

2017 NL3 WK36 Acts 15:1-18[19-21]
17-05-14 5th Sunday of Easter

God's beloved people, grace and peace to you in the name of our crucified and risen savior, Jesus
Christ.....Amen.....

1. How does your family make tacos? What is a real taco?
 - a. What kind of tortilla – Hard or soft shell? corn or flour?
 - b. Beans or no beans? Refried or pinto?
 - c. Kind of meat? Hamburger/spice, shredded beef, pork, chicken, lamb, tongue, sausage, fish?
 - d. Cheese?
 - e. Lettuce..., tomato..., olives..., onions..., peppers?
 - f. Sour cream?
 - g. Cilantro?
 - h. Salsa – tomato or mango or tomatillo; fresh or from a jar?
 - i. Guacamole?
 - j. Fresh lime?
 - k. A genuine, orthodox taco in Mexico: actually great variety
 - i. Soft Corn tortilla
 - ii. Some kind of meat – not hamburger
 - iii. Options – onion, homemade hot sauce, salsa, peppers, radish, lime, cilantro
 - iv. What is called fajita in many US Mexican restaurants
2. What is a real Christian?
 - a. The early church was having difficult discussions about this.
 - b. Some folks from Jerusalem travelled all the way to northern Syria to Antioch to make sure that they were observing the Jewish laws, especially circumcision, in order to be “true Christians.”
 - c. Paul and Barnabas thought differently – so off to Jerusalem for a church council.
3. In Jerusalem
 - a. We hear from Pharisees/Christians – YOU MUST.... Be circumcised!! It was difficult to sort out what was essential and what was optional, or flexible, or worshipper's choice, or whatever strengthens your faith in Jesus.
 - b. But for the Pharisees, it was even tougher because of all the years of emphasis on trying to perfectly keep the law of God.....
 - c. This council was a first attempt at trying to figure out what the life of faith looked like..... How do you make YOUR tacos??!!
 - d. We hear from Peter – referring to his time with Cornelius in chapter 10 – Roman Gentile who prayed to God.
 - e. We hear about Barnabas and Paul – though they are not quoted – but they give a ministry report about what God had done among the Gentiles.
 - f. We hear from James – giving the council's decision which turns out to be theological double-speak.
4. In Jerusalem we hear phrases like...
 - a. “*Hearing the word they became believers*” – God's word works belief in us all, even the Gentiles.
 - b. We heard... “*GOD testified to them by Giving them the holy spirit*” – “they were good enough for God!!” And God chose the Gentiles
 - c. “*No distinction between them and us*” – if God chooses them, too, as well as us.... then God has taken down ALL dividers, all categories.

- d. *“Putting God to the test with yokes we couldn’t bear”* – not that the law was bad, but that WE/the Jews were unable to pull with the law... for good. WE couldn’t even keep it; how can we demand that the Gentiles do?
 - e. *“Saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus”* – because of their inability to keep up their end of the yoke, only Jesus could save – it’s on God.
5. *Saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus*
- a. There it is!
 - b. No salvation without the grace of Jesus. He did it! For you!
6. And you would think that would be the end of salvation and the beginning of life in Jesus.
7. BUT..... the big “but” of faith = we are undone by grace
- a. We are totally and completely dismantled by the grace of God.
 - b. We don’t know what to do with it.
 - c. As much as we can’t keep the law, we also have difficulty living in grace.
 - d. Humans just can’t handle it. We think there’s GOT to be more to it.
8. Need an example?
- a. *“We are saved by the grace of the Lord Jesus....., and all we have to do is....”*
 - b. I don’t know how many times I’ve heard that with something tacked on to the end.
9. We are undone by grace
- a. Even James and the elders felt the need to add to grace.
 - b. *“we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God....”* – all grace!!!
 - c. *“BUT we should write them a letter with these 4 things to abstain from....”*
10. We are undone by grace
- a. Because after grace is announced..... after the gospel-of-salvation-won-because-of-what-Jesus-has-done.... is preached..... after your heart is warmed by the gospel.... WHAT then??
 - b. WHAT then???
 - c. Well, all you have to do is..... Nuh-uh!!
 - d. Live in the grace.
11. THIS IS THE MEAT HERE!!!
- a. Live.... Just live.
 - b. But if we live with a few, maybe even 4 very helpful rules that MUST be kept, our living is centered on our own lives..... Centered on the false idol of thinking that we have anything at all to add to the winning of our salvation that Jesus has ALREADY accomplished.
 - c. PLUS, *there is no distinction – all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, failing at keeping the law isn’t a deal breaker – it points you to your need for forgiveness and shows you that you are just like everyone else – sinners saved only through the grace of the Lord Jesus.*
 - d. Buuuut.....// living in grace, in the security that our Lord Jesus has accomplished everything that will ever need to be accomplished..... THEN our lives are lived outside of ourselves!!!!
 - e. Our lives are lived for the good of grace.... for the good of the gospel of salvation in Jesus.... for the good of God’s kingdom here... now!
12. But we are done and undone by grace.
- Amen.....