



CONNECT GROUP NOTES

Sunday 23.07.2023

“Grace & Gratitude”

Preacher

Ps. Cameron Hall

Scripture

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. 13 Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. 14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful. 16 Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts. 17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.”

Colossians 3:12-17

Thought

God is always revealing the nature of His character to us. He longs for us to know Him, and He’s been taking mankind on this journey of understanding since the beginning of creation. In fact, before Jesus walked the dusty streets of Jerusalem, God’s nature was on display through creation itself (see Romans 1:19,20 and Psalm 8:3,4). This is the macro view of God - the wide



angled, zoomed out view of who God is in His wonder and beauty and splendour.

But then Jesus enters the scene, and our understanding of God's nature becomes clearer. We zoom in on God's attributes, his grace and mercy and heart for mankind is displayed through the person of Jesus. He is the visible image of the invisible God. He both is, and reflects, God Himself.

And then we come to another level of understanding, zooming in even closer, we find the invitation to step into deep relationship with God through the death and resurrection of Jesus. By His grace, Jesus has opened the door for us to experience the nature of God in our own lives, and through Christ, the image of God is found once again in us. What was once visible in creation is now visible in our hearts - splendour, beauty, new life bursting forth, all by the grace of God and the empowering of His Holy Spirit. From this overflow of grace in our hearts, we invite the fullness of God into our own homes, our workplaces, our world - drawing others closer to God through the redemption of our own lives (See Colossians 1:6).

Yet Christ never forces His way in - we must open the door of our hearts to Him, and as such, we need to guard our heart above all else. We can open the door of our hearts to many things, but the question is; What are we allowing in, and what are we keeping out?

We can usher in grace and peace, but we also have shadows that try to creep in to compromise and distort us from having peace and grace in our lives and families. Our life's circumstances, or external influences, or our own minds can bombard our heart with noise and distraction - but ultimately, we choose what we open our hearts to.

We are invited to clothe ourselves with peace and patience and put to death the ugly things - things like immorality and lust and idolatry. They are out to distort and are often disguised in different ways. It's our responsibility to show the door to those things, ushering them out, and opening the door of our hearts to God's kindness.

The bible reminds us to put on love and to allow the peace of Christ to rule in our hearts (Colossians 3:15). The challenge is to live this out. It's allowing



peace to be the umpire of our heart. In a world of chaos and disruption and noise, we are called to let Christ's peace make the call on what's in, and what's out in our lives. Like a tennis match, there are times when we are tempted to play a ball which was always going to be out. We must learn to know when to let it go, and allow peace to be our umpire.

John 14:27 is a beautiful reminder of God's invitation to peace, not as the world gives, but the very presence of Christ who guards our hearts and our minds, who has the final say and the final authority.

And finally, we wrap this up in a bow of thankfulness. Peace and gratitude; They are bound together. May we bask in His peace, enjoy the little moments in life, and allow those moments of peace to well up with deep joy, bubbling over in gratitude.

It's from this place of peace and gratitude that we can take the love of Christ into our homes, our relationships and our worlds. Our relationships are changed, we become better wives, better husbands, better parents, better children, better friends and colleagues and students and teachers. Not through our own striving, but as ones who have experienced the mercy and grace of an all-loving Father who has revealed Himself to us through creation, through Jesus, and ultimately through the indwelling of Christ in our hearts - the same God who promises to never leave us nor forsake us, and who promises to grant us His peace. May we not be troubled, may we not be afraid. May we change our worlds with His love.

Discussion Points

1. What attributes of God do we see in nature? (It may help to picture the world as it was in the beginning, before the fall).
2. What attributes of God do we see in Jesus? (You may wish to consider what was important to Jesus, and what wasn't important to him)
3. As we open the door to our hearts and allow our lives to be ruled by peace and gratitude, how does (or should) this affect our relationships with those around us?



Personal application + Prayer

Dear Lord,

Thank you for revealing your heart since the beginning. Continue to reveal Yourself to me, and help me to see who You truly are, to know You more deeply and to see You more clearly. May I understand the rhythms of Your grace, to know the depths of Your mercy in my heart, and help me to display Your kindness to those around me - my family, my friends, every relationship I form or have, and let my heart always be grateful for Your never ending love as I live a life directed by Your perfect peace.

Amen