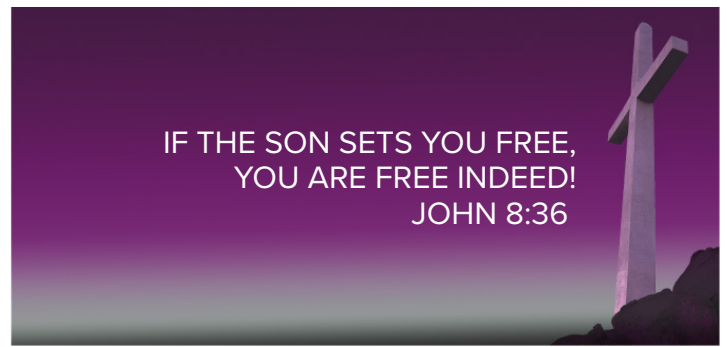


Jesus IOI

“Grace Thoughts”



A short devotional to help get you excited about Jesus!

“There were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.” —Luke 4:27

Henry Tajfel was a social psychologist known for his work on the cognitive side of prejudice. In his experiments, insignificant distinctions between groups, such as the preference for a particular type of art, provoked an impulse to favor one’s own group. The “us vs. them” mentality is a verifiable human condition. Belonging to a group provides self-esteem and pride, and one group can easily discriminate against other groups in order to preserve their social identity.

When Jesus visited the Nazareth synagogue (Luke 4:14-30), He found that the “us vs them” mentality was strong there. Jesus knew what they were thinking. “And He said to them, ‘No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, “Physician heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well” ’ ” (verse 23). In other words, “Doctor, cure yourself! How can you benefit strangers and not us, your own people? The good news is for us, actually *just for us!*” But Jesus continued: “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown” (verse 24), and He proceeded to reveal His outlook, His inclusivity, and the scope of His mission. He gave the Nazareth audience two biblical examples of God’s favors to outsiders: Elijah was sent to the widow of Zarephath, and Elisha miraculously cured Naaman, the Syrian, from his leprosy (verses 25-27). There were many widows and lepers in Israel, yet God sent His prophets to them. The audience was enraged! Jesus, *are you saying that God bypassed “our” widows and lepers, and chose the “outsiders?”* But it was all too evident. Their rage was overpowering, and, on the Sabbath day, they tried to throw Him off a cliff (verses 28, 29), but it wasn’t His time to die yet. Jesus was and is absolutely inclusive. There is no “them vs. us” at the foot of the cross; Jesus paid the highest price for each one of us. Heaven will be more diverse than we can imagine, with every people, nation, color, tongue, and gender (Revelation 5:9). Father, grant us your grace, that as Christians we may display your inclusive outlook, here and now. Amen!

Talbot, Elizabeth *Jesus Wins!*, p. 263.