



One Page Sermon

By Pastor Robb McCoy

May 26, 2024

“Strangely Warmed”

Recap of sermon from May 26, 2024

Scripture: Romans 5:1-5, Ephesians 2:8

“And it was still hot.”

This is the last line of one of the most formative books of my entire life. I checked out *Where the Wild Things Are* by Maurice Sendak countless times from my school library as a kid. The Christmas morning I found it on top of my gifts remains one of my most cherished Christmas memories.

“The night Max wore his wolf suit and made mischief of one kind. And another,” was the night Max was sent to bed without any supper. “That very night in Max’s room a forest grew, and grew.” Max then got into a boat and sailed off to *Where the Wild Things Are*. There, he was king. There, he could do anything he wanted. There, he could go on a wild rumpus and not have to answer to anyone.

But there, he was hungry. There, he was lonely. And there, he could suddenly smell good things to eat. So he went home. The Wild Things cried, “oh please don’t go, we’ll eat you up we love you so!” But Max said, “No.” So he sailed back home into his very own room, where he found his supper waiting for him. And it was still hot.

Maurice Sendak was born in New York to Jewish-Polish immigrant parents. The atrocities of the Holocaust deeply affected Sendak’s family and Maurice’s childhood. So while I cannot call *Where the Wild Things Are* a Christian book, I can tell you that it was one of the most influential books of my life. It helped me form my theology in ways I was not aware of, and I believe that this classic children’s book is a great example of prevenient grace.

John Wesley’s understanding of grace was one of the most distinctive parts of his theology. In tension with Catholics, Lutherans, and Calvinists, Wesley negotiated a concept of grace that could be considered a middle ground between predestination, grace alone, and works righteousness. It was a threefold framework known as prevenient, justifying, and sanctifying grace.

Prevenient Grace (a deeply Methodist term that you will never hear outside Methodist circles) could also be called “Preceding Grace. It is the grace of God that precedes everything. It was the grace that existed in the beginning, and is a part of every living created thing. Preceding grace comes before anything we have done, acknowledged, or learned. It is the original goodness of creation. But it has been obscured, covered, and hidden by the sin of the world. Sin is all the things that keep us from God, and it affects us all.

Original sin is not to be understood as some stain that passes from parent to child like DNA. Original sin is the state of the created



world that obscures and hides the grace of God. We cannot avoid sin as long as we have a cupboard full of food and a child dies somewhere of starvation. We cannot avoid sin—not because we are particularly evil or broken—but because we are human.

Yet sometimes grace breaks through.

Sometimes something better appears. Sometimes we can notice the goodness of God and each other. Grace breaks through the clutter, noise, and stink of sin.

Grace is the aroma of dinner waiting for us. It can reach across seas and outlast long journeys. It is there even when we try to be king. It is there even when we do whatever we want. It is there through any wild rumpus. And it is there when we stop and ponder our loneliness, emptiness, and wonder what we are missing. The aroma of grace can capture our hearts and lure us to something more.

Suddenly, we recognize that there is a love deeper than all of the noise. There is an aroma more beautiful than the stink of the world. When we see the grace, know the grace, and accept the grace of God, this is the justifying moment. When we finally grasp that we are loved by God, then we can notice how unloving the world is. We are convicted by our own sin and the sin of the world that falls short of the perfect love of God. We are then compelled grow in love. We grow in generosity, kindness, advocacy. We are sanctified by a continuing process of being renewed by Christ. Drawn in by the aroma of grace, we then take time to taste and see that the Lord is good.

Prevenient grace is the aroma of good things. Justifying grace is sitting down at the table. Sanctifying grace is the meal that nourishes us to continue on our journey.

When we notice the love of God, we can be drawn by the aroma of good things to eat. When we return to God, we will find that our supper is waiting for us. And it is still hot. Or maybe I should say, “strangely warm.”

**Next Week: Part 3 of 6 of “Strangely Warmed”
*The Means of Grace, John 1:16 & 1 Cor. 11:23-26***