

# Because of His Appearing

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[ 0 : 00 ] Father in heaven, we praise you and we thank you for every good gift. We thank you that your glory will appear to us one day.

We thank you that your grace has appeared to us in Jesus Christ. And Father, as we are lifted and strengthened and led by your grace, we ask, Father, that we would live thankful lives.

And we ask that these gifts given would be a sign that we give our lives to you in joyful service. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. It would be great if you'd open your Bibles at Titus chapter 2, page 998, to the passage that was read a moment ago.

And as you do that, I want to just explain these two pieces of paper that you received with the many other pieces of paper on the way in.

It's a plot by our ushers to stop people holding hands together. However, this, I wanted to speak a little bit about this FAQ, if I could.

[ 1 : 16 ] We as a church, as you know, are partnering with St. Peter's Fireside downtown. And as a church here in Vancouver, we are seeking to bless and to extend God's kingdom.

And that means we know that some of you are encouraging some to pray and to go and to be part of St. Peter's Fireside. So the trustee said, well, what does it mean to belong to a church?

And I've written the front of the bulletin and copied some of the prayer book on the inside of the document. On page 3 of the FAQ, I've listed some good reasons for leaving St. John's and joining St. Peter's Fireside.

Let me just say, there are no good reasons for leaving St. John's. But if you're aiming to join St. Peter's Fireside, that's great.

What are some bad reasons for leaving St. John's underneath it and joining St. Peter's Fireside? I had a very long list, but the staff talked me out of it. And there are some.

[ 2 : 20 ] Seriously, though, we want to bless this group. And we're going to have a commissioning in the last Sunday of October as these folk leave us because we want people to make a minimum two-year commitment if they change to go down to St. Peter's Fireside downtown.

We don't want people to be church shopping and church hopping and consumer thinking in their minds to try it out for a little while and sneak off and sneak back.

There are previews of the services that you can see. And what we would like to suggest is that if you're thinking and praying and seriously considering doing this, you have a conversation with one of the members of the clergy team and you speak about that.

And it's not for permission. It's just to transfer membership. And then we'll have this commissioning and our prayer and hope is the church will get off to a great start. Are there any questions?

No, I'm not going to take any questions. There is the FAQ. If you put that away, that would be terrific. Now, Titus chapter 2 verses 11 to 15 has to be one of the most full, wonderful, majestic, amazing passages in all the Bible.

[ 3 : 39 ] It connects God's great big doings with our ordinary Monday daily doings. And it shows how the grace of God works now in the present today.

You remember, Paul sends this letter to Titus in Crete. There are some new churches on the island. They're in a bit of a mess. And they're in a bit of a tough culture.

And Paul is writing fundamentally to show that Christians are to live an attractive life, a cross-shaped life, in an unattractive culture.

And last week we looked a little bit, didn't we, at what that cross-shaped life looked like. So you cast your eyes back to chapter 2 verses 1 to 10, first three or four verses.

Those of you who are older men and women, that means those of you who are 45 or older. Unless you have young children. You're not supposed to just retire and be put out to pasture and live for

yourself.

[ 4 : 43 ] They're meant to serve others and continue to grow in godliness and fruitfulness. In the next couple of verses we see Christian parents, how the gospel now comes into the household and changes our family patterns.

Mothers and fathers make costly decisions on the basis of the cross of Jesus Christ for their families. Christian leaders, you can see, I think it's verse 7 and 8, are meant to model good works and integrity.

And slaves, stroke employees, in verse 10, are not supposed to steal paperclips from work. It's a challenge. And if that is not enough of a challenge, part of the reason to live this life is because God has vested his reputation in the world on how we live.

I don't know how you feel when you hear that sort of thing. I feel a little bit terrified about that, frankly. Know that it's saying, onlookers are meant to see the face of God in the way that we live. So just look down at verse 5. The reason we are to do these things at the end of the verse 5 is so that the word of God may not be abused, reviled. Or at the end of verse 8, so that nothing evil will be said about us.

[ 6 : 03 ] Or even more important, in verse 10, That's a very tall order.

I mean, God, there is no one more splendid, has more splendor and majesty and beauty than God. But God has humbled himself and arranged it so that we adore and we publicize, we advertise how good God is by how we live.

And so the question is, how's that going? How are we doing that? Are we advertising and publicizing the beauty of God by how we live?

This is a tall order, I think. And I think it's a mighty risky thing to put your reputation in someone else's hands. And that is why we are so grateful for the first three letters of verse 11.

F-O-R-4. Paul has laid out the need for a cross-shaped life and some of the shape, what it looks like, he's going to go on to more of that.

[ 7 : 05 ] But now he comes to explain where it comes from. What kind of power is there that can take Cretans, who are an ugly group, and change them to live fundamentally new lives?

And what is the power at work in our lives that can make us different than how we used to live? What is the power that can make a community of contrast out of us, which commends and publicizes the greatness of God?

And the answer is, the grace of God, the grace of God, the grace of God. And Paul says the grace of God does two things. And the first is God's grace gives us a tutor.

Verse 11. For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us. It has appeared in the past.

Something has happened. There's an event that has taken place. A specific thing. A time when God's grace was revealed and appeared. Not for the lucky.

[ 8 : 16 ] Not for the fortunate. Not for the great and the good and the enlightened and the religious. But for all. For those who don't deserve it. For those who need salvation.

That thing that took place in the past has a vast universal significance as big as the heart of God. What is it that's appeared?

It's the grace of God. We didn't go searching for it. We didn't find it. We didn't put our heads together and meditate until it came to us.

It's God's. And by his decision he has revealed his worldwide grace. And of course he's talking about the death of Jesus. Which we'll come back to in a few moments.

But the issue here is that the appearance of God in the past gives us a tutor in the present.

[ 9 : 12 ] For the grace of God has appeared past, training us now. It's a present tense. And I don't know how you view tutors. You might have had a terrible experience with tutors.

Strict, fierce beatings and whippings and lashings and slashings. Or you might have had a tutor who just wanted to be somewhere else. Despairing of my marks in high school.

My father brought a science tutor in. He was a lovely man from the local congregation who worked high up in the administration in the education department. He'd never taught a day in his life.

And we had such a fun time together. And his stories about the politics of administration were much more interesting than the periodic table. And I was passively resistant every time we went to science.

And so we just had a great time talking about all sorts of things that had nothing to do with anything. However, where was I? Oh yes. This word training has to do with having a tutor.

[10:13] At the time this was written, lots of families would bring in a tutor for their children. And they placed the tutor in charge of the child's entire education. This was much more than the ABCs and formal learning.

It was about the process of the development of the character of the child. There were elements of formal learning. But there were also music and gymnastics and practical skills.

And the primary aim was that the child would come to live as a member of this family. Would represent this family. And as they came into their inheritance, they would live out this family.

And the tutor taught by imitation and example three basic lessons. He would teach them to say no to certain things. We don't cheat. We don't lie.

We don't steal. We don't have humility. That was a vice in Greek culture. They would say no to certain things. Yes to certain things. Courage, loyalty, whatever.

[11:11] And they would teach them to wait. And say your life is to be shaped by your inheritance and the customs of this house and family. And you need to have a growing understanding of what it is to take on the family name and identity.

That tutoring is this word here. The grace of God has appeared. Tutoring, training us. And because of that appearance of God's grace in the past, we have a tutor now who educates and trains and develops us along the lives of the cross-shaped life.

And the tutor of God's grace equips us to do three basic things. To say no, to say yes, and to wait. Let's look at those individually.

The grace of God trains us to say no to certain things. Look down at verse 12, please. Training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions.

We keep meeting this word godly, ungodly. And I'm not sure it's a common word today. And I'm not sure we're well tutored in what it means. The word godly comes from the root to wonder.

[12:22] When a human being is confronted with something totally other and bows before that God. When God appears in his presence in the scriptures.

This word wonder is where godliness comes from. So it's the attitude of heart of someone when they are seeing God. God, and now in this context, godliness is a whole life lived with a sense of God's majesty and his presence.

It's having a sense on my heart of the goodness and the glory of God and his grace. It's a basic sense of wonder.

And it translates into action. It's a godward life. And that doesn't mean every waking moment I'm thinking about God or 100% of my time.

But it's the basic music theme and direction of my life. And ungodliness is simply the opposite. It's living life. It's making decisions without really thinking about God at all.

[13:29] It's not having a fear of God in my heart. It's my life oriented around, well, what I want really. And what I serve. But God's not really a significant contributing factor in my decisions.

And what's so searching about this is that godliness and ungodliness are much deeper than morals or virtues. It has to do with the whole cast of our inner life for God or for ourselves.

We are to renounce ungodliness. It's the same with worldly passions. Passions is a neutral word. It can be good or bad. But the passions, what Paul is saying is that those things, our desires, many of which are very good in themselves.

But if they control you so that you focus on this world, it's ungodly. He's talking about consumerism. He's talking about materialism.

He's talking about having a narrow horizon. Having our lives dominated by the cares and pressures of this life. Grace trains us now to renounce these things.

[14:34] To say, no, no. I belong in a family where there's a sense of wonder at God. And that means I have to deny certain things. I have to renounce living for myself.

So when grace becomes your tutor and my tutor, certain things have to give way. There may be things you need to give way to now. Grace trains us to say no.

Secondly, the tutor grace tells us to say yes to certain things. Verse 12, just read on, to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age.

It's great. You know, a lot of people view Christians, view what we're doing here is sort of pie in the sky and just frightening each other until the judgment day, which is never going to come. But if

God's grace is real, it trains us for this life in this present world.

We are saved not just for the future, but for the present. And grace tutors us toward family likeness, to be self-controlled. We've heard this word a couple of times.

[ 15 : 40 ] This is what the young men are urged to. Don't you love the way when Paul gives the list of things that people are meant to do, the shape of life in the first ten verses? Five or six to older men and women, younger women, young men, one thing.

Just one thing, be self-controlled, he says. Very interesting. And being self-controlled is being thoughtful. It's thinking about who you are and what you're doing.

And guarding your heart. Uprightness. Uprightness is being clean. Doing what you say you're going to say. It's being righteous. It's your relationship with other people.

It's doing what you say when they're not watching. And godliness, well, that's the whole godward direction of life. The grace of God teaches us to say no and yes.

And thirdly, the grace of God teaches us to wait with longing. Just as the human tutor taught children to be shaped by their inheritance, so does grace.

[ 16 : 48 ] Verse 13. Waiting for our blessed hope, which is the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

So the first appearing of grace in the past leads to a future appearing of glory, which means in the present we wait with eager expectation for that coming.

And what do we wait for? We wait for a person, for Jesus Christ. Very important, you see. The Christian hope is not primarily focused on the enjoyment and bliss that I will have in glory, even though we will.

It's not even focused on that great reunion with those who've gone before, even though that will be true as well. What a blessing. Nor is it focused on the great relief that we will no longer be tempted to sin, how good that will be.

No, no, it's always in the New Testament focused on the person, on the person of Jesus Christ who is coming. On the glory.

[ 18 : 01 ] And look at what Paul calls him of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ. Incidentally, this is one of the clearest places in the New Testament where Jesus Christ is called God.

Remember in John's Gospel, the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. John says, we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

But when Christ comes again, it will be with God's full glory. And that is the blessedness that we long for and hope for.

And that is the blessedness that God's grace trains us to look for today, tomorrow and all through our lives. To think on it. To meditate on it.

And I wonder if it's part of your ongoing meditation. I wonder if, as you grow older, do you think more about the coming of Jesus and the sweetness of being in his presence?

[ 19 : 01 ] And I think growing in this hope gives us a realism about what this life has to offer. Gives us perspective on disappointments. And helps us to see what's important.

I do hope you think this is important. Apple Computer Company has been running ads. Double page spread ads in the papers the last few weeks.

And the ads start with these words. This is it. This is what matters. And there's some child glued to one of their devices. I'm not going to say what I really think about that.

However, you know, I like Apple products. But to say that that's what really matters, I don't think it is. The grace of God, brothers and sisters, has appeared.

And it trains us now to say no to ungodliness. And to say yes to godliness. And to wait for the appearing of our great God and Saviour. And if you're tracking with me so far, I think the big question you're asking is how?

[ 20 : 04 ] How does God's grace that appeared so long ago do that for us now? How does God's grace transform me now? What's the connection between what happened then?

I mean, when we talk about the death of Jesus, we say Jesus died for our sins. Yes. But how does it do it? Well, let's spend a little time on that, shall we? I think I need to take my jacket off.

That feels better. Doesn't look better, but it feels better. So this morning I woke up and went down to make myself a cup of tea. It's very hard to be spiritual without a cup of tea in the morning.

The power was off. Very sad. So I went to the garage and I got some matches and we have gas on the stove and I made myself some tea. It was fantastic.

And I think what we are going into the second point, which is a briefer point to look at, is that the usual way that we think about ethics, the usual way we think about how we live, is very different than the way of God's grace.

[ 21 : 21 ] How God's grace changes us now is, verse 14, by giving us his son then in the past.

So look at verse 14, please. He goes back to the appearing of God's grace and what really happened. He says, Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

There's a lot here, but let me race through. The key idea is how personal salvation is for Jesus and for us. I mean, don't those words resonate? He gave himself for us to redeem us, to purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works.

There's nothing impersonal about grace. It's not some, you know, force, power out there. Jesus' death was a conscious, deliberate giving of himself, not for a philosophy, but for us.

He gave himself for our salvation. And at infinite and supreme cost to himself, he did it because he treasured us. He wanted to do this so that he would create a people of his own possession.

[ 22 : 47 ] This is the Old Testament word for the most treasured possession in the treasury box. In his death, Jesus binds himself to us for all eternity and binds us to himself for all eternity so that we will be his people and he will be our Lord.

And Paul says here in this verse that amongst other things, when Jesus went to the cross, when he went to his death, he had two purposes in mind. And the first, obviously, is to redeem us from all lawlessness.

Redeem, free, buy us back. And lawlessness is just the attitude of saying, I'm going to make up what's right and wrong. It's the whole ungodly attitude in life.

And the Bible says that is the most awful of slavery. And when he says we're lawless, it's not saying we're card-carrying anarchists. It's not talking about the Canadian legal system.

It's saying, you know, God stands behind the God's law. We just don't recognize his authority. And without Christ, the way we live is we give ourselves over to the desires and dictates of our own hearts.

[ 23 : 55 ] We have no one higher than myself to whom I'm accountable. And it's not freedom. It's slavery. I have no choice then but to serve myself, to be in the dungeon of my own ego.

We live in a time where we worship personal choice. Choice in shopping and choice in clothing and choice in lifestyle and choice of where to live and choice of what to drive. And we build our identity around personal choice.

And we are like children born and raised in a shopping mall, completely unaware that there's more outside the walls of the mall. And we think we're free because we can go around the different stores.

But you see, the grace of God in Jesus Christ, which redeems us, opens the doors, blows the roof, gives us a vision of what's really there and strengthens our wills to do what's completely impossible. Now we make choices to be godly, to serve the Lord, to hope in him. Because in his death, Jesus surrendered to our choices, confined himself to pay for our choices, and redeems us from the tyranny of our own ego and sets us free to serve him and to serve one another.

[ 25 : 09 ] That's one thing Jesus had in his mind and the other is to purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good works. We need purifying.

Because our ungodliness, the basic state of our hearts, is like an oil slick. And it stains us. And it slides and contaminates every relationship that we touch.

Not that we're as bad as we could be. But that we need to be cleaned before he can hold us to himself. And the way Jesus has done that, he removes the stain, he washes it away entirely in his death.

He takes our impurity. He gives us his purity so that we can be united. This is what he does. This is, I mean, there is great joy in this.

The reason Jesus went to the cross was so that you and I might be his. He bound himself to us so that we would be his own possession, so that when he comes again and gathers us to himself, he will say to God the Father, Father, look, behold, here I am and the children, the brothers and sisters you've given me.

[ 26 : 26 ] And the mark of that redeeming, purifying power which happened at the cross, the mark that's active in our lives now, is a quiet, ongoing zeal for good works.

That's how the grace of God trains us to say no and yes and wait. We're bound to him by the power of his death. And what that means, as I close, is this, that the Christian life is one of living in fellowship with Jesus, in communion with Jesus.

It's a daily knowing and following him. It's daily listening to him and speaking with him. The cross-shaped life doesn't arise from within us as we try hard, but it comes to us from a union with Christ which came through his death.

It's not adding classic virtues from the outside. And that means Christian virtues or Christian ethics are different than any other religious or philosophical system.

Christian ethics are not driven by fear. They're not fear ethics. The Bible doesn't say do good works or God will get you. Or stop doing bad things God will reject you.

[ 27 : 45 ] New Testament says the grace of God has appeared in Jesus Christ who gave himself to redeem us, to free us, and to purify us. It's not a fear ethic. Nor is it a merit ethic.

You know, keep on doing good things to keep God on your good side and to prove you really are a Christian. And you might, well, I haven't done anything really sacrificial for quite a while.

I should do something. No. It's grace that trains us to live godly lives. Christian ethics is neither fear ethic nor merit ethic. And let me say, it's also, it's not a gratitude ethic.

You know the idea, because God has done all this for me, I really should be thankful and I really should show my gratitude by saying no to ungodliness. I should, I should, I should. Don't mishear me.

I'm not saying we should not be grateful. We are commanded to be grateful and we have more to be grateful than we can possibly imagine. And God loves a cheerful giver. But it is possible to turn gratitude into guilt.

[ 28 : 52 ] And so long as it's turned into guilt, it is no longer having anything to do with grace.

Christian ethics, from beginning to end, is cross-shaped.

It arises out of the grace of God and what Christ did on the cross. And it comes today from our connection with Jesus, our union with Jesus, of walking with him and abiding in him and seeking him in all we do and returning to him when we sin for fellowship because he has redeemed us from the power of evil, purified us by the Holy Spirit.

And it is our communion with Christ now today through which God's grace trains us to live and to wait with eager longing for his coming. And I think it's no wonder Paul says in verse 15 to Titus, Titus, declare these things, these things, this gospel.

Exhort, encourage, encourage each other with these things. Rebuke one another with all authority and let no one disregard you. It's very clever.

Paul is writing to Titus but the congregation is reading this as well. Here is the gospel. So let's pray together. Thank you.