

Grace, the Practice of Humility

"True humility is not thinking less of yourself; it is thinking of yourself less."

— C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*

Merriam-Webster defines "Grace" as "unmerited divine assistance." In the Christian tradition, Grace is often understood as freely given favor and love, making possible the salvation of sinners. In a world with so much focus on work ethic and so much emphasis on that which is earned, the concept of Grace reminds us that there are gifts to be received simply because of our humanity. We receive these gifts when we connect with our inherent worth and the worth of those around us.

How can we achieve this state? It is so difficult to remember our intrinsic value in our struggle to do more and accomplish more. It is easy to forget that some of the most awe-inspiring gifts life has to offer are, in fact, free. It is easy to forget that Grace cannot be earned.

In that small fact, we learn humility. Despite that we are not and cannot be perfect we still receive Grace. Regardless of time and effort, there are things we will never accomplish. Recognizing this can leave us feeling vulnerable, powerless, and small. Humility can be unsettling but it also lends a sense of confidence and peace: it is ok to be imperfect.

By letting go of the pressure we put on ourselves to earn and deserve all that is good in life, perhaps we can learn to see unmerited favor all around us. Finding peace with our smallness can open us up to a world of wonders and help us find a state of Grace.

Questions for Discussion and Discernment on your own, or with each other:

1. What is your story of grace received? Granted?
2. How do you practice humility?
3. How does humility compare to confidence?
4. How do you know you're ready for humility?
5. What prevents you from feeling grace?
6. How does the UUAC support or enable your humility and your grace?
7. Is service an act of humility?
8. How does humility enhance your experience of life?

Quotes and short readings:

Everything that slows us down and forces patience, everything that sets us back into the slow circles of nature, is a help. Gardening is an instrument of grace."

—May Sarton

There is nothing noble in being superior to your fellow man; true nobility is being superior to your former self.

—Ernest Hemingway

This month's theme was composed by Masha Hoeffy, Julien Lafleur, and the Worship Associates.

Please recycle after November 29, 2015

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On a day when the wind is perfect, the sail just needs to open and the world is full of beauty.
On a day when the wind is perfect, the sail just needs to open and the love starts. Today is
such a day. Grace breaks through. Grace fills the open sail, and brings transforming love. Grace
is not so amazing. Grace is not so rare. Grace is everyday. Today is such a day.

—Rumi

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few.

—Shunryu Suzuki. *Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind*.

Men occupy very little space on Earth...Grown-ups, of course, won't believe you. They're
convinced they take up much more room.

—Antoine de Saint-Exupery. *The Little Prince*.

A man in the view of absolute goodness, adores, with total humility. Every step so downward,
is a step upward. The man who renounces himself, comes to himself by so doing.

—Ralph Waldo Emerson. *Transcendentalism and other Addresses*

As swimmers dare
to lie face to sky
and water bears them,
as hawks rest upon air
and air sustains them,
so would I learn to attain
freefall, and float
into Creator Spirit's
deep embrace,
knowing no effort earns
that all surrounding grace.
—Denise Levertov

Thanks to beasts and birds and flowers and bees.
Thanks to earth and air and sun and trees.
In all we receive, may we learn to give.
In all we do, may we help life live.
—Rev. Dr. Lynn Ungar

When we recognize our place in an immensity of light
years and in the passage of ages, when we grasp the
intricacy, beauty, and subtlety of life, then that
soaring feeling, that sense of elation and humility
combined, is surely spiritual.
—Carl Sagan

If anyone tells you that a certain person speaks ill of you, do not make excuses about what is
said of you but answer, "He was ignorant of my other faults, else he would not have mentioned
these alone."

—Epictetus

Be careful not to mistake insecurity and inadequacy for humility! Humility has nothing to do
with the insecure and inadequate! Just like arrogance has nothing to do with greatness!

—C. JoyBell C.

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