

## **Amazing, Wonderful Grace**

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 Thanksgiving Sunday by Patty Friesen (October 8/23)

We've heard powerful testimonies from John and Katherine on grace and thankfulness; fitting themes for Thanksgiving Sunday. In our scripture reading from 2 Corinthians 9, Paul, who loves metaphors, develops his thoughts around the motif of sowing and harvesting. First is the declaration of a fundamental truth about God: God is the one who is able to multiply/increase in abundance every grace sown unto us (9:8a). The second declaration describes how that divinely inspired abundance affects a harvest in our daily lives: "so that you may have all sufficiency in all things, in all times."

It is not surprising that Paul began with defining "grace," as God's infusing all of life with generosity, with longing, and with prayers one for another. Grace from God comes as an indescribable gift. God's grace prompts grace in and among people, and that grace returns to God in the form of thanksgiving from all. Second Corinthians 8-9 is a case study of the power of grace. The grace that comes from God finds its fruition as it flows through us to others. God's grace, received by us and expressed through us produces a ready-made chorus of thanksgiving to God. God's grace cascades and overflows so powerfully that the circle of thanksgiving expands.

Grace is contagious and can overcome un-grace. Sikh writer Valarie Kaur recounts in her book *See No Stranger*, hearing a Christian tell her at nine years old, that as a Sikh she was going to hell unless she accepted Jesus. Angry about that she marched through the neighbourhood to find a church and a priest to tell off. She found a church and hearing organ music, banged on the door. In her words, "the music stopped, the door opened and a white woman with silver hair in a flower-printed dress looked at me. This was not the priest I was

expecting. The church behind her was empty. “Excuse me, do you think I could sit and listen?” I asked.

“Of course,” she said and she let me in. She was the church organist practicing for a concert the following Sunday. I sat in the empty pew and saw the cross looming at the front of the church, the sign of my damnation. What was I doing here? I was locating the closest exit when she set her fingers down on the keys. Sound burst from the organ like a thousand birds out of a tree. It lifted and swelled and echoed on the stained glass, making my chest ache. I closed my eyes and there was Jesus, head bent over me, arms open and a smile that was wide like the sea, and he was embracing me. The music ended and tears were pouring down my face. This was my first experience of a vision and it happened inside a Christian church.

“What do you feel?” The organist was looking at me. Then I remembered my mission here. “I just can’t believe that there could be a God who would send me to hell,” I said.

“I can’t either,” she said. Then she laughed. I started crying, she handed me tissues and I threw my arms around her. Her name was Faye and she was the first Christian I had ever met who did not believe I was going to hell. I would go on to meet many more people like her and learn that there are many ways to be Christian. Our faith traditions are like treasure chests filled with scriptures, songs and stories - some empower us to cast judgment and others shimmer with the call to love above all. (P. 26)

Let us join together in Christ’s call to love above all and our response of thanksgiving to God’s grace to us this morning through taking a meal together - not a full-blown turkey meal but a little bread and juice to remind us of God’s goodness that gets multiplied in our lives. Please turn in your bulletins to the liturgy of communion and I’ll invite the deacons forward to get ready to serve.