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**Title:** Grace Changes Everything

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**Text:** [Mark 1:14-20](#)

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Rob Bell tells a story about a party a few years ago that he and his wife Kristen were invited to attend. This was a really fancy party, a party full of important people, people who had done things, invented things, built things, really important people. Waiters and waitresses were walking around passing

out flutes of champagne. Bell says that when he and his wife arrived, he quickly realized that he was feeling that he didn't belong at this gathering. His wife made the observation that Bell was wearing the same exact thing that the wait staff was wearing. At one point a group of people handed him their empty appetizer plates. The toughest part, he said was when the voices began rattling in his head

Voices rattling around in his head, saying you are not smart enough to be here, you are not good enough to be here. You can't live up to what the people at this party will expect from you.

We live in fear of being exposed for who we really are. We aren't smart enough, we are not good enough, we've done things that we don't want anyone to know we have done.

That fear paralyzes us, it cuts us out at the knees.

Have you ever thought that? I suspect that everyone has struggled with the fear that in some way we will be exposed.

This is perhaps the moment where grace meets us in the most powerful ways

Grace meets us in the moment when we most need grace, when we are most afraid of being found out. And it frees us, it totally frees us. It frees us to see ourselves as God sees us. Grace, not fear, becomes the new lens through which we view ourselves, the lens through which we view the world around us. It reminds us of the true character of God.

*Grace is the light or electricity or juice or breeze that takes you from that isolated place and puts you with others who are as startled and embarrassed and eventually grateful as you are to be there.* Anne Lamott

Movie Tree of Life, not particularly good but opens with this line: There are two ways to go through life, the way of grace or the way of nature, we choose.

I've spent the last few weeks preparing for this ministry at Geist Christian Church I took some time to drive around the community, learning about it, observing, thinking and praying about what people may be looking for in a Christian community. Don't know if you have noticed, but there are a lot of places of worship around.

What are people looking for? What were people seeking? I believe its grace. The kind of grace that not only meets them where they are but meets them and offers them the transformation they desire, the life and the world that God desires.

Perhaps that is what these four people, James, John, Simon, and Andrew were looking for. Maybe they didn't even know that is what they were looking for. They were in the fishing business, it was a good business, a respected if not difficult job.

The poet John Betjeman describes in his autobiography how his father put pressure on him to follow into the family business, but John had no desire to do that. He wanted to be a poet. His father constantly told him that was a dumb dream, you would never amount to anything, make any money as a poet. You have got to enter the family business, not only to make money but to preserve the family's honor. He was the fourth generation. The young John refused, following what he felt was his calling to be a poet. He ended up as a Poet Laureate, a memorial in Westminster Abbey.

Chances are that this family business of fishing had been in this family awhile. For James and John, Andrew and Simon, this shouldn't have been such an easy decision to leave everything behind and follow this Jesus. But this young prophet calls, and they follow. They leave the family business.

Jesus had spoken about time, Now is the time he says, because here comes the kingdom of God and this is the good news because this is a kingdom in which you can trust, in which you can place your life

We can't understand this call until we understand what Jesus is announcing, for he is announcing that its God's time.

*"After John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee announcing God's good news, saying "Now is the time! Here comes God's kingdom! Change your hearts and lives, and trust this is good news." Mark 1:14-15*

In the NT there are two words for time. One is *chronos*, which speaks of calendars and clocks and everything that we order our lives around. The other word is *kairos*, it calls attention to a special time, a time that is an unusually significant moment.

For these first disciples of Jesus, this is an unusually significant moment, the call to discipleship is an unusually significant call. It's not a call to simply do something or take up a new task but is a call to a new identity. That identity begins in grace.

When Jesus says follow, he is really saying view your life and this world in a new way,

The only question we have to answer is are we willing to fully receive, taste, live into God's grace. If we say yes, yes to grace, then everything changes.

We fully begin to live as disciples of Jesus Christ when we fully trust in God's grace because it frees us in every way possible.

Discipleship is not a task, and nothing that we do as a church, as people of faith, should feel like a task. Jesus does not offer these four people a new task, they are busy, they have plenty of tasks/I doubt if what Jesus had been offering had a been a task, they probably would have said no. What Jesus offered was a new identity, one rooted in the grace of God.

*"Come follow me," he said, "and I'll show you how to fish for people. Right away they left their nets and followed him." Mark 1:17-18*

And once they said yes, everything changed.

Not too long ago I read the story of Grace Thomas, a gentle Christian woman raised in the Southern Baptist Church who, in the 1930s, moved from Alabama to Atlanta, Georgia to begin her married life and working career. Grace became a clerk in one of the state government offices, and through that work, developed an interest in law and politics, and eventually enrolled in a local law school that offered night classes.

After years of part-time study, Grace finally completed her law degree. To her family's surprise, Grace announced that she had decided to enter the 1954 election race for governor of Georgia. There were nine candidates—eight men and Grace—but only one over-riding issue. That issue related to the schools since in the landmark case of *Brown v. Board of Education* the

Supreme Court had just declared that racially "separate but equal" schools were unconstitutional, thus paving the way for school integration. The other eight candidates spoke forcefully and angrily against the court's decision, while Grace raised a counter perspective, asserting the decision to be fair and just, one which ought to be welcomed across the country. Her campaign slogan was "Say Grace at the Polls." But not many did; in fact, Grace came in dead last, and her family was relieved that she had gotten politics and controversy out of her system.

But she had not. Eight years later, in 1962, Grace once again ran for governor of Georgia. In the midst of the growing civil rights movement, Grace offered a message of racial harmony. In response, Grace received a significant number of death threats, but she would not be deterred. Once again Grace finished last on election day, but she continued to be convinced that her message needed to be heard.

Near the end of the campaign, Grace made a stop in the small town of Louisville, Georgia, and chose the town's old slave market as the site for a campaign speech. On the very spot where slaves had been auctioned a century earlier, a hostile crowd gathered to hear what she would say. Began Grace, "The old has passed away, and the new has come." And then, gesturing to the market, Grace continued, "This place represents all about our past over which we must repent. A new day is here, a day when people of all races can join hands to work together."

It was not a message the powers-that-be wanted to hear in the Georgia of 1962, and someone shouted accusingly, "Are you a communist?" Pausing in mid-sentence, Grace responded softly, "No, I am not." "Well, then," continued the heckler, "Where'd you get those gall-durned ideas?" Grace thought for a moment and then pointed to the steeple of a nearby church. Said Grace, "I got them over there, in church."

What we learn here, the best thing that we have to offer here is a radical way of life, a way rooted in God, a way rooted in grace. As we say yes to being disciples, not once, but every day, we experience grace. That is what the church does best, grace because grace changes everything.

Will you pray with me?