

Who Can Honestly Say

John 1:17

“The law indeed was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

St. Mark's & St. James UCC ~ December 20, 2020

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Immanuel Kant once wrote,

“By a lie a man annihilates his dignity as a man.”

A good friend of Immanuel wasn't one to mince his words. He saw things in black and white. He didn't dwell on the gray areas. But who amongst us can honestly say that we do not live in the gray areas?

Who among us can honestly say that we haven't lied – for good reasons?

Who among us can say we live a truly good life?

And who among us can say we treat everyone else as Jesus treated others

With kindness, care, forgiveness, and grace, and too – love?

If our answer is, as it must be, I can't. That's not to say we shouldn't try.

We should all continue to try to be the best we can be.

To escape the sins of our pasts. To be accepting of our little foibles and others.

We can't run away from who we are. As much as we might try we can't just forget who we are and what we've done. The accumulating burdens of past sins would soon have us hunched over, barely able to crawl under the ever-increasing weight.

If there was not grace in our lives we would reach a point where we simply cannot go on. Yet, there is grace. Not the grace of the pastor (although that is a part of it), not the grace of your teacher or employer (although that is important too). Not the grace of your parents or your children. It is the grace of Jesus Christ that I'm talking about.

Although it is by the grace of Jesus Christ, we too can live a grace-filled life with others.

Grace means that when we do commit sin, we're able to repent (if we chose to) and to be forgiven. To be cleansed of sin. This offer of grace is not for only one type of person, or one race of people. Everyone on earth receives grace without any actions or choices on their own part.

Grace is freely given to all.

There is one area in all of this that is black or white. There is no living in the gray areas of this.

We have a choice to make. We must chose to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. We cannot say (to ourselves or anyone else) I kind of choose Jesus.

Either we do or we do not. And when we do the love of Jesus grows more and more in our lives and we show our commitment to Christ by obeying the teachings of Christ, and the commandments of God.

Our obedience is from love. It's not based on greed. It's not selfish. It's not power over others. It's not a sneaky way to say – if I do this I'm in! I'll be in heaven if I do this!

Our obedience to God, our obedience to living our lives like Christ calls us to
is a natural result of our love of Christ.

Our obedience to treat everyone else as Jesus treated others

With kindness, care, forgiveness, and grace

Is born out of Christ's love for us...

It is one of those miraculous happenings in our lives that when we accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and we live in Christ's love, that we can't help but to

Be kind, when we might otherwise walk right past a person.

To care for others when we might have only cared for ourselves.

To forgiven someone who has wronged us or hurt our feelings.

To be gracious when we otherwise would not have.

On this fourth Sunday of Advent, as we get ready to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ,
How will you be getting ready?

Who is on your list?

To forgive

To love

To show grace

You and I have no choice at all, in the matter of Jesus loving us. Jesus was born here – amongst all of us gray dwellers, that we might arise from the muck and mire of a deeply troubled world and move into the bright lights of knowing God more deeply.

Thanks be to our loving God.