only way to God.

In a 2½ hour ride, we must have talked about spiritual things for 1½ hours!

When we left for home, and said 'goodbye' to him, he told me that he'd decided he had to take the Bible at face value and see where it took him.

It made me realize the power of grace and truth; grace first, followed by truth.

Grace builds the bridge that truth walks over.

### **CONCLUSION**

What is your tendency?

judgment and truth?

rejection and truth?

grace and avoidance of the truth?

grace and rounding off the edges of truth?

*"Father in heaven, thank You for sending Jesus as a bridge of grace to me. Please make me more and more like Jesus so that I will build bridges of grace that Your truth can walk over. In Jesus' Name, Amen."*