

The 'Good News' is that God has put perfectionism in the bin, where it belongs. Freeing us from that oppressive regime. Don't place such unrealistic expectations on anyone, let alone those closest to you. It'll only suck the joy right out of all that Jesus intends to energize, and fill us with enthusiasm for living. Live by grace, that's knowing without a shadow of doubt, that in Jesus you are God's loved, precious child, empowered to live that grace into all your relationships, bringing the joy of living, the joy of living life in all God's fullness.

Let's give up on unrealistic expectation, and live by grace, giving from what God has given us in Jesus, so that those around us might grow. Grow into the fullness of Christ Jesus. Grow as God's loved children, celebrating life with him,

today, expectantly looking forward to tomorrow, knowing that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is ours in Christ Jesus. What an eternity we are invited to grow into. Flood all your relationships with this beautiful invigorating hope we have in Jesus.

Let us pray.
 Jesus thankyou that in you we live by grace; your love for us, and not what we deserve. Thankyou for that precious gift. May all our relationships be a living, invigorating expression of that grace you so freely give us. May we freely give of what you have so freely given us. May we seek to serve because you serve us. May we recognize when we are living by law, and repent, replacing those actions with your grace. May we always live from what we have from you, to your glory, honour and praise. Amen.

Christ Church Lutheran

Worship Times - 9.00am & 10.45am
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Reaching Out with the Love of Jesus that All my Know, Worship & Grow in Christ

1 June 2008

Building Healthy Relationships 2. A Healthy Relationship between People



Jesus concludes the 'Sermon on the Mount' with these words: "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock." (Matthew 7:24 NIV) The Message paraphrases reads; "These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on." (Matthew 7:24 The Message)

Our life and trust in Jesus isn't some nice sun-room we go to occasionally to enjoy the warmth, but then walk out of. Jesus hasn't written another self-help book, he's come to claim us so we give up self-help and build Christ filled lives. He comes to consume all of our living. To infuse all of our living with his gracious presence. In Jesus we

have the foundation to make this a reality and not just wishful thinking. That's 'Good News'. In Jesus we are able to live God's grace into all our relationships, building lives that will with-stand the storms of life, and more.

Today I want to briefly look at commandments 4,5 and 6, together with our readings for today to see how we can be building relationships full of Jesus' love, mercy and grace.

In Deuteronomy we read; "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds (could that mean memorise them); tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up (that doesn't

leave out any part of life). Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates..." (Deut. 11:18-20 NIV) I think this is the LORD reminding me not to take things for granted. Any relationship will fall apart when it is taken for granted.

The fourth commandment calls us to; Honour/ Respect our father and mother. Now there's two people who could easily be taken for granted. Today why not tell your mum or dad that you love them. Why not take the time to appreciate all they have done for you.

But this commandment doesn't just stop with our parents, its broader field includes all people in authority. I know I've complained about politicians, which mightn't be the most respectful action. Maybe I could write a note to my local politicians letting

them know I'm praying for them, because I value the role they play in our society, asking God to bless them with his wisdom and love for our community.

The fifth commandment calls me not to kill. The number one way I kill people is with poisonous words. Aren't our words incredibly powerful?

Don't take it for granted that the people in your life know you care, make the time to tell them, to show them with

your actions. A card, or a small gift, or hug brings joy, especially when it comes from Jesus' heart beating in and through you.

This is no truer than in marriage. The six commandment; 'Don't be unfaithful in marriage'. I think taking my wife for granted is being unfaithful, seeing I promised to love her. What symbols, habits, rituals do you have that tell your spouse of your love for them? Today God is giving you the seal of approval, and encourages you to keep up the good

work. You can never tell your spouse too often that you love them and that they are special to you.

Jesus definitely doesn't want us to be like the 80yr old woman who on her 60th wedding anniversary asked her husband, 'Do you still love me?' To which he replied, 'When we got married I said I love you. If I ever change

Don't ask; 'do they deserve it?' Give honour and respect.

my mind I'll let you know.'

In today's reading from Romans we are reminded to build all our relationships on grace and not on works. Easier said than done. "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from observing the law." (Romans 3:28 NIV) The Message paraphrase puts it this way; "What we've learned is this: God does not respond to what *we* do; we respond to what *God* does. We've finally figured it out. Our lives get in step with God

and all others by letting him set the pace, not by proudly or anxiously trying to run the parade." (Romans 3:28 The Message)

So when it comes to honouring/respecting our parents we don't ask, 'Do they deserve it?' That's living by law, not grace. Grace looks at the love God has for us in Jesus

and then seeks to give honour. It's not do they deserve it, but how can I show them honour and respect.

It's very exhausting trying to gain approval. It's invigorating being valued, being shown respect, having honour bestowed. The first saps the life out of us. Jesus' grace floods us with enthusiasm for living.

Don't treat your parents or anyone in authority according to what they deserve. What a horrible world it would be if people only gave me what I deserved! Seek to bless them with respect and honour. I'm sure it would make the police's job far more enjoyable and beneficial for the whole

community if we gave them honour and respect each time we encountered them. It might be as simple as saying; 'Thanks, I appreciate what you do for us.' Or instead of yelling abuse at the umpire at football I could shout out loud, 'Well done' each time he gets it right.

Of course when I treat another person according to what they deserve I'm killing them and my relationship with them. What a sad foundation; perform

or be gone. What 'Good News' in Jesus, God isn't into perfection. In Jesus, God comes as a loving Father to grow his children into the best he has to offer. I can't begin to imagine the best God, my Heavenly Father, has to offer, but just the thought of it lifts me up and excites me about living.

Having to live under the harsh task master of perfectionism, or pleasing other people's judgement sucks the life right out of me. It makes me just want to pack up and go home. I

always thank God that he has given up judging me according to his perfect measure and instead has adopted me as his loved, precious child, he's prepared to give his life for, so that I might enjoy living with him. Together celebrating, rejoicing in life lived together.

When it comes to our relationships God blessed

Jesus has filled you with his grace—give it expression.

us with marriage that we might in a special way learn to live in the joy and freedom of his grace with another person.

In marriage we don't live under the axe. Perform or else. Or else I'll trade you in for someone better. What a sad oppressive regime that would be to live under. No, instead we get the wonderful opportunity to face whatever life throws at us and meet it together with God's grace, so that his love for us shapes life, rather than the things

which happen callously twisting us.

Jesus has filled you with his grace so that you might be free from asking the question; 'What's in it for me?' Jesus wants to liberate us from seeing another person and thinking; 'How can they complete me, how can they meet my needs?'

When the law controls the outcome is always the same – death. When Jesus' grace rules the outcome is always the same – peace, that's fullness of life in God.

In marriage we get the wonderful opportunity to reflect the image of God, as two people immersed in Jesus' grace, get to give of themselves freely for the good of each other. We have two whole people who make a whole marriage. Just like in the trinity we don't have three thirds which make a whole, but we have three wholes who make one whole. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit don't live for themselves but for each other.