

Being of One Mind in the Kingdom of God's Grace

In the Kingdom of God's Grace boys and men work on equal footing and share alike the labors of society; neighbors tend the gardens of neighbors and bear their loads gladly; the poor eat bread without price; the homeless are welcomed into homes; and, it is not an usual sight to behold the King himself, our Lord and our Master, in plain clothes tending to the sick in the hospital and binding up their wounds at his own expense. There is, indeed, a memory of another Kingdom in the minds of His subjects – a Kingdom of Laws and force wherein the master was, with His warriors, engaged in a great battle. But, that is in the past; a memory only. It was necessary to produce for the Master and those He calls friends, this Kingdom of Grace. This Kingdom is paradise but it begins now, in the Church.

This is the Kingdom of Grace, where sins are forgiven for Christ's sake. This is the Kingdom where strangers and foreigners become brothers and sisters. This Kingdom is the Body of Christ where believer is joined upon believer being fit together under their head and made of one mind and heart.

Jesus answers the Pharisee's question about the Law to lead them to this Kingdom. The keeping of the Greatest Commandment *and* the One Like It is what life in this Kingdom consists of. This is why Jesus asks them "whose son [is the Christ]?" That is to say, where are the keeping of these two commandments to be found? Where is it that man loves God with all his heart and soul and mind; and his neighbor as himself? **It is, friends, only in the body of Christ.**

This is why Saint Paul, by the Holy Spirit, in the verse following our reading, begs all Christians to "speak the same thing, that there be no divisions among [them], but that [they] be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." Paul speaks only of the Kingdom of Grace – not the Kingdom of Might. This week, like last week, Paul begs – not exhorts, commands, or implies – he begs He begs them to allow their hearts and minds to be knit together in this body into one perfect heart and mind. He begs them to consider divisions in this body a dread disease that will end the beautiful perfection we are being carried toward. He begs the Christian to remain in the Kingdom where God cares for them, loves them, and sees their perfection through to the end.

Would you like to be more perfect than the Pharisee? Then live in this Kingdom by Faith. Do you want to love God with your whole heart, soul, and mind? Then be fitted into this body and enjoy the freedom of forgiveness by Christ which is your new life. Paul concludes 1 Thessalonians: "Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely. And may your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept sound and blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will do it."

I beg you, and Paul begs you, remain in this Kingdom and enjoy this Kingdom without fear. God has given you this Grace: That you were enriched in all speech and all knowledge according to the testimony of Christ which was established in you [looking forward to] the day [of the return of Christ] who will establish you unto perfection to be blameless in His day.

Do you doubt? Are you afraid that you will be abandoned by this King and that His Kingdom with all its blessings and benefits removed from you? Do not be so foolish. God is faithful [to do this], the same God by whom you were called into the fellowship, that means the friendship, of His Son, Christ our Lord. Hold fast to this one mind – the reception of the Kingdom and God's forgiveness and love. These

words were placed into your mouth and this knowledge into your mind by the One who bore your sins on the Tree so that you would speak and do what is good and live.

It is true, that if you trust in yourself and your actions – that is, if you hope to correct your sinful condition and the wicked desires of your heart – you will attempt to say, with the rich young ruler, “Lord, I have kept your commandments from my youth!” But, like this young ruler, the King turns these words to dust and blows them away and you, like the ruler, will walk away from the King and His Kingdom in great sorrow. These are not the words or the knowledge given you by God. This is the language of foolishness and produces in your heart blindness and anxiety; self-righteousness or self-loathing. There is no comfort in these words because they come from your heart and your kingdom and are dust.

The fallen heart would love to ignore these facts and, with them, Christ. It would prefer to look at the Great Commandment and discover that it has, after, all kept it. However, the command that a fallen heart keeps is to love itself with its whole self, and to carry the soul, and mind along in this too. It clings not to the promise of God’s faithfulness but to getting its own way. It forces out the Kingdom of Grace because it needs no Grace to believe this and, by the way, it doesn’t care “who is the Christ” or “whose Son is He?” because it doesn’t need the Christ or His Father or His Father’s Kingdom.

Upon hearts like this falls the Great Commandment like a heavy weight. Christ in His coming will demonstrate the imperfections of these hearts and destroy them. They have chosen a life outside of the Kingdom of Grace and live there now. At Jesus’ coming their imperfections will be revealed and they will live in their own kingdom in eternity.

Your teeth look white until you hold something actually white up against them. In the same way a heart may safely boast in its keeping of the Great Commandments until the One Great Commandment is held up to it. So, to be more productive, Christ turns the attention back to its rightful place and asks: “who is the Christ?” instead of going down the long and winding path of logic that we like to use when we’re justifying ourselves before God and before men.

Christ is the one who brings this Kingdom. Christ is the one who brings you into this Kingdom. He does not do this for a time or a season but up to the very end. You are His Body and in that Body we love God.

Give thanks for this: that God’s Grace is not kept far from His Christians but has been brought near and is being brought near always. Our Lord and our Master works in and among us to keep us firmly rooted and lavished with His Grace. He knows you need it, before you ask, and so He gives it. God is Faithful. He has not begun His work in you with a mind to let it rot and fade away; He is bringing it to completion even now as I am speaking to you and has promised you that He will make you perfect before He takes you. You are in Christ’s perfect Body and in that Body will be resurrected.

In Faith you have received Christ by Faith you become Christ. Because you live in Him, He has added to your Faith speech and knowledge. You are not a dead body but a living one. He has called you into His Grace and with the promise of your first redemption comes the promise of perfection. Do you want to be more perfect than the Pharisees? Then live in this Kingdom of Grace by Faith. God has put His love in your heart and with it the love of your neighbor. God has placed His knowledge in your mind and with it the keeping of His commandments. God is Faithful to keep you and this is what we trust.

Amen +