

APPRECIATION SUNDAY
August 23, 2009
PHILIPPIANS 1:2-6
The Reverend Carolyn McOwen

Contemporary service- read Scripture- then pray

11:00 service- ask the choir to move down to the reserved rows!

In order to make appreciation Sunday special, I must set the stage. And apostle Paul's words are perfect, because he was expressing his appreciation to the people in the church at Philippi.

Traditional services- pray

The letter to the Philippians has been taught many times here at Geneva. As a refresher, this letter was written by the apostle Paul, while he was in prison. It is considered the book of joy as this word occurs over a dozen times in various forms in this short letter. Paul's reason for writing this letter was to thank the church in Philippi for their support of his ministry. So it is very apropos to use it as our foundation for celebration on Appreciation Sunday.

I would like to spend a few minutes understanding why Paul chose these words to thank the people of Philippi. He begins with the words, "**Grace to you.**" A simple definition of grace is God's Riches as Christ Expense. Because of what Jesus did for us, we have been **freely** given the richness of God. Wow! Grace is **NOT** getting what we deserve, but it is receiving what we do not deserve. Grace is the free, spontaneous, unmerited favor of God. It is an activity

Slide #1 of God, not any thing we have done. Grace is a gift from God, and is something we pass forward to others. That is the grace that Pastor Tom spoke of last week. He made the statement that "grace is about seeking to help others even when you are tempted to judge them."

Now looking at today's scripture, Paul says "Grace to you and peace."

Peace is harmony, tranquility, wholeness, and well-being, at the deepest level; not only Peace with God but also an inner peace in place of or in the midst of turmoil. Again this peace is **ONLY** a result of God's activity in our lives.

Note that Paul wrote, "Grace to you and peace from God." Not "grace and peace to you." But the grace of God is what is given to God's people; peace is a natural result of such a gift.

Paul greets the believers at Philippi wishing them "grace to you and peace." Paul knows that the people of Philippi have God's unmerited favor and gifts from God, which results in peace that

surpassed all understanding.

V. 3 Paul then writes, “I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you.” As I think and pray for this church, I understand this joy that Paul is writing about. Just this week, I visited 2 people who went on hospice. I saw and heard their comfort in the Lord and the peace they have, knowing that they belong to him, our Lord and Savior. After visits like that, I know the joy Paul is talking about here as he thinks of church at Philippi. What comfort and joy I receive when I am with people who in the midst of end of life issues, and yet experience God’s presence and peace.

Paul goes on to say that his joy comes because of “your sharing in the gospel from the 1st day until now.”

The actual Greek word for **Sharing in the gospel** is *koinwnia*, referring to fellowship and community, joint participation and partnership. Like the church of Philippi, Geneva does not operate by the paid staff alone. We are partners with you, in spreading the good news of the gospel. We are partners with you as God’s ambassadors to the world.

Paul is expressing:

1. **Gratitude for partnership** in the gospel ministry. Note here that the First requirement for participation in gospel ministry is that you believe the gospel, believe that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior. As Paul was thanking God for the salvation of the people of Philippi, we, speaking for the Pastors of this church, Jeff, Tom, and myself, thank God for the faith of you dear people, for what an encouragement it is for us, as your leaders.

2. Not only is Paul grateful that the Philippians are saved, but **he is grateful that they have joined him** in spreading the gospel to the ends of the earth. For us here at Geneva, that not only means all the Feet Out the Door activities, but also all the serving that is done here in our own church, serving one another in love as God calls and empowers each person. Spreading the gospel was never meant to be done alone.

And as Paul remembered the Philippians, thanking God for their fellowship in the gospel, he also encouraged them even more by the certainty that God will finish the work he started in them.

God will continue to complete the saving work he began in these people.

Note through out these verses, this work is God's work. and he will complete it. We, the people, are the tools he uses to accomplish his work.

This is the foundation of today's Appreciation Sunday.

Thank you all for saying "yes", first to God's call into salvation, and then for serving him in the many ways that he has called you. We are so grateful that God did not call us to do ministry alone. It simply couldn't be done. To get a perspective on this, I want us to look at some numbers together. I sat with Jane Kingston, our Director of Ministry Support, who knows the most minute details of this church, and we discussed the hours of volunteer service it takes to run all the ministries here at Geneva. These numbers are rough numbers, so you accounting, detailed people, please give us grace here. But this will give you a visual of what working together and sharing in the gospel means.

Jane and I figured out that between all the ministries, there are over 3000 hours a month of volunteer serve in this church alone. This is not counting any outside service work, i.e.

slide #2

servicing at the hospital or food bank. Did you know that every Sunday there are approximately 150 hours of volunteer service. Think of this amazing choir, ushers, greeters, Sunday School teachers, communion set up, readers, tech people. I don't mean to leave anyone out. And then, the angels, serving in Courtyard Café. As you know, we have 2 saints there, Barbara Carmen and Diane Felton, who oversee the Café, and their right arm, Barbara Lorenzen, but there are so many others who help out. And the many people who provide food- I think of the faithful Pathfinders, who bring food every month. Every week, someone will just leave a package of goodies on the counter in the outside kitchen. I could go on and on just talking about the service and ministry of Courtyard Café, but let's get back to the numbers.

Out of these 3000 hours, our amazing deacons contact at least 150 families each month- who knows how many hours that takes!

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So now, Take 3000 hours, multiply by 12 months, and look at the number, 36,000 hours per year. Wow, yes, that deserves and applause.

Now if we put a price tag on it, let's say, \$10, you do the math.

But the truth of the matter is this:

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Volunteers are unpaid, NOT because they are worthless, but because they are PRICELESS. You, the faithful servants of our Lord, and of Geneva, are priceless. This church simply could not function without you.

As we talk about the ministries of the church, we are taking a risk that someone will feel left out- that is not our intension. There are many people serving in areas inside and out of this church, that are quiet ministries, service to one another, simply because of the love of God. Some of you are in a position now where you can't actively serve any more, but have done so in the past. Now, you mightily serve God by your prayers. We absolutely appreciate and celebrate you. You are part of this day. And if you are a visitor who is involved in a home church, we celebrate you also. And if you are a visitor and have no understanding of serving God, we are so glad you are with us just to celebrate with us.

This slide show that we will be watching has been put together by the entire staff. As you watch, know that this is the small speck of the family of Geneva and we are thanking God for you.

Please stand when you see your ministry and remain standing to the end.

Have everyone stand and pray-

Play DVD- please turn my mic on towards the end as I will be directing the congregation.