

Grace, Love and Fellowship

“May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.” 2 Corinthians 13 v14

These are words that we use often to finish our meetings with which we call the Grace.

The Apostle Paul ends his letter to the Church in Corinth with these words and ever since they have become the perfect blessing.

But what are actually saying?

That’s what I would like to think about for a few moments today before we come to communion.

Today is Trinity Sunday, the one day of the year that we focus on our unique understanding of Who God Is. And the words of the Grace tell us!

Paul wrote, “May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you...”

The word grace appears 155 times in the New Testament.

What is grace? Grace is receiving a gift that we don’t deserve.

John Newton, wrote, “Amazing Grace how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me...” He knew that he did not deserve God's grace; his life had been wretched and yet God chose to reveal himself to Him.

Grace is personal and is discovered in the life of Jesus. This one word sums up for us the life of Christ. His life was filled with grace. It is grace which welcomes the Prodigal Son home; which grants the late day comer a full day's wage; which forgives not seven times but seventy times seven. It is grace that reaches out to the least and the lost.

It is grace that takes Jesus to the cross. He was rich and yet for our sakes he became poor. Grace is God's gift to you and me.

Grace is desperately needed in our world today. In a world of greed and selfishness; a world of hatred and jealousy, we need God's grace, to fill the lives of all human beings.

Les Miserables was a masterpiece of a book written by Victor Hugo, and it is a book that is ultimately about grace.

Jean Valjean's was imprisoned for 19 years because he stole a loaf of bread to feed his family. When he was released, he was under parole, and he committed another crime, stealing from an old priest.

But the priest forgave him and in fact let him keep the silver candlesticks. Jean Valjean's life was touched by the grace of the old priest, and he remembers the Priest's words, to go and do good. But there was another character in the story, the policemen Javert, who relentlessly pursued Jean Valjean. Javert's life was lived by the law. He showed no mercy, it was an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth, grace was a foreign concept to him.

But grace wins the day, and grace will always win the day, for grace is from God and it is discovered in and through Jesus.

When we say the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are saying something very important, we are asking God that he would fill the hearts of our fellow Christians with His grace.

The Christian life is lived in grace, there is no other way to be a Christian, for when we are a Christian we have the life and grace of Jesus in our hearts and he works and speaks through us.

The second attribute, the love of God.

The grace that was shown in Jesus Christ reveals God's love for the world. Put simply God loves you! Jesus proves it!

The first thing about God's love that's important to grasp is that His love is eternal. The wedding ring is a symbol of love, it is a circle with no end. God's love has no end.

The psalmist wrote about God's love – in Psalm 103.

¹³ *“As a father has compassion on his children,*

So, the Lord has compassion on those who fear him;

¹⁴ *for he knows how we are formed,*

he remembers that we are dust.

¹⁵ *The life of mortals is like grass,*

they flourish like a flower of the field;

¹⁶ *the wind blows over it and it is gone,*

and its place remembers it no more.

¹⁷ *But from everlasting to everlasting*

the Lord's love is with those who fear him,

and his righteousness with their children's children—

God's love is eternal; it is from everlasting to everlasting...it existed before the world was created. God lives in a community of love, the Father, Son and Spirit are One. Love binds them together. He did not need a world in order to be able to love and yet he chose to create this unique planet and its life forms simply because He is love.

God's love is powerful. It seeks the good of others.

It reaches out to embrace and redeem fallen humanity.

I received an anonymous phone call during the week from someone in England. It was a serious cry for help, this person had lost everything in life, she had no one to love her, she felt crushed, felt cursed that the world was against her. Her thoughts are the thoughts of many people today.

I asked her what she wanted from me, and she said a miracle, she wanted to experience God's love, and so I prayed with her over the phone, and assured her of God's love and that His love is constant, and she said the Lord's Prayer with me, and she sounded so much better by the end of the call. She thanked me for listening. She needed assurance that despite her feelings, God loved her and that's the greatest of all miracles.

We live in a world that needs to know and experience God's love, and so when we say the love of God be with you, we are saying something quite profound.

Today as we come to Communion may you receive God's love afresh today.

Thirdly, the fellowship or communion of the Holy Spirit be with you. Today we are coming together in fellowship – a deep fellowship which we call communion.

We come to have communion with God through Jesus. We come to have fellowship with each other.

The fellowship of the Holy Spirit creates partnership and community, we are drawn to each other in Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit enables us to share in the life of God.

The primary calling of life is to be available to God, to meet God, to know God, to walk with God, and by sharing in the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, to live in God for ever and ever.

It is the work of the Holy Spirit that brings us into relationship with God. We cannot know God without the work of the Holy Spirit. We can know of a God, we can research everything about God, but it is ultimately the Holy Spirit that reveals the true God and brings us into communion with God.

So, we are blessed to be able to worship a God of grace, a God of love, and a God who invites us into fellowship with Him.

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Amen.