

WELCOME 16th February 2025 – 6 Epiphany '25 C

Luke 6:27-42

Welcome! It's great to be together again today! Along with your worship order you have in your hands & **Bible Study Qs** that are able to lead you deeper into God's word/work in your life, & help you share that w/ someone else. We also use them for our **Zoom Bible Study Catch-ups on Friday @ 1p.m.** Link is on website...

As we move into this week...

If I asked you **What** phrase did Jesus repeat most often throughout his ministry? What do you think it would be? What words came out of Jesus' mouth most often? I'll spare you the guessing...no prizes like Sunday Schools of old...& probably no surprise: "**Follow me**"...You maybe *could* have guessed...knew it instinctively. ≈ 20X in NT

AND...It was always personal. Jesus *NEVER* said "cling to this mystical secret teaching" *NEVER* drew people into a "religious curriculum" *NEVER* demanded adherence to "rule/ritual." **Jesus calls us directly to himself assuming in that relationship we'll be transformed...made new...reborn...grow in his grace.**

"You must be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Become what we aren't yet...We live toward a destiny as children of God living **EVEN NOW** in the Father's presence working for his purpose.

God has called Living Water Fellowship to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace and go in his power to show his love to the world

Called by God for God's glory...Inviting people into a life of living w/ Jesus as Jesus directs... Growing in likeness to him & being empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the grave...obeying his command to Love others as he loved us.

"Students are not greater than their teacher.

But the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher."

The "why" for you/me...Living Water...**To** grow in his grace...growing is a destiny not a destination...a journey not an arrival...a roadway not a carpark.

Every living thing is designed to grow...

to become more like the original

to reproduce that from which it came

God knew his people in advance, & he chose them to become like his Son...

...the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher...

...grow in his grace.

Let's pray...then explore & experience that together...

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Lord, we come as we are, to become what you meant us to be. We come as we are, broken, afraid, and full of disappointment at times. And we ask you to make us whole and set us free. We come as we are, with all our plans and our dreams, our joy and our sorrows, to be touched by your grace and held in your love. We come as we are, God, and we trust you to make us what you desire for us to be. We thank you for mercy that reaches out, for patience that waits our return, for love that is always ready to welcome us and bring us home...In Jesus' name... Amen

Let's hear God's word...

FAITH CHAT:

1. What's it like to be treated unfairly? How does that make you want to react?
2. What have you been most successful at growing?

*In one brief snapshot...Toward what is Jesus really calling us as his people?
How would you summarize...Jesus?*

6 Epiphany '25 C – ANSWERING THE “WHY?”: A ROADWAY NOT A CARPARK

Darryl Dash is a pastor in Canada. I'm part of an email/blog list smartguy/I learn things...I've shared a bit of that here ^{b/4}...always something good... Like this week. His email opens:

When I started out as a 24-year-old pastor, I didn't know what I was doing. I was 27, but that was me & let's be honest, when you started out teacher, farmer, nurse, electrician, chemist, parent...did you have that role completely mastered? Did you know...**REALLY KNOW**...what you were doing? Of course not. Missteps & mishaps early on? Certainly. Did you want to learn & get better? ...more proficient?

Absolutely. He continues: **So** I started to read as many practical books as I could so to learn how to pastor. When in doubt, read a book. How'd that turn out? Not great. **They** assumed I knew what my goal was. They assumed I knew what I was & who I was. They assumed I knew why I was supposed to be doing the things they were teaching me about. But I didn't know any of that! And I didn't know how any of the things I was supposed to be doing fit into a coherent understanding of my call from God to be a pastor. You can hear it...**he** didn't know the “why?” *As we've seen... The “why” makes all the difference.* What we know about Jesus is that his call was the same to those who joined him as well as those who didn't: **“Followme”**... ≈ 20-21X

For Jesus, it is always personal. Jesus calls us directly to himself assuming in that relationship we'll be transformed...made new...reborn...**grow** in his grace. That in him... as he lives in us by his Spirit...as he rewrites the working of our hearts, minds & wills we will become what we are not yet. That's the “why” ...that whatever whoever we are... wherever we are...especially as his church his people living in his presence power & purpose in the daily footsteps of our lives...grow in his grace. **For** *God knew his people in advance, & he chose them to become like his Son...Rom 8:29* Everything God engineers in this life is designed to draw us more & more into absorbing, adopting, & living the character of Jesus. To grow in his grace until all we are is like him...Jesus said, **“You must be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.”** We live toward a destiny as God's children living **EVEN NOW** in the Father's presence working for his purpose like Jesus

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to be a vibrant Christian community that glorifies God

by inviting all people to become disciples of Jesus who grow in his grace...

Every living thing is designed to grow...to become more like the original - to reproduce that from which it came - *God knew his people in advance, & he chose them to become like his Son... ..the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher...* grow in his grace. **How** does that happen? How does his grace grow us? ...in us? You're not going to like this... Here's how Jesus describes that process:

“But to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate

you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; & when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you.” As I've been reading & re-reading this over the last month or so...it strikes me that Jesus assumes his people will be opposed...speaks as if it is unavoidable that all who follow him will be challenged...

In fact this is part of the same sermon where Jesus says, **What** blessings await you when people hate you & exclude you & mock you & curse you as evil because you follow the Son of Man. – Lk 6:22 We grow in his grace as that grace becomes so visible in all we are & all we do & so challenges the culture around us that the people who are closest to us & see Jesus most clearly in us come at us...*hate you & exclude you & mock you & curse you as evil because you live (Jesus says) like me...* because he is so obvious in you. What does that mean? Well it means that whatever fruit of the spirit/character trait of Jesus God wants to create in your life you will experience something that invites you to do just the opposite. To learn patience you'll be forced to wait. To learn to love you will be placed alongside someone pretty unlovely. To learn kindness you'll have to deal w/ someone who is abrasive, aggressive & demanding. You can only really experience deep soul satisfying joy by relying on God who raises the dead when you hurt so bad you think you want to die. You can only really experience deep soul satisfying joy by relying on God who raises the dead when you have been hurt so badly by another that you'd like to rip their head off & use it for a vase.

But secondly...that “grow in his grace” business doesn't happen by accident. Just like I can't go to bed one night saying I'm losing 5 kilos & wake up the next day & tighten my belt; I can't keep doing life the way I've always done it (my own ease habits comfort satisfaction schedule instincts inclinations) & expect Jesus' character & likeness will emerge. If I desire my attitudes – values – beliefs – behaviour to reflect Jesus more & more & if I want my kids, friends, acquaintances to see that transformation happening & join in...I have to allow him to transform me... something has to happen. **Don't** copy the behavior & customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. - Rom 12:2 And the only way that happens is as I immerse myself regularly...marinate my heart...infuse my life w/ the Scriptures...I find myself coming back to Peter again & again **By** his divine power, God has given us everything we need for living a godly life. We have received all of this by coming to know him, the one who called us to himself by means of his marvelous glory & excellence. Because of his glory & excellence, God has given us great & precious promises. These are the promises that enable you to share his divine nature & escape the world's corruption caused by human desires. – 2 Pet 1:3-4

The only place I have access to God's promises...every single one...Is right here. Life change that matters...transformation that lasts happens as God fills my life w/ his Word. **All** Scripture is inspired by God & is useful to teach us what is true & to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong & teaches us to do what is right. God uses it to prepare & equip his people to do every good work. - 2 Tim 3:16-17 God's word transforms everything it touches never returns empty – always accomplishes its purpose. Reading it daily at home, sharing the experience w/ a friend, experiencing it in worship...God's word transforms everything it touches. Grace grows in me/you...as God's word of grace promise hope forgiveness life & salvation penetrates to deepest recess & darkest corner of my life.

If you've hung around me long enough you'll have heard me say... God's Word is authoritative – true – applicable. **Authoritative:** it is the gold standard - first & final reference point for every decision, every circumstance, every question, every fear, doubt, attack...every word is there because God wanted us to read it. **True:** it will always take me back to the absolute truth of God who created me for himself – redeemed me through His Son & abides in me through His Holy Spirit...it will always identify my sin/self-will & lead me to the forgiveness & healing of Christ crucified, risen, & ruling. I cannot trust any other alleged authority or truth – culture tradition human reason or my flighty feelings at any given moment...those shift & change w/ time & custom God's Word does **not**. **Applicable:** Jesus said, "...everyone who hears these words of mine & puts them into practice is like a wise person who built their house on the rock." James wrote, "Don't just listen to God's word. You must do what it says. Otherwise, you are only fooling yourselves." US evangelist/pastor Dwight Moody is famous for saying: "**God** did not give us the Bible to increase our knowledge, but to change our lives."

The "why" for you/me...Living Water...**To** grow in his grace...growing is a destiny not a destination...a journey not an arrival...a roadway not a carpark. We will always experience that grace & its transformation of our lives in the process of living...& that process is sometimes painful...**But** to you who are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies! Do good to those who hate you. Bless those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, offer the other cheek also. If someone demands your coat, offer your shirt also. Give to anyone who asks; & when things are taken away from you, don't try to get them back. Do to others as you would like them to do to you.

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Through His Word & through the circumstances & situations of our lives where we are called to rely on Jesus' strength w/in us...we grow closer to that desire – design & intention of God that we grow in every way more & more like Christ. Jesus is clear: life w/ him is not simply the prize at the end of this life, some carrot dangling out on the end of a stick. Eternal life is not something we sit & wait on until it comes to pass when this world stops spinning. Life w/ Jesus happens now by the presence & power of the Holy Spirit working in each of us. We are never left to grind out this life on our own. We are never left to soldier through the circumstances of our days by ourselves. Jesus assures us that his mission, his goal was to bring God's power, God's rule to bear on real human lives & real human situations. Jesus' mission was to bring people into a relationship w/ God the Father such that they lived in his presence & power & carried out his way of living here... w/ such intimacy that 'Rivers of living water will flow from their heart.'

God knew his people in advance, & he chose them to become like his Son...
...the student who is fully trained will become like the teacher...
...grow in his grace.

As you leave today, be specific & share w/ your neighbour...

TAKE IT HOME

Name two (2) places in your life where you're asking God to grow his grace in you this week?

(Be specific...where do you want that transformation in grace to happen?)

Prayer after the sermon...

Lord Jesus, outside your embrace we are forsaken. Apart from you we are lost even to ourselves. Unless you gather us in we are homeless & scattered on the earth. Teach us to fear you without being afraid, to serve you without being slavish, to worship you without grovelling. You are perfect in grace, perfect in mercy, and perfect in truth. Without you there are only shadows and broken images. With you there is always light and life and holy joy. Wonderful is your name today and forever! Amen.