
Sermon

*'In Awe of Grace: **The End That Wasn't***

Matthew 28:1-11

::: ZERO :::

*"Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: ONE :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

Let me start with a story today, a tale by
BERTHOLD LUTZ.

THE RANSOM

*"Justice must be done," said the king. The son
did not move. "And mercy must be!" said the
king. The son stood there in silence, then nod-
ded slightly and left the hall.*

*The two who had been thrown into the debtors'
prison that morning were citizens of the city, al-
most neighbours of the castle. They had de-
frauded fellow citizens and were now to remain*

in the tower, as the law commanded, until the last penny of reparation was paid.

From the verdict, the king's son knew the sums owed by the two convicts. He took the money from his private safe and filled two jute sacks with it. He added enough small coins to the large notes to give the sacks weight. As soon as evening came, he went to the tower.

He waited for the watchman's turn, because he didn't want to be seen, then he threw - once, twice. Each time he hit right through one of the window openings, which were large enough that the prisoners did not suffocate, and small enough that even a slight man could not squeeze through.

The space behind each window was also tiny. The only piece of furniture, a narrow cot, was directly under the window. So it happened that the two money bags fell right on the chest of the incarcerated.

The first one, still awake with worry, grabbed the bag and understood in a flash. His heart beat a whirl with joy. He jumped up from his cot and could have danced. He knew that in the

morning he would be able to buy his freedom with the ransom of the stranger. Whoever his saviour was - he would be eternally grateful to him; it was due to him alone that he was allowed to start anew.

The same should be said of the second prisoner, for the fact that he was already out of a fitful half-sleep did not make much difference.

But this second prisoner, without understanding and upset by the disturbance, grabbed the small money bag and angrily hurled it back through the window opening into the night outside. The money, which could have brought him freedom too, hit the pavement of the forecourt not far from the king's son.

The king's son stood there stunned for a long time. Certainly, he was also thinking of the one who had accepted the rescue; his thoughts were much stronger of the other who had refused it.

The king's son finally bent down. With his hands he felt the small jute sack, while the footsteps of the returning guard could already be heard. Full of sadness, the king's son looked

once more at one of the tower windows. When the guard had passed by, would he throw the ransom into it a second time?

::: TWO :::

"JUSTICE must be!", AND "MERCY must be!", that's what the king had said in the story.

And now the king's son, the prince, steps out and takes his money and throws it up into the two in the debtor's prison.

::: THREE :::

Did you actually ask yourselves where he got the money? Such a prince ...

Nothing is written about that - at least not in the story itself.

But in the Gospel of John, it says:

Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.

The Father loves the Son and shows him all that he himself is doing; and he will show him greater works than these, so that you will be astonished.

Jn 5:19–20 (NRSV)

The Son does nothing of himself.
And even the money, of course, comes from the father himself.

There it is, the mercy.

::: FOUR :::

It is not as if the king is the JUST ONE and is responsible for the condemnation, but the prince then alone is the MERCIFUL ONE.

But, if the king himself is also so merciful, so kind, why is there actually this tower of guilt?

It exists because there are things which are right and things which are wrong.

::: FIVE :::

Correct—right—justice ... and JUSTICE must be!

Things are not just suddenly good, or right—
just because the King is merciful.

The difference remains.

And we as humans know and notice this again
and again.

In our lives we often notice how we are con-
strained by our own inability and injustice—like
imprisoning ourselves.

Sometimes consciously, often also because it is
so infinitely difficult to distinguish between
just and unjust, between right and wrong, be-
tween good and evil.

∴ SIX ∴

This is exactly where God's mercy reaches out
to us—comes flying in like a bag containing the
full ransom.

So says the loving, the merciful and just God,...
“TAKE IT! You can't get out of the tower by your-
self—but I have done everything so that you
are free, for you set out into a NEW LIFE.”

This justice, which is so *inseparable* from mercy. Justice which is much more than what we as human beings can give ourselves.

::: SEVEN :::

And the cross is a symbol that our human standards have come to an end.

But an end which is not THE END.

Again, we STAND IN AWE OF GRACE: LOOKING AT AN END, THAT WASN'T—that is not THE END.

Now, the JUSTICE AND MERCY of God applies, this he promises to us.

And, so now the cross stands for AN END THAT WASN'T. *It has become* a symbol for the whole *new* life, a life in freedom, a life by GOD'S GRACE.

We're stepping out of the dark surrounding walls of guilt—setting out into the morning light of a new life in freedom.

::: Amen.