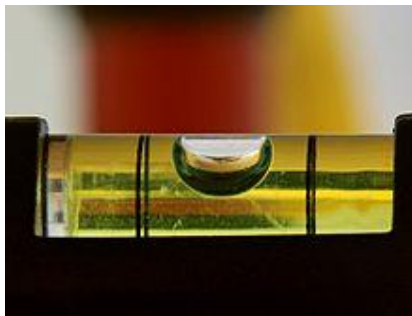


Patterns of Grace and Gratitude Week 5

Monday, May 10



“Spirit Level” Used by carpenters, brick layers, do it yourselfers and stone masons”

Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.’ Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?’ The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’ Matthew 25:34-40

Our Wesleyan heritage teaches about prevenient, justifying and sanctifying grace. Our lives are a continuum of this process of being “graced by God”. Prevenient grace happens before we are aware of it; God is loving us and longing for us to notice God. This is evidence of God’s presence. When we finally notice that God has been with us all along, it is heartwarming and comforting that we have not been alone. At this point our response is gratitude.

The next phase shows up as justifying grace. One way of thinking about this is lining up with God like a plumb line or a level. It makes sure things are in place for the best structure and support possible. So in justifying grace God “pardons” our inaccuracies of judgment, outright sin (missing the mark), or living totally oblivious to how we are harming others or the world. It is fascinating that one of the terms for a tool used in building is “spirit level” as shown in the image above.

The final phase of this concept of grace is sanctifying grace. At this point, we have asked for forgiveness for our wrongdoings and falling short of God’s imagined purpose and life for us. We are self-reflective. We realize that to live this life of faith, it is not just for us. God doesn’t do this act of forgiveness just so we can feel better or get to heaven. We are living the sanctified life when we look around us to see where God’s love is needed. In this way we are continued to be honed and molded for God’s purposes in the world. We become fully human, with God’s image within us, our eyes open to what is around us and a heart full of gratitude. The scripture listed here are folks who are being sanctified by grace.

Understanding grace is an intellectual exercise, but living grace is allowing our hearts to be open and receptive to God’s leading. How does that feel for you? Who can help companion you on this journey?