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| **Fruitful Reception of God’s Grace**  *Promise: God’s grace is able to fill and make fruitful our hearts & lives* Pastor Timothy A. Duesenberg Job 38:1-11; Ps 124; 2 Corinthians 6:1-13; Mark 4:35-41 (5th Sunday after Pentecost, Pr. 7), 6/23/24)  *Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain.* – v. 1  **Lead In –** There are three responses to Jesus in the Gospel Accounts, and they are the same three responses to the proclamation of the Gospel in the rest of the New Testament. The first response is one of rejection. And often, but not always, outright rejection with vehemence is limited to a few. The second response is acceptance. And often, but not always, a vigorous embrace is limited to some. And the third response is one of indifference, a lighthearted acceptance at best. And too often this represents a large proportion of the people. All of which reminds me of the words in Revelation 3…   1. **The Context for Today’s Epistle Reading**    1. The ministry of reconciliation starting in 5:11…    2. Co-Workers with Him as agents of reconciliation…    3. The appeal not to receive grace in vain… 2. **There Is An Unmistakable Sense of Warning and Threat Here**    1. There is a definite sense of urgency here…    2. There is no room for presumption and complacency…    3. In humility humble (empty) yourself, surrender, open… 3. **God Helps Us to Open Restricted Hearts**    1. Ap Paul and co-workers’ hearts were wide open…    2. They put no obstacles in anyone’s way…    3. Open hearts need to be first emptied of pride…self-importance   **Final Word –** Unless you are falling asleep, it takes more effort to close your eyes than to keep them open. It takes more effort to clinch your fists than to open them. And until you let go off the shovel with which you are trying to dig yourself out with, you only dig deeper in the hole. Through Paul’s letter God appeals to us to fruitfully receive His grace. This involves a surrender on our part. This involves not closing our eyes to Him. It involves humbly opening our hands to receive from Him. It involves opening up our hearts to Him even as, and commensurately as, we open our hearts to others…  **Re 3:15-16** “‘I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.”  **2Co 5:18-19** All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.  **2Co 5:20** Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.  *in vain* – that is, in an empty or unproductive fashion; without purpose; to receive something lightly.  **He 4:2** For good news came to us just as to them, but the message they heard did not benefit them, because they were not united by faith with those who listened. | **2 Corinthians 6:1-13 ESV**  *The Ministry of Reconciliation*  1Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. 2For 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. 3We put no obstacle in anyone's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry, 4but as servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: by great endurance, in afflictions, hardships, calamities, 5beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger; 6by purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, the Holy Spirit, genuine love; 7by truthful speech, and the power of God; with the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and for the left; 8through honor and dishonor, through slander and praise. We are treated as impostors, and yet are true; 9as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as punished, and yet not killed; 10as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing everything.  11We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. 12You are not restricted by us, but you are restricted in your own affections. 13In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.  **Mt 7:21** “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.”  **Ps 51:10** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.  **Dt 30:6** And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your offspring, so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.  **Ac 6:14** One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.  **Ph 1:27** let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.  **1Pe 314-15** But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you will be blessed. Have no fear of them, nor be troubled, but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you. |