

## Well Pleased

Words are unbelievably powerful! Proverbs 18:21 tells us that “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” I am sure most of us were told to respond to a verbal insult during our childhood with the following retort: “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.” Certainly, the idiom was well-intentioned, but sadly misleading for most of us. Words **do** hurt, and while they may not break bones, they certainly cut deeply, bruise our soul, and leave our heart in pieces. On the flipside, carefully chosen and well-intentioned words have the power to build up and give grace to those who hear (Eph 4:29). One person who knew this well and communicated accordingly was Mister Fred Rogers, famous children’s TV personality and ordained Presbyterian minister. Besides his most recognizable quip, “Won’t you be my neighbor?”, Mr. Rogers consistently told his audience of children that he was proud of them.

In Luke 3:21-22, a voice resounds from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.” As Jesus rises from the waters of the Jordan River in prayer, God, the Holy Spirit anoints Him for ministry and God, the Father declares His pleasure in His treasured Son. God’s declaration is the primary point of the text. Fixed in the midst of three significant events that launched His public ministry - John’s message of repentance, Jesus’ baptism, and Jesus’ temptation - the proclamation serves as a confirmation of kingship and a declaration of delight. It confirms that Jesus is the Messiah who has come to suffer and declares that the Father rejoices in Jesus’ present holy conduct and future glorious work. The phrases “beloved Son” and “well pleased” bring to mind Old Testament passages like Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42.

**As The Lord said to me, “You are my Son;** today I have begotten you...  
Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling. **Kiss the Son,** lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Ps 2:7-12)

**Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights;** I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; **a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench;** he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isaiah 42:1-4)

These passages brim with an invitation to love and adore Jesus for who He is (King) and what He has done (come to save). The Father is out front, inviting us to join Him in celebrating and rejoicing over the suffering servant, Jesus. In John's Gospel, Jesus describes the Father's response to His Son's redemptive role in the following manner: "... I lay down my life for the sheep... For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life that I may take it up again" (Jn 10:15, 17).

Why would the Father love His Son and be "well pleased" with Him for suffering and dying, not for something the Son had done, but for the trespasses of others? The answer is found in the surrounding context of God's declaration, particularly in Jesus' genealogy. For here and in His temptation (Lk 3:23-4:13), Jesus is presented as the second, true, and better Adam. Whereas the first Adam failed, the second Adam succeeded. Whereas the first Adam lost everything, the second Adam provides an eternal inheritance. Whereas the first Adam lost his bride through age and death, the second Adam will never be separated from His Bride. Whereas the first Adam's death brought death, the second Adam's death brought life.

Therefore, as one trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. **For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.** (Rom 5:18-19)

In His sinless humanity, Jesus became our perfect substitute. This should give us great assurance, because "the free gift is not like the trespass" (Rom 5:15-17). It succeeds and supplants the failure of the first Adam. Paul put it this way: "... where sin abounded, grace abounded much more" (Rom 5:20, KJV). Everyone who has abandoned self-effort and works, and instead has placed their personal trust in the substitutionary sacrifice of Jesus, now stands righteous, accepted, and loved. God is well pleased with you! A new relationship has begun and new heavenly affections have been ignited. As Mr. Rogers said on one occasion, "We are all longing for perfection, but that doesn't mean you have to be 'perfect' to be loved." We simply need to be "in the Beloved."

***Ephesians 1:6-7 (ESV)*** - "... **he has blessed us in the Beloved.** *In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace ..."*