

Reflection Tuesday 14th September

Gracious God, Holy Trinity,
God above us, God below us, God around us,
blessed are you and worthy of all praise.
Teach us at this time to rely on your grace,
to trust in your mercy and to respond to your love,
that we may welcome the opportunities this day brings
and know the encompassing presence of your Holy Spirit
through Jesus Christ our Lord.
AMEN

Bible Passage 2 Corinthians Chapter 8 V 1-15

Comment

In his letters to the church at Corinth the apostle Paul was encouraging them, along with other Gentile churches, to give to help with the needs of the Jerusalem believers. They were going through extremely difficult times financially because of the persecution from the Jews living in Jerusalem. They had been socially ostracized and excommunicated from the synagogues because they believed that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah. Their businesses failed because of the national disinheritance. Paul encouraged the Gentile Christians to help with this great need in Jerusalem by putting aside a gift for the Jerusalem fund.

To Paul, Jerusalem would be the centre of the new age, where God united Jew and Gentile in worship to Him

The collection of money for Jerusalem remains a corner stone of Paul's ministry, he mentions it to Corinth and to Rome, and praises the churches in Macedonia and Achaia for their generosity.

The collection had been started in Corinth under the direction of Titus during the previous year, but had slowed down or come to a standstill. Now they needed a little encouragement to continue with their commitment.

Paul sends Titus back with the letter for the purpose of completing the act of grace.

God's grace makes a difference to the lives and attitudes of his people.

Grace is repeated 7 times in this chapter - it is important, to Paul and to us.

In classical Greek the word first meant something beautiful, as opposed to something ugly, strength as opposed to weakness, health as the opposite of illness, love against hate...etc.

The New Testament writers took the word and blew new life into it in the incarnation of Gods Son, and his death and resurrection.

In him is everything the Greeks thought of as Grace - beauty, glory, health, power and love. Moreover he gave us life.

In Paul's letter grace means generous giving, it is looked upon as a gift of thanksgiving to God - it is the grace of generosity that God gives to all believers.

With this gift of grace it is imperative that we should make one of the hallmarks of the Christian church today an inherent love and kindness in the face of adversity.

The love and kindness such as those reading Paul's letters showed by raising money

for the early church in the midst of severe trials.

Grace given by God that led to overflowing joy and generosity.

People across our world are facing life-changing situations; therefore we must be fully committed, equipped and resourced by grace to be the church for this time and context.

We need to identify that grace as we see it, and consider what the God of grace is asking us to do at this time in His name.

To consider

Where do we see God's grace in the world at this time?

Was there a time when grace has spoken to you, to encourage a reaction that you had not anticipated making?

Showing love and kindness, joy and generosity can also be seen as being weak and easily put upon. How do you respond to that?

Let us pray

Father God,

Show us the relationship between commission and grace.

We are called to share our faith

But we confess

that when we hear your compelling call

We are sometimes paralysed by guilt and lack of confidence.

Help us, Lord.

Take us out of our comfort zone, Lord.

Show us the doors of opportunity

and give us the wit and grace to go through them.

Grant us the courage to tell our story.

To tell the story,

and to trust you for the harvest.

AMEN

Bible Study Wednesday 15th September

Bible Passage 2 Corinthians Chapter 8 v1-15 also 9: v6 - 8

Paul's desire is for a measure of equality to be maintained across the Christian church so that everyone has "not too little" and "not too much" (V15).

Do we still experience that desire today?

"for God loves a cheerful giver" a well-known verse, often quoted.

Is being a cheerful giver rather easier than being a grateful recipient?

Is this only about money? If not, what?