JM Jason Mayfield

SERMON OUTLINE FOR PASTORS

HAVE A GRACE CONFESSION

What Do You Say About Yourself?

> Grace should always be the takeaway. Like John the Baptist, confess honestly what you are not, then anchor your confession in how Jesus Christ relates to you, and come boldly before the throne of grace.

MAIN TEXT
John 1:1-30

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SERIES
Our Father, Week 4 of 4

BY
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AT A GLANCE

THE MESSAGE

1. John the Baptist is a type of the old covenant, the law and the prophets; he is not the light but bears witness to the light (John 1:6-9).
2. Jesus is the only word of the new covenant and the great clarifier, so the Scriptures are read through Him rather than searched to find Him (Hebrews 1:1-2).
3. Jesus is full of grace and truth, and from His fullness we receive grace upon grace; when truth starts to sound like the law, it has been misread, because grace should always be the takeaway (John 1:14-17).
4. Get a confession from the Word: John confessed and did not deny, and a grace confession admits what you are not while anchoring in how Jesus Christ relates to you (John 1:19-23).
5. Against every "neither, nor" accusation, point past yourself to the One whose sandals you are not worthy to untie; your confession will produce, the next day (John 1:24-29).
6. Grace confessions for prayer: I am the righteousness of God in Christ; God has already given me more than I will ask; nothing I do today is more powerful than the finished work; everything I'm not, Christ is in me; Jesus has made up the difference; I am worthy, qualified, and significant enough to experience more in life.



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youtu.be/OJyupPrE4Zw



READ THE ARTICLE

jasonmayfield.com/messages/have-a-grace-confession

PREACHING NOTES

Before You Preach

This message closes the four-week "Our Father" series inside the larger series on the Lord's Prayer. The first three weeks filled people up with a revelation of grace: insight brings manifestation, obedience to the Law does not produce, and doing flows from believing. This week puts handlebars on it. It ends with six grace confessions people can pray every day, starting the moment they say, "Our Father."

The message has two halves. In the first, read John 1 with the Word as the Scriptures: John the Baptist stands for the old covenant (the law and the prophets) and Jesus is the only word of the new covenant. In the second, shift gears and read John the Baptist as a person, an example of a man with an honest confession that points to Jesus. Tell the congregation when you shift.

Put the confessions in the sermon notes or on screen so people can capture them.

These notes were built from the transcript of the message. There were no original preaching notes.

Introduction

Recite the Lord's Prayer together (Matthew 6:9-13).

For three weeks we have talked about grace upon grace and the gospel of the finished work of Jesus Christ at work in the believer. Today, take that idea floating in the clouds, grab hold of it, and bring it down into your life so you see some fruit from the gospel of grace.

Title: **Have a Grace Confession.**

1. The Word and the Witness

> JOHN 1:1-5 ESV
>
> [1] In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. [4] In him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

The Word is Jesus, made flesh among us, as we will read. But for a few minutes, read this passage with the Word as the Word: the Scriptures, the Word of God. That is where today's revelation comes through.

> **JOHN 1:6-8** ESV
>
> [6] There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. [7] He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light, that all might believe through him. [8] He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

John is not the light. He came to bear witness about the light. Some thought John was the Messiah, but he was not the fulfillment of that prophecy. He testifies of the One who is.

Think of John the Baptist as a type of the old covenant. He is the final voice of the old covenant, the culmination of the law and the prophets, the exclamation point just after Malachi ends. Symbolically, John is Genesis through Malachi: the law, the prophets and the fathers, all pointing to a true light. They are not the light. Confuse them with the light and your faith will be disappointed.

> **JOHN 1:9** ESV
>
> [9] The true light, which gives light to everyone, was coming into the world.

At this point Jesus is not yet revealed in His ministry. He is somewhere in the shadows. (Optional, as preached: building birdhouses at Joseph and Sons.)

> **JOHN 1:10-13** ESV
>
> [10] He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him. [11] He came to his own, and his own people did not receive him. [12] But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, [13] who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God.

"He was in the world, and the world was made through him, yet the world did not know him." But to all who received Him, who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God. Have the congregation tell their neighbor, "You look like a child of God."

Two words. If John is the final word of the old covenant, then Jesus is not the first word or the last word of the new covenant. He is the only word of the new covenant, whose blood "speaks a better word than the blood of Abel" (Hebrews 12:24). On one side is the word spoken through the law, the prophets and the fathers. On the other is the word spoken by the finished work, the blood of Christ.

2. Jesus, the Great Clarifier

When we want to know about God, we turn to the Bible. But if you flip open to a random page that doesn't make Jesus clear, you can start to believe things about God that aren't true in our present place in history.

Jesus is a lot. You can't put Him in a box. They tried a tomb, and that didn't work either. But He is also, in the simplest terms, **the great clarifier.**

> **HEBREWS 1:1-2** ESV
>
> [1] Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, [2] but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

God spoke in many ways through many voices, but in these last days He has spoken through His Son. When we come to the Word, Jesus is the lens. If the devil can keep you from reading the Bible, the gospel, your salvation, your blessing and your sufficiency through the lens of Jesus Christ, you will miss everything.

There is a common saying that the Old Testament is Jesus concealed and the New Testament is Jesus revealed. That trains us to go to the Law, Genesis, David, the prophets or the Psalms and look forward to find Jesus. You don't have to. God has already spoken by His Son. You don't have to go to the Psalms to find Jesus; we know where He is. Instead, **look through Jesus** and see revelation in those old covenant promises.

There are great stories in the Old Testament, and we preach them. But there comes a point where you go to Romans, Galatians, Hebrews or John, because Jesus is enough. However deep the story, Jesus is sufficient.

RIGHTLY DIVIDING THE WORD

> **2 TIMOTHY 2:15** ESV
>
> [15] Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.

The ESV says "rightly handling." Older translations say "rightly dividing," which is also a good rendering of the Greek. Either way, know what you are dealing with when you open the Scriptures.

Read the old covenant apart from Jesus and you can land under all kinds of condemnation. Paul says "the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin" (Galatians 3:22). You read about Nehemiah on the wall, "I am doing a great work and I cannot come down" (Nehemiah 6:3), and the problem is, you come down sometimes. Get the right pressure on you, on the right day, and you are on the ground. Half the Bible tells you, "Live up, or you'll be cursed."

But read it through the lens of Jesus Christ, and you don't have to be enough. You can come boldly before the throne of grace because Jesus has been sufficient on your behalf.

Today is about receiving grace from the Word and using grace as your access to God. Not "the man upstairs," not a small God you've built in your head, but the Creator of the universe. If you want an audience with Him, here is how.

3. Full of Grace and Truth

> **JOHN 1:14** ESV
>
> [14] And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

Have the congregation say three words: **full, grace, truth.**

> **JOHN 1:15** ESV
>
> [15] (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'")

He who comes after me ranks before me. **Jesus has the final word.** The whole Bible is inspired, authoritative, inerrant, infallible and immutable. But there is a final word on Exodus, on Judges, on the Psalms and on Malachi. That word is Jesus Christ, made manifest among us.

> **JOHN 1:16-18** ESV
>
> [16] For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. [17] For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. [18] No one has ever seen God; God the only Son, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known.

Now go back to verse 14. What is He full of? **Grace and truth.** And verse 16: from His fullness, what have we received? **Grace upon grace.**

He is full of grace and truth, and from His fullness we have received grace upon grace. This matters because condemnation preaching has hijacked John 1. It says, "Sure, you're saved by grace, but you also need truth," and somewhere along the way "truth" starts to mean the Law: not that you need grace, but that you need to act better and get your stuff together.

That is not what the Bible says. The Bible doesn't say the remedy for your problem is grace plus truth, as if they were two separate substances. From His grace, you get grace. From His truth, you get grace.

4. Grace Should Always Be the Takeaway

If you write one thing down, write this: grace should always be the takeaway. When you are in the Word, grace should always be the takeaway.

You can walk away from the Bible feeling less than, like you don't live up, and with good reason: you don't. But One lived up on your behalf. His name is Jesus Christ. He has given you full access to the Father and a full status of righteousness. You get angry too fast, you're bad with money, you can't cook, you drive too slow or too fast. I know. But there is One who is enough, and His righteousness is imputed to you. That is the doctrinal way of saying, "Baby, it's yours."

Whenever truth is really revealed, you will find it on the grace side of the Bible.

We like to "lay the hammer down," usually on people who don't look like us. It isn't hard to look around a room and guess everyone's issues. (Optional, as preached: "Is he a prophet? No, he's got Facebook.") But truth isn't making sure everybody gets their comeuppance, or showing everyone how little they add up.

The Bible says what it says. We are not changing it, and there is a standard. But the Law is there for a reason: not to keep the believer in condemnation, but to lead people to Jesus. "The law is good, if one uses it lawfully" (1 Timothy 1:8), and "the law is not laid down for the just but for the lawless and disobedient" (1 Timothy 1:9). So when truth starts to sound like the Law, like legalism, condemnation or judgment, be careful. "The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

Everything you need, you can find through a new covenant lens.

5. What Do You Say About Yourself?

Shift gears now. Stop reading John as a type of the old covenant, and see him as a person and an example.

> **JOHN 1:19-23** ESV
>
> [19] And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" [20] He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ." [21] And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" And he answered, "No." [22] So they said to him, "Who are you? We need to give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?" [23] He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

You've got to get a confession from the Word. Write it in big, bold marker and hang it on your front door.

Many Pentecostals believe in a faith confession, in speaking faith words. But many speak faith words while denying reality. John "confessed, and did not deny, but confessed" (John 1:20). There is no merit in having a disease and acting like it doesn't exist, as if you could out-think it. You need the blood of Jesus to touch you. You can have a faith confession that the cross is enough for the illness you are walking in without pretending you aren't sick.

Confess honestly what you are not. I'm probably not qualified to be up here, to do this job, even to pray. I won't deny it. (As preached, Pastor Jason was candid here: a short fuse, a low tolerance level, a tendency to isolate. When you feel your pastor's love, "that's not me, that's Jesus.") Everybody has something that disqualifies them. So what? You don't have to pretend it doesn't exist.

Illustration: the veil. A couple of weeks ago we talked about the veil over Moses' face (2 Corinthians 3:13). Moses kept his face veiled so the people would not see that the glory was fading. Churches do the same. People get upset about hypocrites because once in a blue moon somebody's veil falls off and we

find out not everybody in church is perfect. Where did we get the notion that we have to have it all together to come? Perfect people don't make good testimonies.

So: **"What do you say about yourself?"** (John 1:22).

John answers by finding himself in Isaiah 40:3: "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said" (John 1:23). Find a confession in the Word that speaks of who you really are. For example: "They are planted in the house of the LORD; they flourish in the courts of our God" (Psalm 92:13). Say it over yourself: I am planted in the house of the Lord, and I flourish in the courts of my God.

Anchor your confession in how Jesus relates to you. John, a type of the old covenant, looked back to Isaiah and pulled out a confession of how the coming One related to him. I know God so loved the world. I know it's for everybody. I know we have been sanctified "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10). But how does Jesus relate to **you**?

This is not about your testimony. You don't need a prayer breakthrough, a healing testimony or a deliverance testimony first. What does the Bible say Jesus did for you? Start confessing that, and you'll probably end up with all the testimonies.

6. Neither, Nor: One Who Comes After Me

> **JOHN 1:24-28** ESV
>
> [24] (Now they had been sent from the Pharisees.) [25] They asked him, "Then why are you baptizing, if you
> are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?" [26] John answered them, "I baptize with water, but
> among you stands one you do not know, [27] even he who comes after me, the strap of whose sandal I
> am not worthy to untie." [28] These things took place in Bethany across the Jordan, where John was
> baptizing.

These things happened in a real place, at a real time, while John was doing what he was called to do.

"Why are you baptizing, if you are **neither** the Christ, **nor** Elijah, **nor** the Prophet?" When you step out to do anything, your life will be a confrontation with everything you are not.

- Start a business selling bracelets, and you'll find out you can make a great bracelet but QuickBooks scares you.
- Preachers with decades in the pulpit still get nervous: "What if this is the one that doesn't work?" What if it's the one that does?
- **Illustration: the lawn business.** You want to start a lawn business, but you don't have the equipment, you don't know many people, and you don't know how to invoice. Go ask the six neighbors closest to you, "For $30 a month, can I cut your grass?" Now you've done something. You don't have to talk about everything you can't do.

If no one else is saying "neither, nor" to you, you are saying it to yourself in the mirror: not good enough, not thin enough, too tall, too short, "if I just had what that person has." And that person is living in the same torment.

John's answer: "I baptize with water." This is what I do. "But among you stands one you do not know." I am not worthy to untie His sandal. He is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit and fire.

Use the confession you get from the Word against every accusation thrown at you. And the accusation that this whole series is aimed at is this one: **you're not good enough to pray.** Not holy enough, not righteous enough, you don't serve enough, you don't give enough. Don't look at me. What I'm doing in the prayer time isn't that significant, because there is One whose sandals I'm unworthy to untie. I'm not in here by myself. I've got the Lord Jesus' credit card.

Illustration: the pastor's season (as preached). Pastor Jason spoke candidly about the church's coming vision for 2027: he has given the church about everything he has, and what takes it to the next level would require him to be a different person. He can keep trying to change, reverse his whole strategy, or say, "I baptize with water, but there is One whose sandals I'm not worthy to untie." There is a source outside himself he can call on. Then he turned it to the congregation: "I'm not talking about the church right now. I'm talking about you."

Disqualification and condemnation have flooded in on someone today, even if you look like you have it together. **You need a grace confession.** Speak the Word over yourself until you believe it.

7. The Next Day

John's confession pointed to Jesus, to the finished work of the One who came after him. Then verse 29: **"The next day."** Have the congregation say it.

> **JOHN 1:29-30** ESV
>
> [29] The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! [30] This is he of whom I said, 'After me comes a man who ranks before me, because he was before me.'

Not next year, not next decade: the next day. Have some impatient faith. I want next day breakthrough, and it won't be because of me. It will be the Lord.

Your confession will produce. I'm giving you these confessions because they will work, not because they might work. If you take them, you will see Jesus at work in your life. Maybe the next day, maybe the next twenty minutes, maybe next week, but it works.

8. Grace Confessions for Prayer

Here are the handlebars. When you get into the prayer place and say, "Our Father," let that be your trigger to confess these over your life before you go any further.

1. I am the righteousness of God in Christ. Not in myself, my behavior or my doing. Because I'm in Him, I am righteous enough to pray. God made Him to be sin who knew no sin, "so that in him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

2. God has already given me more than anything I will ask Him for.

> ROMANS 8:32 ESV
>
> 32 He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?

Don't shrink your request before the Lord. If you need a car, don't ask for "transportation." Nothing I am asking for is bigger than what He has already given me.

3. Nothing I will do today is more powerful than the finished work of Jesus Christ. It works both ways. Nothing you do will produce more in your life than the finished work; it is your ace in the hole. And nothing you fail at today is more powerful than the finished work. You don't start back at zero.

4. Everything I'm not, Christ is in me. You have insufficiencies, but Jesus is that in you.

> 1 JOHN 4:4 ESV
>
> 4 Little children, you are from God and have overcome them, for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.

5. Jesus has made up the difference between who I am and what I do. Romans 7 is Paul's frustration with his own covetousness: every time he tries to do better, he does worse. It ends, "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" (Romans 7:25). And then:

> ROMANS 8:1 ESV
>
> 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

6. I am worthy, qualified and significant enough to experience more in life, because I am in Christ. Someone will call this a New Age affirmation. It is the Word of God working on your behalf: "those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17).

PRAYING IT

Model it: "Our Father. Not just Jesus' Father, not just their Father: my Father. Today, I am the righteousness of God in Christ. God has already given me more than anything I'm about to ask for. Nothing I do today will outrun or undo the finished work of Jesus Christ. Everything I'm not, Jesus is in me. Jesus has made up the difference between who I am and what I do; I will say the wrong thing in a meeting or to my family, but Christ is the difference maker. And because I'm in Christ, I'm worthy, qualified and significant enough to receive everything I'm about to talk to You about. Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name."

Conclusion

Next in the series: “hallowed be Thy name” and the power of the name of the Lord. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower; the righteous man runs into it and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

These confessions position you to take the posture Hebrews calls for: “Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace” (Hebrews 4:16). They give you boldness to step into the throne room like you belong there and make your requests known, instead of groveling like you don’t belong.

Illustration: doing business with the Lord. I used to walk the beach every morning, and I called it doing business with the Lord. With these confessions, you come prepared. Now you can do business with the Lord.

Close with praise for the Word received.



ABOUT

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Pastor Jason Mayfield is the Senior Pastor of Citylight Church in Saraland, Alabama, an author, and the creator of POWER 27. He has given more than 20 years to the local church and helps pastors and ministry leaders lead BIG.

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