



Prevenient Grace

Whether it takes place quickly – as in a sudden conversion experience – or gradually – as people find nurture in the church-God’s grace is the key to understanding transformation. John Wesley helped us to understand grace by naming three aspects of grace.

Wesley understood grace as God’s active presence in our lives. This presence is not dependent on human actions or human response. It is a gift – a gift that is always available, but that can be refused.

One of the important things that set us apart as United Methodists from other denominations is our understanding of God’s grace.

Prevenient grace is the divine love of God that “goes before,” preceding any and all of our conscious impulses and actions. This is the initiative of God pursuing a relationship with us, urging us to turn towards God (repent) so that we may be delivered from the bondage of sin and death in order to have abundant life here and now. We need God’s initiative as our human state prevents us from being able to turn to God on our own.

All of God’s grace is prevenient in that God always takes the initiative in offering grace to us. In fact, God’s grace surrounds us and reaches out to us all the days of our lives! Here are some Bible passages that help us understand God’s prevenient grace:

Psalm 23:6 “Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever.”

1 John 4: 19 “We love because he first loved us.”