

February 2023 – Pastoral Message

*“For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all.” – Titus 2:11 NRSVUE*

Beloved Neighbors in Christ,

Grace and peace to you, my family, and friends, in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Epiphany greetings to you, my family and friends, as we enter into the month of February. We continue in the time of the church year that allows us to look for the revelation and manifestation of Christ in our lives...daily. That is, we seek the little things in and around us to reveal Jesus with us, always. I love this in-between time of the year where we are called to gaze into ourselves, seeking the light and life of the baby we have celebrated at Christmas and prepare for the time of Lent that comes near. Epiphany reminds us of the little things: we remember what we may have put away; we catch a glimpse of something lost and now found; the sight of a cardinal or blue jay that reminds us of a loved one that has gone on before us; or a simple thought that pops in our head revealing that our Lord is still there.

I bring you a piece of scripture from a document, or letter, which has been attributed to the Apostle Paul and written probably in the mid-to-latter part of the 60s in the first century of the common era. The Epistle to Titus is a short but important work that is addressed to the elder church leaders on the isle of Crete in the Mediterranean Sea. The aim of the letter is to not only guide their important work, but remind the Bishop of Crete that organization is paramount in developing new congregants in the way of the Christ. It also mentions the gifts that have been given to us as a humanity through the person of Jesus Christ, as well as the divinity of Jesus as the Son of God. We witness this through Jesus' death and resurrection portrayed in the gospels. God's grace, in the form of love, came to each and every one of us, and that love brings salvation, redemption, and deliverance that we are called to share with our neighbors.

Salvation is a term that is often difficult to nail down and define. Webster describes it as a “deliverance from sin and its consequences, believed by Christians to be brought about by faith in Christ.” Theologically, that sets it as a means in which love is given freely by God to take away our wrongdoings – the sins against God, our neighbors, and ourselves. Practically, it is a gift provided from on high that frees us from the things we do each and every day that causes us to turn away from our Lord. Simply, we are freed from our mistakes. I truly believe that is what Paul is attempting to do. He not only reminded those in Crete so long ago, but also inspires us to seek Christ in our everyday lives. And that is what Epiphany is about. Keep the faith, beloved!!!

In Christ,

Rev. Erik Karlson

Pastor, Neighbors in Christ Parish