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Title: *What Kind of God #4 - "God is Gracious"*

Scripture: John 8:2-11

Speaker: Mike Chilcoat

Good morning, Orchard Hill Church. I'm Mike Chilcoat. I'm a member of the teaching team here at Orchard Hill. Also, I am on the Young Life staff. I'm the Regional Director for Young Life in Pennsylvania. But my family and I call Orchard Hill Church home, and we are absolutely thrilled to be here this morning. I'm always humbled to get a chance to spend a little time with you, dive into the word, and leave here, hopefully knowing Christ more than when we walked in.

We are continuing this weekend on our series entitled *What Kind of God?* In this series, we're considering all kinds of aspects of God and of the person of Jesus Christ. Goodness, graciousness, and kindness. But this morning, we will be honing in and drilling deeply into the graciousness of God and the aspect of God and his graciousness. Many years ago, at a British conference on Comparative Religions, so many, many years ago, experts from around the world had gathered to begin debating about what, if any belief, was unique to the Christian faith. What separated Christianity from these other doctrines, these other faith traditions? What separated Christianity? What made it stand out?

Well, the debate continued and raged on until one moment C.S. Lewis walked in. If you know C.S. Lewis, maybe you know him from his writings, *The Chronicles of Narnia*, *Mere Christianity*, *The Great Divorce*, or any of the number of wonderful books he's written over the years. C.S. Lewis was a brilliant professor at Cambridge and Oxford and became a follower of Christ later in his life. And so here comes C.S. Lewis walking into this room as these folks debated about what separated Christianity from all other religions. And they posed the question to him, and he was told, you know, what the discussion was revolving around, and it's Christianity's unique contribution to world religions.

And they posed the question to C.S. Lewis, and he said, that's easy. It's Grace. And then C.S. Lewis left. Talk about a mike drop moment. Right? This incredible mike drop moment where he says it's grace. That's what separates Christianity from every other religion. Every other one is climbing a ladder of good deeds to sort of earn this favor from God. But grace is what separates and is distinctive about Christianity, about following Christ. So, what is grace? If it's this huge mike drop moment by C.S. Lewis, this moment where he says, this is it. This is a huge, monumental game-changing word. Grace. What is it? What is Grace? What's God's grace? And how is it so mind-blowing and life-altering in every way?

The graciousness of God may be one of the most misinterpreted and misunderstood aspects of our Heavenly Father. It might be one of the very tops. I mean, look at the interview on the street. This could range. We could have watched that for hours as they walked around The Point and other places downtown and interacted with folks. And you would have been getting answers from all over the map.

Some folks would have no idea. Some would take a shot at it and maybe be, you know, wildly inaccurate. Others would have some kind of a grasp on it. But how is this one so oftentimes misunderstood and misinterpreted? There are lots of impressions out there, various

impressions of God that range all over the map, some bad first impressions. Maybe they had a bad experience at church, or maybe someone had no experience at all, but they just heard the things regardless.

A lot of times there are bad first impressions that have shaped how people view God. And if they've taken these bad impressions and run with it and sort of dug their heels in and decided this is what God is like, and I've figured it out and no one can change my mind. And once these thoughts are established, maybe they've never been challenged, developed, or investigated properly. Either way, the ramifications of a misunderstanding and a misinterpretation of God and God's graciousness could have dire consequences.

You know, there's lots of, as I mentioned, lots of impressions of who Jesus is. Some of you in this room, maybe you grew up in the church, maybe you've been around following Christ for a long time, maybe decades. You know, some of you, this might be your first time darkening the hallway of a church wherever you're at on that scale, or maybe you're investigating who Jesus is for the first time, wherever you land, and there's all kinds of impressions, some good, some bad, some true, some false. We all come in with sort of some things that we picture who Jesus is.

Now, if you know me well and you've heard me teach here before, you know that I like to joke around a lot. You know, I'm rarely serious, but I am going to show you something. I'm going to have a little bit of fun. I just want to point out, I'm probably overexplaining myself, but I want to clarify here, I'm not poking fun at Jesus in any way. What I am poking fun at, though, is some interpretations of Jesus and some pictures that maybe we grew up around, and again, some of them there's some truth in there, too, but a lot of these are from the seventies and eighties that maybe you saw on your grandmother's wall or in a Sunday school class. But either way, I thought we would take a look at some folk's interpretations of who Jesus is through some artwork that we have.

Let's throw the first one up here. Here's one. This one's interesting. This guy is diligently studying. Looks like he's, you know, combing through some medical journals or something. And Jesus is helping him out there maybe or turning to a chapter that the guy needs to focus on. Either way, I was struck by this guy having the time of his life. You know, I had the time of my life. Look at that guy's face. He's so excited. And Jesus is like, you know, getting all the answers right. The guy still doesn't seem to be too excited about that. But this guy here, hopefully, he passed and hopefully he's a doctor in a town near us.

Here we go. Next one up. This one. I like this one. This was a little more frightening, a little freakier. This is sort of the Godzilla Jesus, Jesus let loose on the city. I mean, make sure you didn't park near there or your car. Hopefully, insurance will cover that. I don't know. We'll have to look at your policy, but either way, I would love it. Imagine the guy on the floor where Jesus' knuckle is, you know, kind of like not going there. The guy's just sitting there. It's a Monday, you know? He's like, yeah, Rick, my weekend was okay, but oh, Jesus, look out. You make these copies, Rick. Jesus is always watching. So here he is. Godzilla. Jesus.

Next one. Okay, this one. I'm hoping that Jesus is throwing the tip-off. I hope he is because otherwise, he's like, get that weak stuff out of here, right? Jesus, pack in the shot of these kids. He's like, you've come in the pain. Anyway, real quick on this one. You got a girl back

here. I don't know if she's cheering or what's happening. She's getting down. And then look how high the rim is on the backboard. I don't know. This is like, A.I. Drawing, what they think a basketball hoop should look like. Either way, Jesus is like Hakeem Olajuwon in there. Don't bring that stuff in there.

What else do we have next? This one I just threw on here because it's kind of intense. You may have seen this one growing up, but this one is really intense, right? The kids are probably like, just a little bit back, okay, my neck is hurting.

Okay, let me get the next one here. I'm going to take just a second on this one. I really like this one. I like several aspects of this. I don't know if this is a Broncos jersey or what this is, but you have the kid here with the helmet strapped up. You have what looks like the Broncos jersey. And then I like how he wears tough skin jeans. He couldn't complete the uniform. He's got tough skin jeans, zips, or kangaroos or something down there with white socks. I like that. And then I also want to point out what is going on in this picture in the background. I'm not a defensive coordinator, but they look like their buddies are running off, you know, to go fishing. I'm not sure what they're doing. Or maybe 26 is like a lockdown corner. Maybe that's, you know, Rod Woodson or Deion Sanders in their prime. Maybe that's Revis Island over there, and I'm just making fun of it. The other one is I think Jesus is maybe calling for the pitch. That's going to be forward. That's going to be a penalty. Jesus should know better than that. That's frustrating.

So, these are all impressions of who Jesus is, right? All over the map. It's all over the map. And I poke fun, and I tease. But today when this ends, I'll jump in my car, and I'll head down to Oakland. There's a student involvement fair down at Pitt, where Young Life and some other ministries that we're involved in will be there, meeting students. And what's wild is if you go to any campus college, high school, middle school, you name it any campus, the impressions of who Jesus is, I mean, sometimes it's really dark and sometimes it's really sad. There are things all over the place. There are people who will associate Jesus with hatred, fear, anger, and insecurity that'll be all over the place. So, impressions of Jesus range all over the map. Maybe there are some various impressions here in this room of who Jesus is.

So, our first impression of Jesus is important. But then as we go on, our ongoing impressions of Jesus are just as important. I'm just being honest, and I'm acknowledging that this is out there. Have you ever jumped to a conclusion about who someone is or what they're like? Have you ever judged someone quickly? I have. Have you ever had a moment where you've maybe met someone or maybe you're around, why this person's been introduced and you all of a sudden kind of draw a bunch of conclusions and you assume that you have this person figured out? Have you ever had that?

And then have you ever gone on and maybe gotten to know that person better and you realize that your impression was dead wrong, that you were totally off? I bet if you stop and think about it, you could come up with a few names like, yeah, I thought this person was like this and I was way off. The more I got to know them, the more that that the curtain was pulled back. I realized that my impression was way off.

So, wouldn't you agree that we can be wrong in our initial judgments? We can be completely, utterly wrong in our impressions and imagine the devastating ramifications if we have a

wrong impression of who Jesus is and his graciousness. And we continue to operate in life with these huge misunderstandings, imagine how devastating the ramifications of that would be. Imagine how much that would shipwreck our life, our faith, and our relationships. Well, it would be the most important thing that we would have to figure out if C.S. Lewis says grace is the one thing that separates Christianity from all other ways of thinking. Imagine how important this is for us to make sure that our impressions aren't bad, that we've got it figured out, that we look again with fresh eyes and a fresh perspective on who Jesus is.

There's an amazing passage that I think gives us some real keen insight into this question, and it appears in John chapter eight. So, Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, the Gospels, the eyewitness accounts of the life of Jesus here in chapter eight of John, verses 2 through 11, I think we're going to dive into today. It really can be broken down into three sections.

This passage is called The Woman Caught in Adultery. So, it's about this woman who's caught in adultery, and she's been leveraged by these guys, the Pharisees, who are teachers of the law. And they're angry and threatened by Jesus. So, they're looking for a way to trap Jesus. They want to paint Jesus in a corner here. So, in the first few verses of chapter 8:1-6, you could classify those as the trap, the Pharisees attempting to trap Jesus to make sure that He contradicts himself or He looks foolish and to trap him. Then the next few verses after that are Jesus's interaction with the accusers. We watch Jesus turn and address his accusers for the next few verses and then the last few verses of this passage Jesus turns and addresses the woman. So, it's Jesus' word of the accuser, and then Jesus' word to the woman here in the last few verses.

I'm going to pick it up here in chapter eight of John. I'll start with verse two. It says this. "At dawn he appeared again in the temple courts, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them." So here he is, right here in the middle of Jerusalem, where all the people gathered around him, and he sat down to teach them the teachings of the law. "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery. They made her stand before the group and said to Jesus, "Teacher, this woman was caught in the act of adultery. In the Law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" They were using this question as a trap, in order to have a basis for accusing him."

So let me set the scene a little bit. Here in the temple courts, they're there and the Pharisees are plotting to trap Jesus, to paint him in a corner, and the trap is set, and they bring this woman in who's caught in the act of adultery. Adultery back in Jesus' time would have been defined as someone sleeping with or having sex with someone who was not their spouse, whether that was marital unfaithfulness or just a person who was sleeping around. Either way, this would be defined as adultery. And they take this woman caught in the act of adultery, they bring her down, and she is nothing more than a pawn in their game. This is so inhumane. They treat this woman as if she is subhuman. She doesn't count, she doesn't matter. She's dirt on their shoes. She's just there to make a point.

This horrible, callous moment where they catch this woman in the act of adultery. I don't know what that means. They don't elaborate a lot on it in the Gospel of John here. I don't know if she had time to gather herself up to grab something to cover herself. I don't know. Either way, they dragged this woman out. Imagine this woman grew up here. She knew

people in the crowd. She could have been easily identified. Imagine the humiliation as she's shaking.

And then stoning. Stoning was this barbaric form of punishment, right? Judge, jury, executioner where stoning would be a crowd that was gathered, and someone would accuse someone, and they would deem that this person is guilty. And everyone would pick up rocks and they would count down, and then they would launch the rocks and pummel someone until they died. So, imagine her sitting there shaking, thinking this could be it. Not only am I absolutely humiliated in front of everybody, in front of my peers, but now also this might be the end. I might be staring down the barrel, the end of my life. I don't know this Jesus guy. How is he going to respond?

So, I'll pick it up here right after this. Let's see how Jesus responds. He says this. Young woman, you know what you did was wrong. Jesus says rules are rules and they need to be enforced. Jesus signaled the crowd to follow his lead. Jesus stooped down and grabbed a stone. Jesus looked intently at the young woman and saw anguish on her face. But fearing the crowd's response, Jesus cocked back his arm and he let the stone fly. That is not what it says at all. I made up that entire verse. Of course, it doesn't say that. Of course, that's ridiculous. But the funny thing and don't miss this. Hang with me. Isn't that how often times we think Jesus responds to us? I know that if I read that initially when I started following Christ, I would have been like, yeah, that's about right.

No, of course, I made it all up. By the way, all the Scripture read through six is accurate. I made up seven. Throw that out. Don't show a little clip and say my pastor said. No, that was made up. But I did it on purpose because so oftentimes we think that's how Jesus is going to respond, that he'll be the first to throw a stone at us. And he's just sitting there waiting, counting down till we screw up that he can have that I told you so moment, that he can have that moment of condemnation.

Don't you want to know how Jesus really responded? Don't you want to know what's here? Let's address it here in chapter eight. Here's how Jesus really responds. So, they set the trap. They're using this question as a trap. "But Jesus bent down and started to write on the ground with his finger. When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, 'Let any one of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her.' Again he stooped down and wrote on the ground. At this, those who heard began to go away one at a time, the older ones first, until only Jesus was left, with the woman still standing there. Jesus straightened up and asked her, 'Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?' 'No one, sir,' she said. 'Then neither do I condemn you,' Jesus declared. 'Go now and leave your life of sin'"

So, the trap is set. They don't elaborate on what He's doing, but Jesus stoops down on the ground and He begins to write on the ground with his finger. I have no idea. I can't wait to ask Jesus to fill us in, fill in the details on that one. I'm not sure why. Maybe he's giving the woman a second to gather herself. Maybe he's trying to take some attention off of her. Either way, he writes on the ground. Then he stands up and he addresses the accusers. If any one of you is without sin, throw the first stone. The older folks think about it for a second. Wisdom prevails and they start to throw the rocks down. Then the younger people who are kind of, you know,

fired up for this, they throw their rocks down as they think about it a little more and they walk away and it's just Jesus and this woman.

What a scene. Can you imagine her adrenaline? She's sitting there going, okay, now how is Jesus going to respond to me? And he says is anyone here left to accuse you? And she says no one, sir. And then Jesus says something wildly profound. He says then neither do I condemn you. But he adds this really cool part at the end that we want to focus on and zoom in on a little bit, he says but neither do I condemn you. Now go leave this life of sin. Leave it. He says it with love and compassion, but he says this life is broken. The life you're living in is not an abundant life. This is not life to the fullest. This is not how you're designed to be loved and cared for. This life is empty. So, here he is addressing this woman, bringing back her humanity, loving her with mercy and love and kindness and caring. But then also truth in love to tell her to leave this life, it's broken.

Is it possible that you and I may have an impression of Jesus and maybe some of our impressions are off? Is that possible? Even for those of you who've been following Christ for a while? Maybe, just maybe, we have some wrong impressions of who Jesus is, and we need to look again with fresh eyes and a fresh perspective.

It's mind-blowing to read about how Jesus responds to this woman in this passage. It's countercultural. It's the opposite of how a lot of us believe Jesus would respond if He saw what we were really like. Maybe there are things in your life. I know I have them, like things that you're deeply ashamed of or things that you like to keep tucked away and hidden where you're like, Jesus, I'm going to keep you at arm's length. If you knew what I was really like Jesus, you'd never care for me. You'd never come in and be intentional and address me and love me and forgive me and want to be with me in a relationship. Is that true for you that your impression of Jesus could be like this woman who is caught?

Imagine if all of our deepest fears and insecurities were dragged out and exposed to everyone. Imagine me in a room like this and in everything, all your deepest shameful sins and insecurities and things that you want to keep locked away and hidden were exposed for everyone to see. Would Jesus love me still? If all my deepest fears and secrets were laid bare, we would be devastated. Right? Or in this case, maybe Jesus would. Maybe we think Jesus would be the first to cast a stone at us.

So, once again, is it possible that we have impressions of who Jesus is? Is it possible that maybe some of them might be wrong? And then even more so, is it possible that Jesus could be far more than you and I even realize that we haven't even scratched the surface of the person of Jesus Christ? Could Jesus meet you and me in the way that He met this woman and love her and love us in a way that we never thought was possible? What if we were designed to be loved this way? Someone who knows us inside and out, someone who knows all our failures or shortcomings or insecurities, yet they love us anyway. More than we could even ask or imagine. That, my friends, would change everything. That would be a game-changer. That would be a needle-moving moment. God's grace through Jesus Christ is a love like that. God's grace through Jesus Christ is a love like that.

So, as we look again at God's graciousness with fresh eyes and a fresh perspective, I want to lovingly welcome us, not challenge us but welcome us to leave here, to walk out these doors

draped in the freedom of the immense and game-changing grace of our Savior, Jesus Christ, to be freed from that bondage.

I have a friend named Lewis. Lewis has a great illustration that I use a lot. I think it'll be helpful for you. Lewis had daughters just like I have three daughters. And so, a lot of Lewis's stories I would relate to is I raised three daughters and Lewis had a lot of rules in his house. And there were some rules that you couldn't break. And some rules were pretty serious rules. One of them was, you can't talk back to Mom, don't sass Mom. Well, of course, one night one of the daughters gets a little sassy, throwing it back at mom a little bit. Lewis stands up and he goes, hey, you don't talk to your mom that way. You know the rules. You broke them. You got to go to your room. You're grounded tonight. That's it for you. And his daughter sulks a little bit and she storms upstairs. She goes into a room and Louis waits a little bit.

He walks upstairs, walks down the hallway, and he goes into his daughter's room, and he sits on her bed. He says you knew the rules. You were clear on those. You broke them willingly, and now you're serving your punishment. You're in your room, you're grounded for the night. This is justice. And the little girl's like, okay, great justice. Thanks, Dad. He's like, you knew the rules. You broke them. This is justice. So, he waits a few moments and then he says, I'm going to let you out of your room early. You should stay here. You knew the rules. You broke them willingly. This is justice. You should stay here and serve your punishment. But I'll let you out early.

So, the little girl, you know, lights up a little bit, jumps up, runs out, opens her door, and starts to walk down the hallway. So, he follows her out the door, down the hallway, and he stops her and he says you should be serving your punishment in there, but I let you out early. That's justice. But this letting you out early. This is mercy. This is mercy. So, the girl thinks, okay, mercy. That's good. So, she starts to walk down the steps. He follows her down the stairs. He grabs her coat. They walk out, they get in the car. He drives her down to the ice cream parlor. He buys the biggest, most elaborate, most expensive ice cream sundae they have. And he slides it in front of his daughter. He puts a spoon in, and he says this sweetheart is grace.

You see grace is Jesus' unmerited favor, his gift of love that he painted on the cross for us. That gift of sacrifice. He was justice. Justice was served. He didn't sweep it under the rug. He died on the cross. That's justice. And then he takes our place for us. That's mercy. We should be on the cross. He takes it for us. That's mercy. But then he blows our minds with the game-changing truth of grace. And grace is the free gift that we don't deserve when we deserve punishment. And this life eternally with Jesus, starts right now. When we begin a relationship with Jesus, we can experience that now. We don't deserve any of it. We've been grafted into his family, adopted as sons and daughters. We have all the inheritance. It's God's mind-blowing grace for us.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says this. "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." So, we can't keep up all these good deeds and earn our way to God and somehow be acceptable before a Holy God. No, it is by grace. You have been saved through faith. I can have confidence that Jesus is who He says He is, and in that faith, in God's free gift of grace that can be grafted into his family, not by works. I didn't do it. He did it. God does the heavy

lifting. So, it's all from the Lord. It's not earned, it's not a workspace. God does all the heavy lifting, and he gives us this beautiful gift, this beautiful, amazing, life-changing gift of grace.

Now, here's where the rubber meets the road, Orchard Hill. And I'm going to let us into the other side of this. In the later part of chapter eight, he has a moment where Jesus says, neither do I condemn you. Here's this beautiful gift, right? But then he goes on, but now go leave this life of sin. So, here's what I'm going to tell you that's important. And if you grasp this, your life will change. It will change the trajectory of your marriages, the way you raise your kids, how you interact with your community, and how you care for your neighbors and your coworkers, etc. And it's this. A free gift, even a free gift of unmerited favor without a call to action is a waste. It is incomplete and becomes a beautifully packaged free gift that's left unopened under the tree on Christmas morning. It becomes merely a get-out-of-jail-free card without authentic life change through a renovation of your heart by the Holy Spirit.

When receiving this gift, open it up and say, Lord, I want to be used in your kingdom. I was bought at a price. So, grace, without a call to action, is a waste. And it becomes what Dietrich Bonhoeffer calls cheap grace. You talk about a guy with credibility. Dietrich Bonhoeffer. If you don't know him, Google him later. Bonhoeffer was a German theologian and pastor who eventually was killed by the Nazis as he stood up against their tyrannical reign. He's a fascinating guy, loved Christ, and was in prison for a long time. You talk about a guy who has the credibility to live it out.

And here's how he describes cheap grace. "After all, we are told. our salvation has already been accomplished by the grace of God... It was unkind to speak to men like this, for such a cheap offer could only leave them bewildered and tempt them from the way to which they had been called by Christ. Having laid hold of cheap grace, they were barred forever from the knowledge of costly grace. Deceived and weakened, men felt that they were strong now that they were in possession of this cheap grace - whereas they had in fact lost the power to live the life of discipleship and obedience. The word of cheap grace has been the ruin of more Christians than any commandment of works."

Basically, we hear about this free gift of God's grace and say that sounds awesome. Sign me up, check the box, a get-out-of-jail-free card. And there is zero obedience and life change. There's zero submission to the one who bought you. You were bought at a price. You are not your own. If that's the case, then we are missing it. These quotes go on and it's a little bit long, but it's worth it. There are so many gems in here.

"Under cheap grace, the Christian life comes to mean nothing more than living in the world and as the world, in being no different from the world. The upshot is that my only duty as a Christian is to leave the world for an hour or so on Sunday morning and go to church to be assured that my sins are forgiven. Cheap grace is preaching forgiveness without demanding repentance, baptism without discipline, communion without confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, the cross, Jesus Christ living and incarnate. Costly grace, on the other hand, is the treasure hidden in a field. For the sake of it, a man will gladly go and sell all that he has. It is a pearl of great price to buy which will cost us everything. It's the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a person will pluck out the eye which causes them to stumble. It is the call of Jesus at which a disciple leaves his nets and follows. It is grace which must be sought again and again, the gift must be asked for, the door at which a person must knock."

You see folks, failure to understand costly versus cheap grace will kill your spiritual life, or at least seriously impede it. As I mentioned a second ago, in First Corinthians 6:19-20, Paul states that you are not your own. You are bought at a price. So as Jesus willingly laid his life down for you and for me on the cross, was under no compulsion, no one forced him to do it, He willingly laid His life down and paid the penalty. Justice. When he paid that penalty for you and for me, and he set us free with his mercy, we should have been on that cross, but he took it for us. When he does that, when he pours that out, he buys us at a price and he says, you haven't just been called out of something. You've been called into something. Your life can count for something more through faith in Jesus Christ. As we lean into that, we can sacrificially love other people. We can make an impact that is driven by the power of Christ through us, not our own strength. Thank the Lord.

So, we've already identified that we can't earn this. Well, how does Ed Jarrett put it what it means to be bought at a price? He says it this way. "We were bought from sin - redeemed by the blood of Christ. When we speak of redemption, it is referring to this legal transaction of purchasing us from slavery to sin so that we can be adopted as children of God."

It's beautiful, the great exchange, all our garbage for God's merciful grace. And then now our life has hope and a purpose and a reason for living to pour that love out onto other people and to give that love away. Only God can do this. However, once redeemed, once we open up this free gift of grace in our life, we are called to obedience and life change and putting our hand to the plow, giving our lives away, not to earn this love and redemption, but to actively take part in God's redemptive work and to be a vessel and a tool to be used in His Kingdom to bring people hope that's found in Jesus Christ alone. Luke 6:45 says, "For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

I love this illustration. It's a little corny. My brother Andy told me about this one. It's a great one. Sorry, Andy, that I called your illustration corny, but it is. But it's good. I love pizza. I've always loved pizza. In college undergrad, I went to Ohio State. I didn't have two nickels to rub together in college. So, on Mondays, they had this special at a place called Adriatico's where you could order a sheet pizza for half price. I would order it on Monday. This is horrible and disgusting and bad for you, but I had no money so I would eat it from Monday basically through Thursday or Friday. Right? It was getting a little bit stiff there in the end, but I would eat this. But that was my meal plan in college. So, someone would come to me, and they would say, Chili, can I have a piece of pizza? And I'd be stingy. I'd be like one. You know, or two people came. I'd be like, split this one. That's it, though. The rest is for me. This is my meal plan. I'd be kind of stingy with it.

Imagine if you and I won some contest, some crazy contest where we win free pizza from the best places in the entire world for the rest of our lives. From Italy and Sicily and New Haven, Connecticut, and Little Italy in New York. And I think pizza in Pittsburgh is underrated. There are some great spots here. Imagine all these great pizza places are delivering pizza to us continually. It would shift from me hoarding that pizza to me now, actively thinking, how can I give it away? And I would be thinking, who can I call? Hey, I've got a ton over here. You got to come grab 20 pizzas. Hey, I'm going to swing by. I'm going to drop off some pizzas for you. These are amazing, by the way. All of a sudden, my thinking would be not just stingy, but rather, how can I actively give this away?

And folks, so much more than with pizza. God's grace is not an eyedropper of grace where He's like, I'm going to give you a little bit. Don't spill it because that's all the grace you get. No, it is a tidal wave of grace that the Lord unleashes out of our hearts. And He calls us to not just be called out of something, but to something, and to give that love away and to share the love of Christ with others who don't know about it.

So, we're not just set free from something, but we're called to something. We're rescued for a purpose. It isn't like the Lord just swings open the cell door and says, okay, you're free. Good luck. No, he says, I'm swinging this door open and setting you free from your bondage because I'm calling you to something and to a purpose. And this purpose, if we lean into it, frees us up into a life of purpose and impact, an eternal joy in Jesus Christ. We're going to take hold of this gift of grace, open it up, and utilize it in our lives. I hope so.

I'm going to pray for us. Lord Jesus, thank you so much for this time. Thank you for this group of folks that gather together, Lord, and learn about you and Your Grace. Lord, we are so humbly overwhelmed with the gift of Your Grace that you stopped at nothing, even to the point of death on a cross to get to us. And Lord, I thank you for calling us to a purpose. A purpose in you of hope, a purpose of love, and sacrificial love and kindness to others. And I pray that we go and do likewise and give that love away. In your name, I pray. Amen. Thanks for coming out this morning. See you soon.