

SERMON: Sunday – 18 September 2022 – Rev Alistair Cowper

The Kingdom of Grace

1 Timothy 2:1-7

Luke 16:1-13

Paul sums up the good news of the gospel of grace when he declares to Timothy that,

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“God our Saviour, (who) wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth” (1 Timothy 2:3-4).

God is on our side. God is not against us. God is for us.

You know, growing up, I didn't hear that in church. Was I just not listening that week?

Faith was never painted to me as something so simple. There was always something you had to do in order to 'get right with God'. It was as if human beings would never be good enough, were always indebted to God in a kind of impoverished way.

That's a rotten theology. A toxic theology and I'm afraid I suspect it was all too common. I wonder why?

Why is it so difficult to proclaim the goodness of God's gracious salvation? Why are we too often left to feel that somehow we've got to earn it?

Which of course means that what we're aiming at is not grace in the first place. If we're striving for God to accept us then we haven't understood grace as undeserved favour.

I've always found it quite strange that the Master in Jesus' parable commends the shrewd manager for showing favour that was undeserved and doing it in a dishonest way - it wasn't his money to be lavishing on debtors without his masters permission.

But there again, why should I find this strange because the gospel is all about such grace even when it's undeserved favour shown by sinful wheeler dealers like shrewd manager looking to save his own skin.

In the world of grace, everything is free and exists in abundance (eg I heard a new interpretation of the parable the sower recently which spoke of the sower as the one who lavishly showers seed everywhere until it takes root everywhere, until the word of God is all in all).

Like so many things in this life, worldly wealth will come and go. It won't last forever. It's not eternal. It's transient. Here today and gone tomorrow, though many of us are in the fortunate position of benefiting from inheritance. But ultimately, riches will pass and poverty will pass. And true riches will remain.

I tell you, (therefore, says Jesus) use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings. Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much, and whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

Riches are entrusted to us. I suppose even the riches of all creation are held in trust to be used for the benefit of all living creatures. God the Creator has made us stewards; and trusts us with riches, some with little and some with more; and of course, some with not enough.

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You cannot serve both God and money (Luke 16:13). We want to serve God therefore our money must be placed beneath our service of God.

Like the shrewd manager, how then can we make use of resources that are not our own, God riches in creation, to make friends who will welcome us into eternal dwellings, in other words to make friends within God's family, brothers and sisters in faith.

It's about putting resources at the disposal of God's mission in the world so that all will be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth.

So I wonder how we might, as individuals and as church together, use our resources to do that. What might it look like to invest what we have in God's mission in the world.

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How can we use worldly wealth to make friends? Can we see our everyday encounters with people as opportunities to build friendship? How can we be generous with the riches of faith that our generous master has given us?

- Warm hub idea
- Refurbished building to accommodate more

- Looking for other ways to actively bless our community in a way that might grab people's attention and stir up a hunger for God and God's kingdom; generate a growing interest in seeking that goodness.

Let's pray that we will be wise with what we have. Wise in its use and with a commitment to use what we have for good.