

**The title for today's message is;** Always Thank God Because of His Grace

**Here in our text for today;** the apostle Paul describes a divided and struggling congregation not unlike struggling congregations today.

Grace and peace to you from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen

"When I have a poor case," said an attorney, "I prepare an eloquent speech, when I have a good case, I simply call the witnesses."

The gospel of Jesus Christ simply needs to call its witnesses. In our gospel lesson for today the apostle Paul speaks about his own calling.

Paul was called to change his life, to serve the Lord Jesus Christ as a witness to God's grace in his life, as Paul would say; 'Not I, but Christ.

His only concern was to be sensitive to the voice of God who had called him. As members of the body of Christ, we have been called by God to be his people.

Called to be saints, called to be his church, and called to be the ones who bring God's grace into this world.

We think of God coming to us in his means of Grace, his word and the sacraments of baptism and holy communion.

But the other means which we often ignore is ourselves. We are called by God to be his means of grace in this world.

We are called by God to be sacramental, to be a means by which his love, and his forgiveness is brought into this world.

Have you ever thought of yourself as a sacrament of God? Well you are, you are a holy temple, a means by which God comes to those who are hurting.

And a means by which God comes to those who need to be forgiven, and a means by which those who need love are loved.

Look God works through people like you and I, we see that every Sunday morning as he works through the brokenness of this person to bring his grace to you.

God uses me to bring his forgiveness to you at the beginning of the service when I declare that your sins are forgiven.

Sure, its my voice, and my arm in the air, but its God's action working through these things that makes you not guilty, that forgives you of your sins.

I have been called by God to be an apostle, as one sent forth, just as all of you are called by God to be sent forth into this world.

Just as Paul says in our first verse from I Corinthians that he was called by the will of God to be an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Look were not kept safe in these four walls, we are not kept safe in our homes, nor at our jobs.

But we are called to be sent out into the world to be with those who do not know the love of God in their lives, or to be with those who are hurting and those who need forgiveness.

As well as with those who are in their everyday lives, as they struggle with all the brokenness of this world.

As we can see the church is not these four walls, but the people inside who are called by God through Christ and his spirit to be the church.

Like a little boy had fallen asleep in the church nursery and as the pastor was shaking hands at the doorway, an usher brought him out of the nursery into the church.

The usher said that it seemed like his parents had forgotten about him. As the boy woke up in the church, he looked around.

And what he saw disturbed him, he saw that the church was empty, and he said, where did the church go.

Where did the church go! Well that's an appropriate thing to say. It was like the little boy knew it was the people inside the church's four walls that made up the church.

It seemed He knew that the church was people, people who were called by God through Christ and the Holy Spirit to be followers of Jesus.

This little boy understood what the church was all about and I wonder why do adults see the church only as a building?

I wonder. Our lesson from I Corinthians tells us we have also been called to be saints.

Believers in God, called to be the ones who believe in the promises of God to be true for our lives.

We know that the covenant we have with God is a covenant between a greater party and a lesser party, God being the greater and we being the lesser.

God has called us to live in his covenant, called us to be his people because he wills it for our lives. Remember we don't seek God, He seeks us.

God claims us to be his because he wills it for us who are inferior to him. But why? That is the unanswerable question of time.

Why would God call people who reject him, who would rather believe in their own selves, in their own worth, and in their own pride?

Why would God call people who have only selfish motives in life, people who cannot see beyond themselves, why God calls that kind of people to be his we will never know this side of heaven.

But he has, that is the amazing grace in which we live. God has called us to be his, called us to believe in the promises he has made to us.

He has called us to be His children, not when we can respond, but he calls us as babies, as those who have no choice, as ones who don't even understand what is happening.

Paul says further that the promises we are called to believe in enrich our lives with every spiritual gift.

As Paul reminds us; the grace of God gives us direction, purpose, meaning, and vocation to our life.

We are called by God to give honor and glory to him in all areas of life. All of us have been given gifts by God with which we support our families.

To take care of our homes, or learn knowledge for future use. What ever we do, we have been granted that skill, that ability, by God in our lives.

With that gift comes a responsibility, to use these gifts to a worthwhile end, to use those gifts for the honor and glory of God and in service to our neighbor.

Finally Paul says we are called into fellowship by the grace of God and into this place so that we can receive support.

Encouragement, forgiveness, love and respect one another. Another words It is within the church that we are to care for one another.

It is a feeling that needs to be kept alive in our church. Sometimes we get so wrapped up in ourselves.

That we cannot see the hurt, the frustration, the loneliness, the sorrow, the pain, the despair, or the anger in the heart of our brother or sister in Christ.

But the Christian community is a place, a place where brothers and sisters can come and share their brokenness.

Where they can come and gain peace and comfort from a brother and sister, where one can tell another the pain of life and know there will be support.

Concern and compassion. The church in its beginning was a very compassionate entity, but I wonder.

I wonder if we have lost some of that compassion through out the centuries. I wonder if the members of the church have turned more inward.

More concerned about themselves than about their brother or sister in Christ? Paul says we are to be sent forth to be witnesses in this world for the grace of God.

He says we are called to believe, to be saints, to trust in the promises of God for our lives.

He says further that we are called into a fellowship, called into the church, called into the body of Christ to care for one another.

We are to be compassionate, to be loving people to our brother and sister in Christ.

We are to reach out to others in this world who need to feel the grace of God through us.

What we are talking about this morning can be summed up in one word, discipleship.

We are to be disciples, followers of Jesus as members of the body of Christ. Discipleship isn't what you do.

No, being a disciple is who you are, yet it changes everything. Being a disciple of Christ changes you from the inside out.

A closing story sums this all up for us as we contemplate what it means to be a disciple of God.

“Let God have you, and let God love you, and don't be surprised if you hear God calling you to be his witness.

Amen

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all. Amen.