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Speaker: Matt Eckert – Executive Lead Pastor
Scripture: Ephesians 2:1-10

Lord God, as we open up Scripture, as we engage the text, Jesus we believe that all Scripture points to Jesus. So Lord, in many ways every time we open the Bible it needs to lead us to the cross. God, open our hearts to what You would have for us this morning. May we be willing to perhaps hear the word of encouragement that we need to lift us up, perhaps to hear the word of challenge that we need to move us forward. But whatever it is, we give You the honor and the glory that we can be here today. Amen.

It is September 2nd, right? Rhythms begin again perhaps for many of you. I even talk to people who are retired and they say there is still something about September that kind of new rhythms begin even though it's just perhaps another day. Maybe it's just our North American culture but there are certain times of the year, aren't there, where something in us says, "Okay, now I am going to make a change." Isn't that right?

In reality we can wake up any day of the week, any day of the year, and decide today will be the day. But something in our culture, September is one of those times, maybe January another one, where something in us says, "Okay, now I am going to make that change." But the reality is, right, we all know, if we don't make the change by, let's say, mid-October, we say, "I'll wait till January." And we'll figure it out then, right? There's something about this. What will your fall look like?

Have you ever had someone ask you about what you believe? They look at you and they say, "Well, if you say you believe that, then why don't you do this?" Ever had that challenge? You say you believe that, but you know maybe a friend has said that to you. "You say you believe in our friendship but..." Maybe you have had your spouse say that to you.

"You say you love me but you no longer bring me flowers like you used to, so I'm not really sure anymore."

You know our faith is expressed in our actions, is it not? What we believe is always expressed in what we choose to do. When we look at the fall – I'm excited about the next series and I in a way kind of want to set us up for the next five weeks. Pastor Paul will begin next week. We are going to look at five key chapters in the Bible. What do we believe? What are the foundational pieces? There are two in the Old Testament and three in the New Testament. But it's my hope and my desire that perhaps for many of us, we renew that we really do believe.

We were privileged yesterday to host an Ethiopian church here for a baptism. Here is a great picture of just the youth who were baptized. There were about 14 people that got baptized. It was great; Ron Burdock, our global mentor, actually connects with the pastor of this Ethiopian church here in London. They said, "We need a place for a baptism." He said, "100% - come on over." And they, over a four hour period, had a service and baptisms and food and just a big party here and we were grateful that we could host them. But here are ten youth that have chosen to step in and say, "My faith means something. I am going to declare it to every one of my family and friends. I am moving forward on this."

At North Park we have a baptism coming up in October. Maybe you have not been baptized and we need you to be in the tank. We need your story – the community needs your story just as much as you need to share your story and to declare, "I am in – I am in."

So I want us to look at the beauty of something today, of Scripture that is maybe familiar with many of you, that talks about the foundations of our faith, but the whole idea that God is also birthing something in us because of our faith. I think too often though that our faith caps what God is trying to birth in us, what He has put in us. It's a journey though. We have to continually make decisions, to keep saying, "Okay, this next season I'm stepping in again, I am going to keep stepping in. It's this ongoing process."

There is a great quote here I want to read from a gal named Marjorie Thompson. Here's what she says about that journey we are always on. She says,

"God's Spirit is continually challenging, changing and maturing us. Although we may be able to point to a single and decisive conversion experience, remaining faithful always involves a journey of continual conversion. It can never be said in our lifetime that we have arrived. The spiritual life invites a process of transformation in the life of a believer. It is a process of growing and gratitude, trust, obedience, humility, compassion, service, joy. As we deepen our relationship with God we begin to choose God's ways and purposes as our own. Spiritual growth is essentially a work of divine grace with which we are called to participate."

It is this ongoing peace and as we look to the fall, what is that next step that God perhaps is calling you into? Will you participate in it?

I want us to look at a passage in the book of Ephesians Chapter 2, Verses 1-10. And if you have been in church world for a while, if you have been in Sunday school and Bible studies, if you have been in some Scripture memory programs, you are probably very familiar with these verses. They are very common. This may be totally new to you and I hope that as we go through these something will rise up. There is something packed so tightly in these few verses that I think is so amazing. I want to read these first verses, 1-10 through, and then I want to more focus on Verses 8, 9 and 10 for this morning. But let's see what it has to say and let's see where this can take us this morning.

Ephesians Chapter 2:1

Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live in sin just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil, the commander of the powers in the unseen world.

Now this already starts off strange, doesn't it? If this is new to you – you are going, "What is going on here, this thing about sin and disobedience and the devil and unseen world," it almost seems like the beginning of a sci-fi book, doesn't it?

Yet this is what we believe. There is this thing called sin that tears us apart and wants to take us down different paths and there is this unseen realm not that we can touch, feel, smell or taste, but it exists. There is a battle going on beyond what we can see and it's fighting for our very lives.

It goes on.

He (the devil) is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God's anger just like everyone else.

And right away it's like whoa God and anger; how does that fit? You know, I thought God was this God of love.

You know I loved our series last year – for 31 weeks where we looked at the entire arc of Scripture because I think we were able to reveal more of the beauty of the entirety and character of God, right? Because we all, if we admit it, we all have a version of God we follow, right? None of us has the full picture. Maybe your version of God actually is a God of anger, so when I say that you are saying, "of course, like, this is who God is, just always mad, He's always pounding His fist; that's who God is".

In reality I think most of us want to believe in the grandfather God, right? That's the Grandfather who sits in the rocking chair and you know, hands out mints and if you need ten bucks He will just give it to you and pats you on the back, "You'll be good." Right, the Grandfather God. We want that God, right? Turns His face the other way when we go

and do something else because He just, the Grandfather, just loves us right? Doesn't matter what we do. But there are many facets to who God is and if we are going to step out and worship God we have to embrace the complexity of all that He is. And yes, there is a God who at times is angry. That's a holy, beautiful anger of justice but it is anger.

Well it goes on in Verse 4:

But God is so rich in mercy and he loved us so much...

Now like we're getting whiplash right? We've got the God of anger but now we have got the God of love and mercy and how do all these things fit together?

He loved us so much that even though we were dead because of our sins he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. It is only by God's grace that you have been saved. For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness towards us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with (who?) Christ Jesus.

If you ever doubt or wonder I just want you to know that everything around North Park centers around the person of Jesus Christ. Everything always points to Jesus. That's who we will always be about. All of Scripture always points: who is this Jesus character? It is all about Christ, Christ crucified, raised from the dead. Everything pivots around that.

But we go on to Verse 8:

God saved you by his grace when you believed – and you can't take credit for this, it is a gift from God – salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

There is something so beautiful in these verses that sets up the foundations of who we are. Our faith though will be revealed and our actions, and there is something that when you believe this that something God puts in you and you become His masterpiece to pull out.

Let me first camp on Verses 8 and 9 because they set up this thing so well. I think there are three words that we need to get our heads around to make sure we know what is taking place.

The words are simply: First is *saved*.

The second word is *grace*.

And the third word is *believe*, or some versions will use the word *faith*. These three words I think are the key ones we have to get our heads around. You see he says in Verse 8, "You have been saved by grace when you believe," but here is the reality: in order for you to be saved, you have to believe you actually need to be saved from something, right?

If you don't think you need to be saved, if you think well, I'm pretty good, what is there to be saved from, you do not continue on the journey. Do you actually believe you need to be saved from something? Or do you believe, well, um, I'm pretty good, like, it's okay, right, like surely God wouldn't...yet as followers of Christ we believe that in the beginning of time this gap rose, and Pastor Paul will connect next week with a story of Adam and Eve, probably a very familiar story. But something happened and we have this separation, this thing called sin, and we are not connecting with God, but something in us knows something is missing. We need to realize that we cannot close the gap; we need to be saved.

But if you have been a follower of Jesus for a while, have you lost the understanding that you have been saved from something? Is it just language?

You know, what does sin do? I read one theologian this week that summarized what sin did to us. It's these three things: he says first of all, **sin kills the innocence in us**, it kills the innocence in us. Maybe as a kid, or one of your kids, you know, your kids are going through life, it's beautiful but then they hear something or whatever else and you say to

yourself, “My child has lost the innocence of childhood.” You’ve probably said that sometime, right? They just knew too much or whatever else. Sin kills the innocence, and we’ve all been there, right? Adam and Eve had the beautiful innocence of living with God in the garden and somehow sin just killed the beauty of that.

But secondly, this person said, **sin kills our ideals**, it kills our ideals. You know, we have this ideal way how a friendship should be and all of a sudden it doesn’t work like you thought. You have an ideal of how you move into a new house and how this neighborhood should look, right; it’s the ideal and it doesn’t work. You get married and you say your vows and both of you are looking at each other and you have this idealist vision as to what marriage is going to be and then somehow your sinfulness comes out and the ideals are killed and you wonder what happened. Sin does that.

But finally, **what he says is sin takes things that were designed for pleasure and it skews them and turns them into these addictions and things that aren’t as they were to be. It distorts them.**

You know sin will take the beauty of what God created to be an intimate sexual relationship between a husband and a wife in a marriage and then it takes it and it skews it and people then chase after all kinds of things. Before you know it you are just running after an addiction. What was meant for beauty, sin takes and twists it and distorts it and it’s no longer what it should be. That’s what sin does, and we’re separated from that, right? We need to be saved from that.

Do you still think you need to be saved from something?

The verse goes on to say, well, God says, “I will save you.” In this thing called grace – this is a word we use in church world quite a bit and what is this thing called grace? Maybe you just understand grace as something you say before a meal (Let’s say grace).

What is grace? You know we have a definition we say that grace is unmerited favor, whatever that means.

What is grace? So there is one example that I was given once and I know analogies all break down somewhere along the way but this one seems to work for me – maybe it will help you to understand what this crazy thing called grace is.

Perhaps (this is hypothetical) I am traveling 80 km an hour over the speed limit (hypothetically) down the 401 at 180. And the police catch me, and I pull over dutifully.

The officer comes to the car asks for “licence and registration please” and starts to write out a ticket and says, “Just so you know, you were doing 80 over; we are going to impound your car. There will be a \$10,000 fine. You are going to lose your licence for 2 years, just so you know all that stuff, because you were doing 80 over.” And the ticket is written out. The officer gives it to me and I need to sign that I agree, that I have received it. We would all agree I think that, that is justice, right? That’s justice. I deserve it and society has determined that that should be the fine. That’s justice. Wee would say, yeah that’s good.

Then after I have signed it and given it back to the officer, the officer looks at me and takes the ticket and tears it up and says, “You can go on your way now. I am not going to hand this in.” I would think we would agree that that is mercy, right? I did not get what I deserved. I should have had the ticket. I no longer have to pay the fine. That’s mercy.

But then the officer goes back to their car and comes back with this envelope and inside it is full of stacks of one hundred dollar bills – a hundred thousand dollars in the envelope. The officer simply says, “We’re grateful that you are a citizen of our place, of our country and we just want to give you a hundred thousand dollars.”

That is grace – that’s grace. Not only am I not being punished but I am actually getting so much beyond. That’s grace.

You see, as Christ steps in, not only are we not being punished for the sin that we have committed but we are actually getting eternity with God the Father forever and ever. We do not deserve it. Grace makes absolutely no logical sense, and that’s the kingdom of God – that’s grace, the beauty of

grace. Try to wrap your head around that- it doesn't compute with us as humans because that's not how we live our lives, is it? That's grace.

Can you accept the beauty of this? If you are not a follower of Jesus, does that not blow your mind? Like, why would you not want to step into this?

If you have been a follower of Christ for a long time, does grace still send tingles up your spine or has it become just a word you use and you're just bored with it, and you have lost the beauty of grace, that not only are you not punished for the sin that is in your life, but you get so much more. Have you lost the beauty of grace?

But how do we get grace? Well the Scripture here says we believe, we have faith, we just accept this. Now faith again is one of those strange things, right? Is it blind? Do we like okay I guess, and we just jump in, like, what is faith? I can write another book, oh by the way, here's a new religion; just believe it. Is faith this blind thing? I think sometimes we believe it is. So why not just believe any religion out there? I'm just believing by faith anyways, right?

I think our faith can be, let me call it an educated faith. Let me share with you for me – and these may not be for you, but for me, three reasons why I can have faith, three pieces of knowledge I guess I have grasped that I believe that I can jump and have this faith.

Here's the first one for me – it may not work for you: it is the Bible itself, the text we have. It is for me; it is so earthy, it's so pedestrian, it's so real, written over 1400 years by dozens of authors, kings, prophets, farmers, and a doctor. There's just such an eclecticism of the writers and yet somehow the story holds together in this beautiful way – something about that makes me say, "I think I can trust this text.

Because I compare it to other religious texts out there – one where a potential prophet goes into a cave and an angel speaks and says, "Write this down" and he comes out, voila, here is our text." Something about that makes me go, "hmm".

Or the prophet who God told, "Go up to this hill and dig and there will be some gold tablets in a language no one understands but you will, and write down the text, and voila, here is your scriptures. Something about that just doesn't land with me. That to me is a leap of faith.

But for me our Scriptures are so earthy and pedestrian, I think this is real, these are real people who walked and lived and engaged in life. For me that allows me to step in, in a more serious way.

Secondly though, the actual story itself is so not earthy, it's so heavenly that it makes no sense. That wrestles with me. You see every other religious context I have studied and looked at, it's always the god who is out there, the god who is angry, a god who you are chasing after, a god who you are trying to do enough good things, pray enough things, say the right things, and hopefully at the end of your life, hopefully you have done enough and this god will be okay with you. It is always distant.

That's the kind of god humans would create, right? Because that's the way we live our lives, isn't it? Everybody has to prove themselves to us for me to trust you, right? That's how we live our lives; that's a very human way of creating God. Whereas Christianity, it's the God who created us who is chasing after us, who chooses to come down in the most humblest of ways, a God who chooses to suffer in pain and agony for our sake. Does that make any human sense? A human would not create that. It is so out there. If I combined that with the earthiness of Scripture, I am going to have something for me that allows me to step in and have faith.

But thirdly for me, I can just say I have experienced God. There are times that God has shown up in my life – I'm not expecting it, I'm not asking for it, I am not looking for it, and all of a sudden it's like, "how did that just happen?" I can only declare that God is out there working.

No one of those three does it, but for me, when I bring all those three together, it allows me to have faith that what is going on here is true. I can step in and accept the beauty of grace and declare that I need to be saved. I can't do this on my own.

How does your faith stand these days? How does the beauty of grace land in your life these days? Does this still make your heart pound or is this still just a story that you learned as a kid or somewhere and it's just become boring and you have lost the beauty of grace? You don't think you really need to be saved because "surely I'm good enough – I'm good enough."

Well, I think it is no coincidence that the next set of verses follow right after this. You see, once we grasp the beauty of this, God says, "Oh, by the way, we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus so we can do the good things He planned for us." You know something happens when we are saved by grace that God, in essence, infuses us with His amazingness and He says, "I have put something in you, and now this thing needs to come out for the sake of the world. It needs to come out. You are My masterpiece."

The real word actually here is poem. "You are My poem. I am writing these beautiful prose about your life and they have to come out."

I think the degree to which we have faith and believe this is the degree to which this can come out.

You see if I don't believe I'm really saved from much and grace is just nothing major, I think it caps what God can bring out because I just don't really believe there is much in me to bring out.

Yet God has something beautiful in you. He has put it in you. He is writing this poem and this fall God has another verse He would love to write. He would love that verse to come out. Will you allow it to come out because of the beauty of grace?

There is some great research done by a guy at Fuller Seminary in California. He looked at leaders who finished well, Christian leaders. He tried to understand what did they do that allowed them to finish well, that they went strong to the end?

Now, when I talk about leaders, let me use it in the broadest of terms. If you are married with kids, you are leading in your home, okay?

If you live in a neighborhood, I think God calls you to lead what you can do there. I think in many ways we all have pieces we are called to step into and lead. Let me use the broadest term.

But as he looked at their lives he found that they went through four phases in their lives. Let me show this to you and maybe this may connect with you. So he said, first of all these leaders began with their foundation years. This is almost like zero to almost about 25 years old. This is your family of origin, your cultural context, the schools you went to, etc. etc. These are the cards you have been dealt to live life.

Now in reality if you are a parent, if you are a teacher, you are actually putting in foundation blocks for those you are connecting with, so be very intentional as to what cards you are giving them to play for their life. But secondly, after foundation, he said they went through another phase which he called their preparation years. This could be anywhere from 25 to 45 or 50. It's like, what? You could be here; you're 35 and going, "I'm preparing for what" right?

They still did a lot of amazing things but he said they were still preparing. God had something He was still writing in them for another phase.

The third phase, he said, was what he called their contribution years, that all the things that God had been birthing and building in them came out in these beautiful contributions, that these were their most perhaps impactful time. Here God was more concerned about them being developed and here God let them go and impact. Finally, their last phase was what he called their multiplication phase where they made sure that they were building back, so what they did multiplied beyond themselves.

It is interesting to ponder. But then here is the clincher. Here is what he said, as he looked at people all over the place. He says, in his words, "The majority of people (whatever that means), the majority of people, he said, never make it past the preparation years." He says, "Oh they live beyond those years, they age through these years, but they never actually move beyond preparation. They never enter into the most beautiful things that God may have for them."

Maybe they have forgotten grace. Maybe sin has just overtaken them. Maybe it looked too hard. We use terms like “mid-life crisis”, whatever you want to use, but something about it, they just never kept allowing their story to unfold according to what He saw.

You see I think our lives in many ways are like this. There are these steps that we go on and we are up here, right. God calls us at these moments to say, “Are you ready to go deeper? Are you ready to step in? I have got this beautiful poetic verse I am going to write in your life. Are you ready to go there?” We come to these moments and we have to decide, “Am I going to trust God?”

Now these may be God-ordained moments that He puts in your life. These may be moments of sin that someone, for whatever reason, ruins your life. It may be the death of someone close. It may be a relational issue, who knows? It wasn’t necessarily God saying, “Oh, I’m going to make this mess up for you.” But there are these moments where God says, “Will you trust Me? Will you trust Me? Are you ready to go deeper in our relationship?” I think so often we go to those points and we’re like, “I’m just comfortable here,” and we step back from those moments, and yet God is calling us, “Come on,” and so we go down, “Okay phew, got that one covered off; now I’m good for life, right?” And God shows up again.

I can point to areas in my life where these have happened and I believe there have been some points where I have just jumped in and said, “Okay.” There have been moments where it took me a year or two to say, “Okay.” And I am sure there have been moments that I have totally missed. But see, God is continually saying, “I have got a masterpiece in you, and I want this masterpiece, this poem to come out. There are beautiful things that I have planned for you to do.”

It all hinges on; do you believe you need to be saved? Do you understand the beauty of grace? Will you have faith and just step into this moment? Then God infuses us with something beautiful and He says, “Okay, let’s go, let’s go.” Maybe this fall is one of those moments for you. Maybe you know exactly what I’m talking about.

You know you are right here. You know God has been speaking to you and He is saying, “Ready?” You know you have been pushing it off because it might cost you financially, it might cost you relationally, it might even embarrass you among people because they are going to look at you funny and say, “What are you doing?” Yet you know, in your heart you know that God is saying, “I have got a beautiful verse. Are you ready to write this verse with Me?” And you are saying, “Ahh, I don’t know.” In reality what you are doing is you are rejecting the beauty of grace. You see in grace God gives everything. In grace God comes down. In grace God dies the most gruesome death. In grace, God gives everything.

And He says, “Now you give everything back.” And we say, “I don’t want to.” We miss the beauty of grace because we believe that we can write a better story than the story that God has for us to be written. We don’t really believe that what God has put in us is really amazing. We think we can figure these pieces out and yet God has something beautiful in you. He has put something beautiful in each of you. He said, “It’s a masterpiece. By faith, will you let it come out? Will you trust Me? Will you trust Me?”

Here’s the funny thing about it though too, right? Maybe you are going, “Okay, Matt, but, I wish God would just tell me, what is that one thing He has called me to do?” Ever had that conversation with yourself, maybe with someone else? Let me read you another interesting quote from someone who had to wrestle with that too. She couldn’t figure out what is that one thing, and is it really that one thing because I think I have those conversations a lot with people. “I wish God would tell me that thing.”

Listen to how she wrestled with this. She said, *“Some people’s passions are obvious and God leads them through those passions into a single path of service - Mother Theresa, for example, or the lifelong kindergarten teacher, or the musician who offers their skillful playing every day for God’s glory and other people’s joy. Others though, like me,” she says, “have less obvious passions, what gives them energy develops over time and remains partially hidden or blooms suddenly in response to new situations. As a result, such people offer an assortment of odds and ends of service: a regular*

job done with integrity, some volunteer work, a career decision that seeks service over money and prestige, kindness to a neighbor, or maybe teaching teenagers how to repair appliances.

“Their lives may not have the clean simplicity of vocation, but at the center of everything they do is a deep love for God – and that’s everyone’s true vocation. I have learned that God treasures the lives made of a single piece of cloth cut into the shape of service, but God also values the lives that look more like a bag of fabric scraps, some big pieces, some tiny pieces, different colors and weaves.

At each stage in my life, with each piece of it, I try to ask God, ‘How can I offer this scrap to You?’ I have to trust that if I offer all the odds and ends of my life, God will stitch together the pieces into some lovely pattern and receive it as my gift.”

You may or may not find that one thing and you may be holding off, but God has in front of you the next thing for you to do. This fall will you choose to step into that moment?

If you are not a follower of Jesus, if this is kind of like, “What is this stuff?” new, maybe this is your moment to kind of say, “Something about this resonates, like I need to be saved, I feel this gap.”

Will you accept the beauty of grace? You cannot earn it. You cannot pray enough. You cannot do enough. You cannot give enough. It is simply grace. God is saying, “I don’t need anything; I just want you to say, ‘I am in’” and His grace will give you beyond – beyond what you can imagine. It is not just mercy, not getting what you deserve, but it is getting so much more.

Maybe this fall will be the beauty of a new connection. When you do that, God will infuse you with something and He is going to be able to birth in you because you are His masterpiece, His poem and He is going to start writing these prose out of your life that will amaze everybody around you.

But if you are a Christian, if you have been a Christian for a while, have you lost the beauty of grace? Have you lost the beauty that God has stepped in? Does it no longer send tingles down

your spine that a God who is rich in mercy comes down and He says, “You can’t do a thing, but I love you so much and not only will you not be punished for what you have done, you will be welcomed into My glory.”

Has the beauty of that no longer sent shivers up your spine? Then maybe this fall you need to lean in again and know the beauty of grace. Maybe it’s a time of confession saying, “God, I have lost this and I am willing to step in because You stepped in and did everything for me. Why would I not? Why would I not say, “God, whatever You want, I am going to just say, yes?”

The opportunity is here for you this fall, September the 2nd. When we come to December, what will your fall have looked like? Will it be another straightforward drab fall or will there be a new beauty?

Let me briefly read the thoughts from Pastor Shane in the Going Deeper Guide you received on the way in. I think his thoughts are profound here. He says this; he says, *“Opportunity. It is defined as a set of circumstances that makes it possible to do something. Life is full of opportunities. Some of us have had many of them; others think that we have not had our fair share. Whether opportunities come our way often or only ‘once in a blue moon,’ the real question that we ought to wrestle with is, what have we done with the opportunities that we have been given?”*

“As I think about the content of the guide and the nature of the Going Deeper Guide in general, opportunity is the word that keeps coming to my mind. Each page of this guide, each and every ministry event profiled in these pages presents us with a different type of opportunity. Indeed, these pages are teeming with what I would call ‘spiritual opportunity.’

I have served churches in different parts of the country and have come to recognize the unique spiritual opportunity that the people of North Park are afforded. North Park has been blessed over the years as it has cultivated an environment where people are not only called to ‘go deeper’ in their faith, but also given the tools by which they can take the next steps of the journey.

“Here’s the thing about opportunity. In order for an opportunity to become a benefit, it needs to be taken. An opportunity that is presented and passed over often causes disappointment later down the road of life as a ‘chance not taken.’

The opportunities presented in this guide are plentiful. Don’t let this pass you by as a chance not taken. Be sure to jump in and take advantage of the spiritual opportunities God is giving you this season. I am excited to take them with you. As a church, let’s commit to taking them together.

“Welcome to Fall 2018!”

So we stand here at the beginning of the fall. It’s your choice. It’s your choice. Will you allow the beauty of grace to move you out and will you allow the beauty of God in you, this poem He is writing, will another prose come out of you this fall? To the glory of God; what would it look like in your life, what would it look like in your family’s life? What would it look like in your neighborhood and what would it look like for North Park Community Church if we all leaned in and said, “God, thank You for grace? Thank You for the masterpiece in me. What would You like to come out this fall?”

Let’s pray.

Heavenly Father, it is good to be here. It is good to reflect. Jesus, forgive me when grace becomes just another word. I forget the immensity of what this word means. Jesus, I need to be saved. God, I accepted Your grace, and thank You Lord for all of us in this room. God, for those who have chosen not yet to accept Your grace, may this be the moment to recognize that they need to be saved, step in, and by faith – by faith, agree.

Jesus, would we as a church live in the beauty of grace and allow the masterpiece in us to come out for Your honor and for Your glory. For this fall, I commit to You, in the name of Jesus our Savior. Amen. Amen.

Points to Ponder

Ephesians 2:1-10

1. How often do you think about how your life fits into a larger plan that God has? What do you think about? Do you believe that God has something unique for you to do?
2. The aspect of sin and no one being “good enough”, is perhaps a tough concept to embrace. What are your thoughts with respect to needing to be saved from your sin?
3. How do you understand grace? What concepts come to mind to help you understand it more fully?
4. What does your faith in God look like? What insight do you have that helps you take steps of faith?
5. You are God’s masterpiece. You are created to do good works that are planned for you. What do you think about this? What do you believe God has planned for you to do? What is a next step to help you embrace all that God has planned for you?