

Anniversary SUNDAY

35th Anniversary Celebration *Grace and Gratitude // Colossians 3:15-17*

If you have your Bible, turn with me to **Colossians 3**.

- **Pray for Jamaica – Hurricane Melissa.**

This morning, we celebrate 35 years of God's grace.

- Thirty-five years of lives changed, prayers answered, gospel preached, and faith stretched.

But if we're honest, these years haven't all been easy.

- I am sure there have been many peaks and valleys.
- There have been good days and bad days.
- Like most churches, we've faced loss, transitions, uncertainties, and challenges.

Yet - here we are. Only by His grace.

You know, anniversaries are funny things.

- They remind us of how far we've come – and how much we've had to depend in His grace to get there.

D.A. Carson once said, “Grace isn't God helping those who help themselves. Grace is God helping those who can't help themselves.”¹

Today, we don't celebrate what we have done.

- We celebrate what God has done.

And our response to His grace is simple: **gratitude.**

¹ *Scandalous Grace*, D.A. Carson.

That's what Paul does in the book of Colossians.

- He shows us what a life marked by grace and gratitude looks like.

Let's stand and read this together:

Colossians 3:15–17:

[15] And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. [16] Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. [17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Paul is describing what a life shaped by grace looks like.

- Grace changes the way we live, the way we think, and even the way we treat one another.

The first thing he says is this:

1. **Grace gives us peace.**

[15] And let the peace (Paints the picture of *oneness* or unity) of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful.

We are told to “*let the peace of Christ rule.*”

- The word “**rule**” means “**to act as an umpire.**”²

In other words, let the peace of Christ ***make the call*** in your heart.

When conflict arises or fear tries to settle in, let His peace rule in your life.

- When anxiety steps to the plate, let peace rule in your life.

*The peace of Christ settles any friction or strife, so that the body can remain strong and unified.*³

This is a vivid image for the life of the church.

- For 35 years, Eagle's Landing has seen transitions, tough decisions, and many challenges.

But through it all, Christ's peace has made the call.

² https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_315-16#3:15

³ https://www.preceptaustin.org/colossians_315-16#3:15

- His grace has kept this family together.

This reminds me of what Paul says in **Philippians 4:7**: *The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your heart and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

Peace doesn't come from perfect circumstances.

- It comes from a perfect Savior.

When we keep our eyes on Jesus, our soul finds rest in Him.

And Paul says – the natural overflow of that peace is gratitude: “*And be thankful.*”

- When Christ's peace rules in our hearts, gratitude begins to overflow.

When we look back, we don't see all the wonderful things that we did.

- We see all the wonderful things that *He* did.

Peace is not the only gift of grace Paul mentions.

- God's grace not only calms our hearts—it fills our minds...

Grace gives us peace.

2. Grace fills us with His Word.

[16] *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

Paul says, “*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly...*”

- If peace guards our hearts, His Word fills our minds.

The word “**dwell**” means “**to take up residence.**”

- God's Word is not meant to be a weekly read.
- It's meant to be a permanent resident.

It's meant to *live in us richly.*

Someone once said: *A Bible that's falling apart usually belongs to someone who isn't.*

- As a church, Eagle's Landing has been, and will continue to be, a place where the Word of God is preached.
- We take Bible intake seriously.

- We study the Word, we sing the Word, and we desire to live the Word.

Again, that's grace.

- God is using His Word to build us – He uses His Word to restore marriages, to mature saints, and to send men and women on mission.

And when God's Word dwells among His people, *real worship breaks out.*

- Paul says we “sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.... with thankfulness in our hearts.”

That's what we do today and every Sunday: *we sing the story of grace.*

Charles Spurgeon once said: *When we bless God for our mercies, we usually prolong them; when we bless Him for our miseries, we usually end them.*

- That's why we sing – because gratitude turns our theology into doxology.

Paul doesn't stop with the present. He looks ahead.

- Because the same grace that fills us today is the grace that will guide us tomorrow...

Grace fills us with His Word.

3. Grace shapes our future.

[17] And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

Paul looks ahead and says, “*Whatever you do...*”

- In other words: There is more work to do!

The same grace that brought us here is the grace that will carry us forward.

What will the next 35 years look like? We don't know.

- But what we do know is this: *If we keep doing everything in the name of the Lord Jesus* – if we keep letting His peace rule, His Word dwell, and His name be exalted – His grace will continue to flow.

As **1 Thessalonians** says: *He who calls you is faithful; He will surely do it.*
So, we look to the future not with fear, but with faith.

- Our gratitude today fuels our hope for tomorrow.

We can trust – the same God who has been faithful in the past will be faithful in the future.

As we plan for the future, we must keep our eyes fixed on Jesus... and trust His grace to lead and sustain us.

- We must respond to His grace the same way Paul did: *“giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”*

This is who we are, Eagle’s Landing.

- We are a church marked by grace and overflowing in gratitude.

When we remember His grace, we find new strength for tomorrow.

- When we are grateful, our hearts are renewed in worship.

So let’s celebrate 35 years – not by boasting in ourselves, but by saying together: *To Him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. (Ephesians 3:21)*

Everything we talked about today begins with grace.

- And grace begins with God.

Maybe you’ve realized you’ve never truly experienced that grace for yourself.

- You’ve been around the church – you may even be in an LG or serve – but you’ve never surrendered your life to Jesus.

Listen, this is where it begins.

- The same grace that’s held this church together for 35 years is the same grace that can forgive your sin and give you a free life today.

Ephesians 2:8: For by grace you have been saved through faith...

If you will turn to Jesus – and put your trust in Him – He will save you today.

If you make that decision, we would love for you to take the next step – baptism – today.