



GEORGE STREET UNITED CHURCH

25 Buchanan Street, St. John's, NL, A1C 0A4



And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in the one body. And be thankful. Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God.

--Colossians 3: 15-16

Friday, October 15, 2021

To the Saints of the George Street Pastoral Charge,

The Apostle Paul writes to the fledgling church in Colossae as it takes its first steps in the Christian way. And the foundation that Paul wants to rest this fledgling church on is one of gratitude and not obligation.

It makes sense, though it is a huge risk.

It makes sense that Paul would make the foundation of the Christian church one of gratitude and thanksgiving since it is Paul's understanding that God, through Jesus, does all the work that is necessary to reconcile the people of God to God's very self. The problem was our sin which estranged us from God. The solution was not that we should attempt to undo that estrangement on our own (and fail) but that God, through Christ, would undo that estrangement and succeed. God, the Father, pays the ultimate price for our reconciliation with the death of the God, the Son, on the cross. We are given the reward of Christ's righteousness removing all condemnation from our lives. There are no strings attached, no new rules to follow. We are, as the Apostle would say, new creations in Christ Jesus and therefore free from condemnation.

We are therefore obligated to do nothing.

Our salvation is a gift of God's grace, it is assured. All we need to do (and this for our own benefit) is work that salvation out so that we live the life of the saved and enjoy the freedom God's grace, through Christ's death and resurrection, we have been given.

This is a huge transformation from the previous theology of the people of Colossae which was, make the gods happy or suffer the consequences. It was a theology of obligation, and the obligations were so stringent that failing to abide by them invited the gods to take out their anger not on you as an individual but your whole family and indeed your whole city.

If you are an informed consumer, you've probably heard the warning to be careful about deals that sound too good to be true. The grace of God certainly sounds like a deal that is too good to be true. And yet, the people of Colossae were so taken in by it they embraced Christianity and responded to the graciousness of God with gratitude of their own which multiplied grace upon grace.

A few thousand years later we at George Street continue to exist in that graceful economy where



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the only currency that can be exchanged for grace is our gratitude and thanksgiving.

Which leads to the danger part.

The enemy of being grateful is taking for granted. That what was will always be.

Nothing is mandatory.

The Church will exist on the currency of grace and gratitude, or it will not exist at all. The Church will not lay obligations upon members telling them what they must sacrifice for the good of the faith community. Well, some might, ours will not. All we will say is that the need is great and without support existing ministries will be discontinued.

This is why we have chosen to revisit the theme of stewardship and offer some reminders of what it is that we at George Street are grateful for. Hoping that in remembrances of graces given we might awaken the desire to see gratitude returned.

Again, no obligation, nothing is mandatory. We are inviting you, as the Church of Christ always must build your life on a foundation of gratitude and thanksgiving that our joy may be full and transformative of all that we meet.

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