



August 5, 2018  
Titus 2:11-15  
Pastor Phil Ward

## Grace and Good Works

Hi Everyone. My name is Larry Adams and I want to take a moment to thank you for reading this message. At Golden Hills we are committed to exalting Jesus and preaching the Word. Your downloading of this message is a great encouragement to us, as we know that our ministry is going out to spread God's Word all over the world.

We want you to know, too, that in no way do we intend these messages to be a replacement for your involvement in a good local church, where, sitting under the authority of pastors and other teachers, you can learn to worship, grow and serve and be engaged with a body of believers where you can grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We realize also, that some of you may be in areas of the world where there is no local church. Therefore, we hope these messages you are using, to gather with your family or other believers, or people from the community that it will be a great encouragement to you, as you hear God speak into your life, helping you to become disciples who are true, reproducing followers of Jesus Christ.

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Welcome. My name is Phil and I'm one of the pastors here. I have the privilege of preaching this morning. I haven't been here for a number of weeks, but my wife told me it's like riding a bike: you'll get back in the swing of things. But it has been a struggle all day! So be gracious to me, and forgiving and patient.

We are in a series called *Devoted*, and it's about the pairing of the gospel with good works. So if you have a Bible, we'll be in Titus 2 this morning. I love this series. I love the series we did previously, which was 1 Timothy. I love it because it reminds us that we, as Christians, are not called to merely believe something, nor are we called to merely behave a certain way. Instead, we are called to wed those two things. We are to believe a certain health, sound doctrine, but we are also so behave a certain way that brings glory to God, and the good of our neighbor. So we are always to be living in conformity with those two things together. That's what this series is really about: the gospel and good works. How do these two things come together.

My family was travelling for a while. We went to the East Coast for a couple weeks last month. My son played in a baseball tournament in Cooperstown, NY. We went to the Hall of Fame and all that stuff. Then, our family went to New England. We did all the things we were told to do there. We were good West Coasters on the East Coast: we went to Boston, we did the Freedom Train, we cruised through Providence, RI, and Connecticut. We went to Mystic, where you got to see where they made the movie, Mystic Pizza. Whatever. We went to New York City and did some of the things there. We went to Philadelphia. We did all that stuff. What was really neat, though, was it was my kids' first plane ride. As you know, any time you're with somebody who is flying for the first time, it can be a little bit nerve-racking. So my kids were asking us questions about what it was going to be like. I was asking, are you nervous? And so they were pretty good. But, if you've ever been with someone who has never flown before, there are always two things etched in their minds, that they will remember forever about flying. Two things. Not security, not the peanuts, not the Ginger Ale, it's the take off and landing. For us, it was an adventure. My son was sitting there. Here we go, starting to go up. I looked over and could

see him, getting pressed into his seat as we were taking off. I smiled. He was big-eyed, like *is this supposed to happen?* So he was a little bit nervous. Then when we landed in Newark, NJ, they had cross winds, so we came in sideways! You kind of look out and see that the runway is going this way, but we're coming in that way. So it was unsettling. So when we hit the runway, we bounced and hopped. I played it up like I was cool, but inside I was like GAAA! . My son was grabbing that arm of the seat. When some of the players on the baseball team asked us later how was the flight, you know what the kids all talked about? The take off and the landing. They're like the bookends of your adventure. The most memorable time.

You know, in life, there are so many examples where we remember the bookends, but are kind of murky about the details that go in between them. I remember when I got my acceptance letter to college. I also remember very clearly, when I graduated (cap and gown and all). It's just all that time in between those, I don't remember everything we learned in my classes. I don't remember every conversation I had, or every meal. They're just kind of whatever. But I certainly remember getting in and getting out! Those were the bookends. I also the gentleman who shared with me that he had just one and only job for one and only company. He remembers the handshake when he got hired, and he remembered the handshake when he retired. I thought – that's cool. (Many of us won't do that, especially millennials. They will have 37 jobs before they retire, or something like that.)

I was thinking about this in human history. Sometimes when we learn history, we learn about the rise and the fall of empires and nations, and people groups. But a lot of the details in between, not really. How did it come to be and how did it fall apart – yes.

Another thing is, I have an interest in American history, especially WWII stuff. So when we think about WWII, we think about two things: Pearl Harbor, and D-Day. The beginning and the end.

So, we see this in life. Most of the things we remember are the bookends – the beginning and the end. That's what Paul is going to talk about in Titus 2, about the Christian life having bookends. It has one, the first coming of Jesus, which he is going to call the "grace of God appearing". Then there is the second component – the second bookend, the finish side of it, which is the second coming, often coming the Second Advent, which Paul is going to call the "appearing of God's glory."

So the bookends of the Christian life is the grace of God and the glory of God. Everything in between is what we're doing right now. We live in the midst of, or in between, the grace of God and the glory of God appearing. That's where we're at, and that's what Paul is going to talk about.

We are also going to share Communion today. It's important to understand that Communion reminds us that we live between grace and glory. It's this truth, the fact that we live between those bookends, which is the foundation for all the good works we do. Every good work we ever endeavor to do, as Christians, is founded upon the truth that we live between grace and glory. We'll see that today in Titus 2:11-15.

Let's pray together: *Father, I pray that You would teach us. I pray that You would show us Your word, what it is we are to believe. I pray that You would work in our lives to see and behold the beauty and wonder of what You've accomplished on our behalf. God, that You would also compel us with Your love, to be the kind of people You envision us being. So God would You teach us, grant us the Spirit, giving us the mind of Christ and giving us the kind of heart we need to comprehend and believe and understand what we're going to talk about today. So do these things for us, we pray. For Your glory and our joy in Jesus' name, amen.*

In order to really grasp what we're doing here, we have to remember some of the things Larry preached on the last couple weeks. In the first week of our series, he talked about the fact that our lives cannot be disconnected regarding what we believe and how we live. He highlighted the fact that what we believe impacts how we live, and the two together make up our devotion to God. So if you want to know

how devoted to God you are, you have to look at how you're living and what you believe. You can see how those two things go together.

We see in Titus 1:1, how Paul puts these two things together. He says, "Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the sake of the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth, which accords with godliness." Notice that it accords with godliness. So in Paul's mind there is a connection between what you know and believe, which should accord with godliness – how you behave. So he is saying I'm here for the purpose of helping people believe and know the right things, but everything they believe and know is always in conjunction with (or according to, in partnership with) godliness. They are inseparable. You can't just focus on one or the other. It has to be both.

We see a warning in Titus 1:15-16 where Paul writes:

<sup>15</sup> To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure; but both their minds and their consciences are defiled. <sup>16</sup> They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient, unfit for any good work.

So outwardly, with their mouths, they say they know God. But the way they live gives every indication that they do not know God. They deny Him. That's why Jesus said, "Why are you calling Me Lord, Lord and are not doing what I say?" Who are you fooling? Are you kidding me? NO, the person who truly knows God is the person who lives in a godly way. Because those two things go together.

It's not only that good behavior or godliness is in accordance with what we believe, but what we believe is in accordance with how we live. It works both ways. Paul said that in Titus 2:1 – "But as for you [Titus], teach what accords with sound doctrine."

So at one point, Paul says I'm going to teach you the doctrine, then you need to live accordingly. Then he says, I'm going to teach you godly behavior, and you need to believe accordingly. Notice what he is doing – he is wedding what we believe and how we live together. That's all what Christianity is – taking what we believe and wedding it together with how we live.

I know many Christians are accused of not living as good as they should. We as Christians should reply, naturally, "Duh." Because we're a work in progress and the work God is doing is not done yet. So all of our lives it's about trying as best we know how, with whatever means God has granted us, to get what we believe and how we behave, together; to wed those two together.

Larry also mentioned that our devotion to God is rooted in our identity and our purpose. You have to know who you are. You have to know why God placed you on planet earth. A lot of people don't know their identity. They don't know their purpose. So they are living aimlessly. In some ways, there is a lot of dissatisfaction in life.

So Paul wrote that he is a servant of God. That's his identity. He is an apostle, or a "sent one" from God. He is here for the sake of the faith of God's elect – that's his purpose. He is here to minister to people, to grow in their faith and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, in accordance with godliness. So Larry mentioned that our devotion to God is deeply rooted in who we understand ourselves to be, and what our purpose is. We as Christians understand that we are children of God.

Not only that, but we are also called to be ambassadors and witnesses. That is our purpose.

One question is, why. Why should we study theology? Why should we behave a certain way? Why should we pursue godliness? Why should we pursue sound doctrine? There are two answers to that. Most of the time, we see these and we tend to lean one way or the other.

The first one is this: the reason why we try to behave the best we can and live in godliness, is because God said so. That sounds noble. Maybe it is dignifying. Unfortunately, it is just difficult and actually, it creates some real deep complications. Here is what I mean. If you believe that God wants you to believe a certain thing and live a certain way, and the only rationale is “because I said so,” then you begin to think of the good Christian life that God has called you to, as a law. Laws are there to tell you what you ought to do, and threaten you if you break it. Many Christians have in their minds, “I ought to behave this way! I ought to believe this way, or else He is going to get me!” That’s law.

There is another answer to the question, why should we believe and behave a certain way. It is not law. It’s called grace. The answer to that is, the reason why I believe this, and the reason I live this way is because of all God has done for me, when I didn’t deserve it.

Notice the difference. One is an emphasis on what you must do for God. The other is an emphasis on all that God has done for you. That is a world of difference. One will crush your soul and spirit. The other will liberate you. That’s all.

So this is significant. That’s why Paul keeps emphasizing this. This is the difference between freedom and slavery.

Here is how Paul put it: (Titus 2:11-12)

<sup>11</sup> For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, <sup>12</sup> training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Let’s stop there. Notice what Paul does with the first word. It’s the conjunction (Greek “gar”), “for”. It could also be translated, “because.” It is a conjunction that signifies causation. That means, pay attention to this *affect*, this outcome. I want to call to your attention, why that outcome is the way it is. Here is the cause. It’s “because” this. So when Paul goes through, in Titus 2:1-10 and lays out what the Christian life is supposed to be like – the good life – he lays it out and then he uses the word gar in Greek, or because. In other words, that’s the affect. That’s what we’re trying to accomplish with our lives. Verses 1-10. The reason why, or the “cause” of this kind of life is because of this – the grace of God has appeared. Notice that? The grace of God is the foundation of all of our life. It is the motivator. It is what enables. It is what empowers obedience. Right living. Right thinking. Good doctrine. It is grace.

We have to ask, what is grace? We typically think of grace as a thing we experience, not something we can see. So when he says the grace of God has appeared, how is that possible. Grace is not something you can measure, (we think) or taste or see. What color is grace? How much does it weigh? But Paul is saying that the grace of God has appeared. There has been a visible manifestation of God’s grace, somehow. We recall what John 1 says, where Jesus is described as the grace and truth, “the fullness of God’s grace and truth has come.” So when we put these two things together, we recognize – oh! The reason why we live as we do, and believe what we do, is because Jesus has come, in His first coming, full of grace and truth. It says He is bringing salvation for all people.

Titus 2:1-10 highlights five different kinds of people. Older men, be self-controlled. Younger men, be self-controlled. Older women, train younger women. Younger women, be respectful. Then he goes into bondservants, or slaves. Five different people groups to whom he said, this is how you should live, because the grace of God has appeared.

Paul is saying that not everyone gets saved, but that God has come to save all kinds of people. Here is how Tim Chester, an author and pastor in the UK., put it:

Why should older men be temperate or self-controlled? So they can commend the gospel to other older men, because Christ came to save old people. Why should older women be reverent? So they can commend the gospel to other women, because Christ came to save women. Why should younger women love their husbands and children? So they can commend the gospel to them, because Christ came to save husbands and children. Why should young men be self-controlled? So they can commend the gospel to other young men, because Christ came to save young men. Why should slaves be subject to their masters? So they can commend the gospel to their masters, because Christ came to save masters.

What that teaches us is the grace of God is made available to all people. There are no prerequisites to the reception of God's grace. You don't have to be at a certain level of education. You don't have to be of a certain level of wealth or privilege. You don't have to have a certain socio-economic level – high class, middle class or any class. You don't have to be black or white. It doesn't matter what your skin color is. It doesn't matter what your background is, or what language you speak.

All are offered grace. (applause)

The whole rationale is this: the whole reason we should live this way, is the grace of God has appeared, and the grace of God is how God is ransoming people from every tongue, tribe, nation and people group, to Himself. The grace of God is trans-national. How we live is a commendation (a recommendation) for the beauty and truth of the gospel.

When we buy stuff on line, usually you look at the reviews. Is this recommended? Will this work for my situation? We do recognize that the way we live is constantly recommending the beauty of Christ. This is how beautiful He is.

That is what Paul is trying to get across. The grace of God has appeared. It's the grace for all kinds of people, regardless of your background, or what you have done or not done. God's grace is here for you. He wants you.

Not only is it beautiful, and saves, but it also trains. Look at verse 12. Grace is ...

<sup>12</sup>training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age.

Notice the two things: it teaches us to say no, but it also teaches us to say yes. No to the bad. Yes to the good. In other words, no to being ungodly; yes to being godly. Grace teaches us this.

What does that look like? Like this: we have to realize that, when we renounce ungodliness, it's basically saying no to being the opposite of God. Grace teaches us how to say no to being the opposite of God. An example would be this: if you come to realize, through meditating, thinking and pondering about the good news of Jesus Christ, that God sent His one and only Son to rescue you in the midst of

your sin, through His death and resurrection, you will simply believe that He is sufficient and you don't have what it takes, but He does. If you ponder that and start to realize – oh, my goodness – I've been forgiven of so much! Then when your neighbor or your family member does something stupid, and you are posed with this dilemma of should I or should I not forgive them? The person who has pondered the deep and profound beauty of the grace of God will answer always, yes I should forgive them, because I have been forgiven so much. Remember what Jesus said, forgive as you have been forgiven. The person who ponders grace and the gospel and understands that – oh, my goodness! – I don't deserve anything! But God, in His lavish mercy and grace has given me all that I need. It's amazing.

So when you encounter somebody who has needs, whether worldly needs or spiritual needs in this world, you don't look at them and close your heart against them, because you can recall the gospel and the radical generosity of God toward you, and then you turn your heart (not hard but soft) and you say, just as God has met my needs, I am going to meet yours!

If you ponder the grace of God, and you think about the deep and profound beauty of God and the gospel, it impacts the way you live. You will say no to being the opposite of God; and you will say yes to godliness, or being like God. It all depends on thinking about the gospel.

Typically, in church, we tend to think of the gospel, the good news of Jesus, as being strictly for people, to take them from unbelief to belief. Once they've come to believe, we tend to put the gospel on the shelf. Close the pantry. We're done. But we don't recognize that Romans 1 says that Paul was coming to the church at Rome because he heard of their world-famous faith in Jesus. He was blown away by what they knew and believed and how they lived. He was floored. Five verses later he says, "I am eager to come to you that I may share the gospel with you as well." Wait, what? They have world-famous faith, and you're eager to share the gospel with them? They already know the gospel. Here is the beauty of what Paul is doing: the gospel is not just for how to get to heaven. The gospel is the reminder of God's goodness toward you in the midst of your sin, the grace that He lavishes upon you.

Laws don't provide you with what you need to obey the law. However, the gospel is the power to not only command you to live a certain way, but it also supplies you with what you need to obey it. That's the beauty of grace. It teaches us to say no to some things and yes to others. I want you to see the beauty of that. If all we ever do is focus on what the good life is like (2:1-10), to be forgiven, to be self-controlled and all – if all we ever do is focus on that, and all we ever do is reiterate the commands to other people, (you better be like this, or you better do this), it can eventually crush your soul. How? Like this: if you know you are commanded to be self-controlled, and you lose self-control, what do you do? Generally, you go to somebody and say, I need to confess. I totally lost control of my kids, I became impatient. I lost it with my wife. Horrible. *That person looks at you and he says, you need to be self-controlled.* You say, yeah, that's why I'm here. I didn't do what I should have done. So what do you think I should do? *He tells you, you just have to try harder. Just be better at trying harder to be self-controlled. Recognize your inner fortitude. Recognize that you possess all you need to do it. You can do it! So go do it!* Ok, I'm going to try harder. You try hard. A week later you're back going, that didn't work.

Here's the thing, it's not so much that our conscience is plagued with the fact that we can't meet God's standards, it's plagued by the fact that you and I can't even meet our own standards. Let's take God's standards out of the equation and ask you – are you living as well as you know you should? What's the recommendation? Try harder? Notice how crushing that can be. I've already done that. It doesn't work. So then you get the Christian version of it, *which is you just have to read your Bible more and pray more. That will work.* Ok! I'll do that. Then four days later – failed again. So what do you do?

Do you keep trying harder and harder and harder? No. Eventually you'll end up feeling condemned and guilty and filled with shame. But Romans 8:1 says for whoever is in Christ Jesus (whoever that may be), there is now no condemnation. So how is it that I feel condemned all day long, but I'm told I'm not condemned? What's the solution? The solution is not more law. The solution is grace.

Here is how Tim Chester put it (the pastor and author from the UK):

There will be times when you need to tell people what a good life looks like. Self-control, for instance. But if you want people to actually live a good life, then do not emphasize the good they must do for God. Instead, you must emphasize the good that God has done for them.

As we ponder and think about the depths and beauty of God's grace, that in the midst of our rebellion and sin and hatred toward Him, where we wanted all the gifts of God without God Himself (like a spoiled brat on Christmas Day, who only wants the presents and wants the parents out of the room), in the midst of that God said, I want to give you My most precious treasured possession. I'm giving you My Son.

It changes the way you live. You recognize – oh, my! – the way I live is in response to the radical generosity of God in providing for me, what I needed most desperately.

The answer to how can I be more self-controlled is not to try harder. The answer is to ponder the preciousness of the gospel of God's grace. As you ponder the gospel of God's grace, you will be strengthened by that grace. That grace that strengthens you in Christ Jesus has the empowering and enabling effect upon your life. That's amazing. The grace of God does that.

John Bunyan who wrote Pilgrim's Progress. One of my favorite stanzas in one of his poems is this. It has helped me tremendously over the years:

Run, John, run, the law commands,  
but gives neither feet nor hands.  
Better news, the gospel brings.  
It bids me fly and grants me wings.

You need to realize that the law commands you to be obedient, but it supplies you with nothing. The gospel commands you to be obedient, and grants you all you need to be obedient. That is good news.

Communion reminds us that we live between grace and glory. The grace of God has appeared, teaching us to say no to some things, and yes to others. It empowers and enables us. It really is the foundation for all of our good works. It says, "in the present age," (vs 2:12). That means right now. It's not just the good news of how to get to heaven. It's the good news of how you live the life that God demands and commands, which is pleasing to Him and glorifying to Him and also precious and joyful to us.

That life is one of waiting (v 13). "waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ." Our life today is a life of waiting. As Christians, we are waiting for the glory of God to appear. That is our blessed hope.

Now, this sounds horrible to us as Americans because we hate waiting! You know what I'm talking about. Last time you went to a restaurant, how long was the wait? Ok, let's go! When you go to a coffee

shop, or anywhere. You're waiting and you see a long line – you keep driving. Let's go somewhere else. I'm not waiting in that line. Or if you happen to be in a line, one that it's worth waiting for, what do you do when you're waiting? Just sit there? Talk to people? NO! You pull out your phone! You're not going to be caught doing nothing! So you pull out your phone. I have stuff to do. I feel like every time I'm in line at a coffee shop, I feel like asking people on their phone, *do you have to do that right now?* Just curious. I bet you, not. People are just addicted to it. They can't be idle. They can't just stand there.

So when the Bible says to wait, we go – no, I don't think so. I want it now. We live in an instant gratification society, do we not? I want what's easy and fast. Cooking takes too long, I will microwave it.

That's not how it works with the Christian life. We wait patiently. The degree that you are willing to wait patiently is rooted in what your waiting for. Nobody will patiently wait to be smacked in the face, but you will patiently wait for something that you think is valuable, and you'll receive it for free. You're willing to wait for that. So what are we waiting for as Christians? Because this present age is marked with waiting.

He says we are waiting for our blessed hope. The word "blessed" here can be translated as "happy." We as Christians are waiting for our happy hope! The word "hope" means a confident expectation of something to come in the future. So as we think about the future, we are happy! Does that describe you? Often, it doesn't describe us. Not because there is nothing to be happy about, but that we have forgotten what to be happy about. We're happy for vacations, but they come and go. We're happy for promotions, but now you actually have to work! We're happy when our kids learn to tie their shoes, but then they come in, dragging mud into the house.

We as Christians can never be so near-sighted that we have forgotten our hope. Instead, as we ponder the hope that is laid out before us, we should respond the way we ought to – which is, we should be happy.

What is there to be happy about? I had nine things to be happy about, but I only have time left to do three. I will pick the three best. Three reasons to be happy in our hope, as Christians, in the appearing of the grace of God.

**First** – when Christ appears, and I know that he is talking about the glory of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ, the coming of glory. It's another way of saying the coming of Jesus. He is coming back! We know He is coming back because He was dead, and then He rose from the dead. He is coming back. When He does, what is going to happen. Oh – happy! 1 John 3:1-3 –

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. <sup>2</sup> Beloved, we are God's children now [our identity], and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. <sup>3</sup> And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

That might not mean much to you, but remember the standard thing. We don't even meet our own standards. There is coming a day when we will no longer look introspectively. We will say, look at all the ways I come up short. I'm not as patient as I should be. I'm not as loving as I should be. I'm not as forgiving as I should be. All that wells up into all kinds of conviction and guilt. If that's not dealt with, it results in shame. Pretty soon, all that guilt, shame and conviction – convicts us, crushes us, and we feel like we can't move or do anything. Have you ever been there? As you think about that, we need to

realize that this promise is this: there is coming a day, brothers and sisters, when Jesus will come and beholding His return, we will be transformed. No longer the failures that we know we are, but we will be transformed into the image of Him who has never failed. The righteousness we know we lack, we will be given in fullness and finality. We will be made perfect. (applause) So if anyone ever says, Phil, you are a Christian but you fail all the time. I'd say, I know! But there is coming a day when I won't any more, and in that day, there will be an overwhelming sense of happiness. Because on that day I will be what I always wanted to be, and the person I knew God was going to make me. I will be like Jesus. If you know Jesus, you know that He is the exact best friend, best spouse that you've always dreamed of. We're all going to be like that as Christians! I can't wait for that day!

**Second** – The second happy thing that will happen when Christ appears is we shall receive our reward. The apostle Peter said (1 Peter 5:4) <sup>4</sup>“And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.”

The apostle Paul said in 2 Timothy 4:8 <sup>8</sup>“Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.”

He said in Colossians 3:4 <sup>4</sup>“When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.”

There is coming a day when our reward will be granted to us. The reward is a crown of glory. A crown of righteousness. And we will see Him as He is. This doesn't mean we're just going to get rich, sitting on thrones and stuff. It means we will be given a crown of righteousness, of glory. We will receive all that God has promised us. I know that sounds a bit bizarre. Paul means this: what you are going to receive is the unhindered, unfiltered access to God's glory. God's glory is a difficult thing for us to understand. We throw it around all the time. It might even be over-used, but it might be not well-understood. The glory of God is the visible value of all that God is. There is coming a day when we will be free of sin, and able to behold the glory of God and see how valuable He truly is. That is our reward. We will see Him! Whereas the psalmist put it (Ps 16:11) “In Your presence is the fullness of joy, and at Your right hand (which is where Jesus is) are pleasures forever more.”

There is coming a day when we will have access to the presence of God, and in the presence of God we will experience the fullness of joy. Brothers and sisters, you know what that's like. You know that your heart is longing and aching for a satisfaction that extends well beyond this world. You put your hope in a vacation and you get back, then the only thing you can think of is, when is the next one. You put your hope in a promotion, and as soon as you get it, you wonder, when is my vacation coming? You put your hope in your kids behaving and getting into college, and then what? You see, we have unmet desires. As C.S. Lewis said, “If I find a desire within myself that nothing in this world can satisfy, it must mean I am meant for another world.”

There is a joy, an infinite joy, a full satisfaction, the fullest of pleasures forevermore that are offered to everybody in the presence of God. When Jesus returns – that's what we get! Fullness of joy. Pleasures forevermore.

One of my favorite things is, in Peter Pan, the lost boys are looking at the old Peter Pan. They say, “Hey Peter, you're old!” And one of the lost boys comes to the grown up Peter Pan and he squeezes on his face, and push away the wrinkles. But that doesn't work. So he takes the corners of Peter's frowning mouth with his thumbs, and lifts it. Then the boy steps back and says, “OH! There you are, Peter!”

There is coming a day when we will see Jesus. We've seen glimpses of Him, but then all of a sudden we'll see Him as He is and we'll say, "OH! There is what my heart has always wanted! There you are!" I don't know about you, but that makes me happy.

**Third.** When Christ appears, we will be transformed. Philippians 3:20-21 Paul writes:

<sup>20</sup> But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, <sup>21</sup> who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

When Jesus appears, this lowly, decaying, decrepit body is getting exalted! We will have bodies no longer plagued with sin, no longer plagued with disease, no longer falling apart. Instead, we will receive a glorious, transformed body! That is incredibly awesome!

One of the promises is in Revelation 21, that when Jesus returns, He will wipe away every tear. I don't know about you, but my grandfather died at 79 from bone cancer. We shed tears. But we understand that the hope of a Christian, the happy hope is this: though my body is wasting away, I'm getting a new one! And the people I love, who I'm praying for, who are experiencing the devastating effects of things like cancer, and their body is wasting away – we have to encourage them with the happy hope that, as much as this body is wasting away, God has promised you that though you die, yet shall you live! This is amazing!

We will be radically transformed when Jesus returns. Free of grief. Free of suffering. Free of pain. Free of disease. Free of death. Every tear will be wiped dry, in the presence of Jesus, our greatest joy.

It makes me realize that this world isn't my home. I'm destined for more. In fact, God has promised me not only do you have a desire for more, but your desires will be satisfied. That makes me realize – this world is not my home. I want to go home. I'm homesick! It wears on me to have people say bad and negative things about me, time and time again. Sometimes you just want to stop and say, God, I want to go home! There, I won't be slandered any more.

The beautiful thing is, it's not just that we get to go home, it's that, as we wait for home, Jesus is slowly but surely bringing home to us. That's why we gather as a church. We're brothers and sisters. This is a small glimpse of home. Let's be good to each other, shall we? We're in this together.

Communion reminds us of that, God. We live between grace and glory. In the meantime, we patiently wait for the happy hope of all that God has promised us. That affects the way we live.

Lastly, I have four "P's" of what Communion reminds us of, that Jesus gives Himself for us.

Look at verse 14: Jesus, <sup>14</sup> "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." The beauty, the greatness of Jesus is that He has given Himself for us. He hasn't given Himself TO us, but FOR us. That means there has been an exchange. I want your sin (He says), and I'm going to give you My righteousness. The new creation (2 Peter 3) is said to be the home of righteousness. That's what we wait for.

There are four things that Jesus did, giving of Himself for us. The four "P's".

**First, to purchase us.** Paul writes, (Titus 2:14) “[He] <sup>14</sup> 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.” The word “purchase” is an economic transaction. It is the idea of when someone is purchased out of slavery. By the blood of Jesus, those of us who were enslaved to sin, and realize that the redemption of Jesus accomplished through the shed blood on His cross, is that He purchased us from slavery and set us free. He did that for you and me.

Ephesians 1:7 says, “<sup>7</sup> In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace.” When we take the cup in our hands, and we’re looking at that grape juice, symbolic of the blood of Jesus, we have to remember in that moment that it is by the blood of Jesus that I’ve been purchased from the slavery of sin and been set free. Thank You for Your blood.

**Second, it purifies.** Jesus gave Himself to purify us. It’s not just purify in the sense that outwardly everything is going to be fixed, and we’ll do what we should do outwardly. But there is also an inward purification. This is what is significant. Hebrews 9:11-14 talks about how Jesus enters the throne room of God, not by the means of blood of goats or heifers, in the Old Testament, but He came into the presence of God with His own blood. Verse 13-14 ask this question, if the blood of goats and bulls was enough to satisfy God’s wrath in the Old Testament, can you imagine how much more beautiful the blood of Jesus is than animals? “How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God.”

I don’t know if you grasp the severity, significance and weightiness of God’s sending His Son Jesus to bleed for us. The blood of Jesus purified not only our outward conduct, but it purifies the depths of who we are by cleansing our conscience.

As the failures in your life begin to add up, and you’re starting to feel condemned, plead the blood of Jesus. Plead the blood of Jesus. Romans 8 says that if you’re ever accused of not being good enough, and not being acceptable by God, you know that comes from Satan. Because the shed blood of Jesus has already happened. He has secured for you an eternal redemption. You have been purchased by Jesus. You are His. If any nonsense about you not being good enough, ever gets into your head, you know you need to tell Satan to shut his mouth. Because the blood of Jesus is sufficient. And you can be free in your conscience. I don’t have to work and be good enough to be accepted by Jesus. In the midst of my weakness and sin, Jesus worked His way toward me! I stand on the finished work of Jesus, not my work! So shut your mouth, Satan.

See how rich and beautiful Communion is? That Jesus purchased us, purifies us **so He can (third) possess** us. I am yours and you are Mine, Jesus says.

The last one is He possess us, purifies us and purchases us so that we can be **(fourth) passionate** about good works. That’s what the word zealous means. We are His own possession, who are zealous for good works, passionate for good works. Not because by good works are we saved, but because we are saved by grace, we are eager to do the good works which commend the gospel.

I want to tell you how great God is. Even if you won’t listen to my words, will you at least listen to my life? Let me show you how good God is. Though you don’t deserve this, I’m giving it to you. Though you don’t deserve forgiveness, I’m giving it to you. Though you don’t deserve this love, I’m going to love you anyway. This is how good God is. What I’m doing for you is what He did for me.

That’s what we do in Communion. As a body, as a family, we come to the Lord’s table, rehearsing the gospel, reminding ourselves of the truths of God’s grace. Taking the body of Jesus, represented

symbolically through the bread. Knowing that the body that God came in, He died in, rose in, and is coming back in a new body. We're promised the same thing! Taking the cup in our hands, we look at that juice, symbolic of Jesus' blood.

You have redeemed me. Purified me. Possessed me, because of this (blood).

*So, God, would You work in us as we share Communion together, reminding ourselves that we live between the grace and the glory, and that this truth is the foundation for all of our good works. God, as Your children, I pray that what would well up inside of us is a deep and profound sense of gratitude for all that You are and all that You have done. Thank You for this bread and this cup, a reminder of Your grace. We thank You in Jesus' name, amen.*