

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 10/30/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, October 31 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for the safety of children. Ask GOD'S angels to look out for the little ones in our world, seeking to shelter and care for their well-being. Offer a prayer of thanks to all who caretake children and demonstrate GOD'S love through that care.*

Halloween is a wonderful opportunity to share grace. Grace is the underserved blessings we receive from GOD. You don't have to do anything to get it. And whatever you do with it is up to you. It is a free gift.

When children come to your door and you give them candy, that can be an illustration of grace. Now, "Trick-or-Treat" was originally "Tricks-for-Treats." You had to do something to get the treat. A handstand or summersault. Recite a poem. Sing a song. You had to do something to get the blessing. But that wasn't really a free gift, was it? So, "Trick-or-Treating" has evolved into more of an act of grace. Children come to your door and without doing anything, then leave with a gift.

Granted, our metaphors only go so far. Children still have to walk to your house. And the expectation is that they will wear a costume and say, "Trick-or-treat," so they are doing something to get the gift. A better illustration of GOD'S grace would be finding a bowl of candy in your room without your having to even get out of bed. Truly a free gift without any strings attached.

Many of us don't think much about grace. We live our lives with some sense of having to earn GOD'S favor and love. But GOD wants us to know that we are loved unconditionally. GOD loves you whether you want it or not. And what you do with it is up to you. The candy received on Halloween can be kept for oneself only. It can be set aside and forgotten. Or it can be shared with others. It's the same with grace. We have received it from GOD and it's our choice what we do with it. We can set it aside, believing that it's not really ours unless we do something to earn it. We can choose to believe that we are not deserving of GOD'S blessing. We can live our lives as though we really haven't received it at all, though we have. Or we can claim it and then seek to share that unconditional love and mercy with others. It's our choice.

When the Trick-or-Treaters come by this year, rejoice that you get to share grace. Celebrate that you are reflecting GOD'S unconditional love to those who come by. And then claim a little grace for yourself. That candy that is left at the end of the evening that you got so that you could give it to others is now yours. Though that was not its original intent, it now belongs to you—a sort of free gift. You have received grace. What you do with it is up to you.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey