

Stretched by Grace

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Within Charlie Mackesey's beautiful book '***The Boy, the mole the fox and the Horse***¹ is found a conversation between these characters where the boy is asked what he wants to be when he grows up. "Kind" is his response. St Paul in **Ephesians 4:32** courageously announces, "*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*" Romans 6:14 reveals "*You are not under law but under grace*".

As we sit under the shadow and the shape of these words, what happens within us, around us and through us? How are these words reading us? How are we reading them? What is our response to them? There is a desire for these to ring long and loudly true. What happens as these words fall silently into our soul – recognition, honour?

Allowing these words to resonate within my soul is invitational. If I am living under grace and not law, can I allow God to touch me in some invitational way in this present moment to make them a reality? Is it possible for those words to mirror what is within me? Who am I if these are living and active words within my very being? I would surely know I am loved and loved by capital L Love.

Sometimes I have to say the mirror image is not clean, clear and beautiful but dashed through with darkness, hardness, unkindness, and non-forgiveness, despite my desire for the opposite. Compassion seems to fly out the window, both for others and for myself. Allowing these words to take root, grow and find a home within me is a constant challenge.

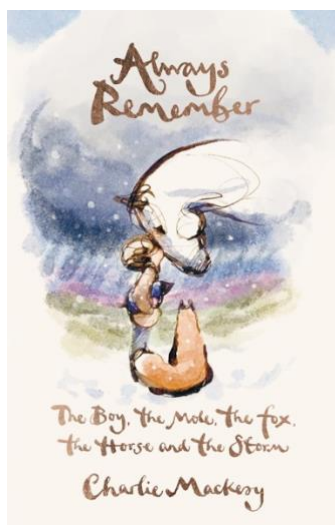


What is grace but allowing the touch of God to shower what's necessary for growth and transformation to begin to take place?

For these words to resonate within me I need to show willingness for change to take place. Is it possible for me to allow those words to massage the hurt, rawness and coldness that

¹ 2019 Charlie Mackesey, ***The Boy, the mole, the fox and the Horse***, Ebury Press, London

blocks the living reality? I struggle to let God very close when the rubber hits the road in my life and the mess of daily living is so raw and bleeding.



Just a couple of days ago I discovered a second book written by Charlie Mackesy entitled ***Always Remember: The Boy, the mole, the fox, the Horse and the Storm.***²

It was as if God handed me this wisdom to enable me to break open the blockage that was forming within from the messiness of my life.

*"When the storm comes, remember who you are," said the Horse. "Who am I?" "You are loved."*³

My spiritual director would add: "With capital L LOVE!" along with "Who's are you?"

If only I could 'always remember!'

Yet, that is what grace does, does it not? It enables us to claim, or re-claim, the willingness to let God come into our lives in a real, living and active way. Pondering this, I can feel grace stretching me, inviting me to allow the mess to reveal the possibility of creativity and newness bringing forth something beautiful and true from within.

This recalls one of my own relatively recent personal spiritual direction sessions where struggle with fear and the messiness of life was prominent. Preparedness to name what was, and willingness to work with it came with these words from my Spiritual Director:

Grace, like the soul, is a shy forest animal that seems to vanish when the wisps of fear begin to emerge. Yet the beauty is still there and can never disappear because the beauty belongs to God.⁴

These are words, like some stories, that are read not only with the eyes but with the very soul of our being. Allowing the soul to quiver with the goodness, wonder, beauty and extravagance of God is pure gift. If only we could recognise, take a step back and allow God to shimmer from within the rawness, mess and roughness of life. Imagine the beauty we could see – read – within each other. Imagine the invitation to Godliness! Imagine a world of change and transformation. Imagine the eternal moment where we are all beholding God-ness. Imagine the eternal moment of God beholding us – *'what beauty belongs to God. Who's are we?'*

² 2025 Charlie Mackesy, ***Always Remember: The Boy, the mole, the fox, the Horse and the Storm,*** Ebury Press, London

³ Ibid

⁴ Personal Spiritual Direction



As I now sit under the shadow and shape of the words quoted in the first paragraph there is a sense that this is what CEN believers do daily. We allow those words to resonate within us, mirror who we are, and shine forth Godliness. As we allow these words to resonate within us, they move out and touch our struggling world of pain, hurt, violence, hatred and chaos. As we sit under the shadow and shape of these words, we are beholding God and allowing God to behold us and God's struggling universe. In this we sense God's beauty beneath it all and allow those wisps of beauty to be the place that stretches us with grace and from where we live.

Let us take courage from: *"I worry that I'm not very good at anything," said the boy. "You are kind", said the mole, "which is everything."*⁵

Begging permission to finish with:

The Cake of Love

A kilo of kindness
A ladle of letting go
A pinch of patience
A gram of gratitude
Heaps of hope
A handful of humility
A jug of Joy

This recipe never fails.⁶

⁵ 2025 Charlie Mackesy, ***Always Remember: The Boy, the mole, the fox, the Horse and the Storm***, Ebury Press, London

⁶ Ibid