

Grace

Titus 2:11-14

Good morning, church family. It's a joy to be here with you, ready to worship our God together. I am Pastor Jung Yum, your new pastor, and I'm excited about the journey we're about to embark on. After ten years of ministry at Midland First UMC, I've been appointed to Carleton UMC by Bishop Bard as of July 1st. I'm eager to see how God will use our time together at Carleton to reveal His goodness and mercy to our church family, our community, and all the mission sites we'll be involved in. I also want to express my appreciation for Pastor Cloud Poy's ministry here and pray that God will continually bless his ministry.

Let me show you some pictures that I took last week. Thank you so much for your welcome basket. Included in it was a special welcoming card from a church member, which I appreciate from the bottom of my heart. I also appreciate the changed church sign, which has the new pastor's name on it.

We are called by God to take a journey together. For how long? We don't know. But we are to faithfully respond to God's calling as we take this trip together. I believe that there are four keywords we should remember as we begin our new journey. **The first word is grace, the second is transformation, the third is missions, and the last is the Kingdom of God.**

Today, let us think about the grace of God we have.

Have you ever attended the Michigan Annual Conference? On the first day of each Annual Conference, there is a time to celebrate the retirement of our pastors and their spouses. Each of the pastors is invited to share the memories of their ministries. Every year, with no exception, most retiring pastors say, **"It is all about God's grace. There were difficult times in my ministry but God's grace helped me overcome the challenges. Now, I am here today celebrating my retirement. It is all about God's grace."**

Then what is grace? Please know that grace and love can be used interchangeably theologically. According to the Book of Discipline, we define **"grace as the undeserved, unmerited, and loving action of God in human existence through the ever-present Holy Spirit. Grace is God's presence to create, heal, forgive, reconcile, and transform human hearts, communities, and the entire creation. Wherever God is present, there is grace!"** Grace is from God. It is God's loving action through the Holy Spirit. Grace is an agent of our transformation, including healing, renewal, and revival of God's church and creation. Grace is God's presence. Wherever the Holy Spirit is, we can find God's grace there.

Why, then, is grace so important as we take a faith journey together?

First of all, God's grace is for the salvation of all people. .

"For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all" (Titus 2:11 NRSV).

God's grace is for your salvation and for the salvation of our family, friends, and neighbors. We are taking this journey together for the salvation of all people. Our ministries and missions are all about the salvation of all people.

Who appeared as the grace of God to offer salvation to all people? Jesus Christ! So, if we understand and enjoy God's grace, our lives must be Christ-centered. Our church must be Christ-centered in its missions and ministries.

"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you know me, you will know my Father also. From now on you do know him and have seen him." (John 14:6-7 NRSV).

Secondly, God's grace is for the life of our holiness.

"training us to renounce impiety and worldly passions and in the present age to live lives that are self-controlled, upright, and godly," (Titus 2:12 NRSV)

What is the relationship between God's love and His holiness? God's love is an expression of His holiness. Wherever we find God's holiness, we can experience God's love. Wherever we experience God's love, we can find God's holiness. Our love for God cannot be separated from our holiness for God.

The word for holy in Hebrew is "qadash," which means to be sanctified, consecrated, and dedicated or to be separated from the world and worldliness. In our holiness, we have our dedication to our God. So, **"You shall be holy, for I am holy"** (Leviticus 11:44; 1 Peter 1:16) means **"As God is dedicated to you, you must dedicate yourself only to God."** By doing so, we can separate ourselves from the world and worldly passions. God's grace helps us to live up to God's expectations for our lives, which is our holiness.

Last but not least, God's grace always motivates us to commit our lives to doing good deeds.

"He gave his life to free us from every kind of sin, to cleanse us, and to make us his very own people, totally committed to doing good deeds." (Titus 2:14 NLT)

Our holiness is always related to our ethical life in the world. Our holiness is not confined to the church sanctuary every Sunday morning. It is our missional passion to reveal God's love in the world. That's why, according to Titus 2:14, we

find our salvation, holiness, and commitment to missional life in Jesus Christ who is the essence of God's grace.

Midland First UMC was my first cross-cultural appointment. In the beginning, there were people who couldn't understand my English. I thought my English was perfect. But as we built up our relationship together, some said, "Pastor Yum, it is not your problem. It is my hearing problem." Others said, "I think our sound system is not working properly in the sanctuary." It was their grace for me, and they patiently walked together with me.

I know God has special plans for all of us. That's why God has allowed us to experience His grace through His Son, Jesus Christ. I am pretty sure that God will continually help us experience His grace through one another. By doing so, I pray that our lives can be used up for God's salvation work, that we can grow more in our sanctification, and that we can be God's goodness and love for the people around us.

Please know that our lives together in this journey are God's special grace for all of us.