****

**Series: Amazing Grace / Ephesians 2:1-10**

**Part 3 – ‘grace…a gift from God’ (verse 8-9) / Message notes**

Sunday 15th March, 2015 / Speaker: Pastor Tim Symons (East Elim)

**Introduction**

I think that most of us struggle at some stage to come to terms with this concept of Grace. Grace is not something that we see very often in the world around us.

The world tells us that there is no such thing as a “free lunch”, that there is “no gain with no pain”, that we will only “reap a harvest if we are willing to sow some seeds”.

And the Bible is also clear that we need to sow seeds; that we need to do what we can do and let God do what only He can do. However God’s economy works so different to ours.

God says that if we just have faith the size of a mustard seed we will be able to move the mountains of fear, bankruptcy, bad relationships, negative mind sets and sin from our lives.

God says that when we sow seed into his Kingdom we will receive a 30, 60 or 100 fold return on what we invest. You see, our God is an extravagant God, He is an over-the-top God, He is an extremely generous God.

And it is with this understanding that we can start to get an understanding of what Grace truly means. Yet in spite of this there are 2 stories in the Bible that still mess with my brain.

**Story Number One: Criminal on the Cross**

The first one is found in **Luke 23** while Jesus is hanging on the cross, dying for the sins of the world and in **verses 39-43** it says:

You see “**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**.”

**Story Number Two: Woman Caught in Adultery**

Found in **John chapter 8**

**Matthew 10:8** says “… **freely you have received, freely give**.” So as followers of Jesus Christ; as disciples following in the footsteps of our Rabbi; being called and charged to be imitators of Him: we are faced with what I call “**The Challenges of Grace**”.

Let’s briefly explore 3 of the challenges of Grace today.

1. **The Sinfulness of Judgement**

How do we look at the actions of others? Do we stand in judgement of the alcoholic, the drug addict, the atheist, the gay couple down the road? Or do we show the grace of Jesus who left the beauty and purity of heaven to become friends with prostitutes and thieves.

1. **The Freedom from Performance**
2. **Understanding of God’s Unconditional Love**

Prodigal Son v Older Brother – Luke chapter 15

**In Summary**