

RECEIVES YOU, RECEIVES ME.

Grace, peace, and mercy, from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

During the week I bought a new TV. The important thing was that I was able to get it with a minimum of fuss because it was a cash transaction. **Instant credit is the go these days.** Many times when things are advertised on the TV screens, the sellers make it easy so that you can get it immediately, but with conditions attached of course, if you don't have the immediate cash on hand to purchase it.

And of course if you have a good credit rating, you can have it now and pay nothing for any time ranging from six months to five years or what ever time limit you like.

This "Buy now-pay later" can be a big trap, especially if you don't fully comprehend the conditions they are

making because if you miss out on one of the payments by the due date, then that's where your woes will begin.

Because of the missed payment you will start incurring an increase in charges which can mean you will be paying more for your purchase. So that the carrot that was dangling before you was one way of getting your service with a condition attached. Hear this little play on words; *what is offered may not be obtained in the end including from above.* Keep that keep that thought provoker sitting in the back of your minds as the sermon progresses.

In this week's gospel lesson where we hear about **receiving the one who has been sent from Jesus, there is** a promise being offered by him; and the only actual condition that needs to come from the hearer, is a belief in God the Father, and our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. In addition, also having a belief in

what the Bible says, and of all of the promises that are made in it would be part of a healthy criterion as well.

As we have it, the criterion is a fairly simple condition which is [offered] freely given to all people, in order that a relationship is established between each believer. This loving concept had originated from Christ and before him, it came from the will of God the Father, with the intention that this relationship will hopefully and eventually spread throughout the entire world before Christ returns to the earth, to take all of his people with him.

Apart from letting any scepticism enter into our thoughts by observing current world conditions and asking where are the people who should be attending church, let's cling to the belief that God is still in control. In the fact that he is still on the throne, and he will give the increase; and that first and foremost, we need to make his will and relationships happen from one person to another.

And if you're sitting there thinking, 'how on earth can I make any difference to another person's life'; remember that someone must have brought you into the relationship that you now enjoy with God at the present moment; even though we have our fair share of struggles along the way living a Christian life.

You either came into the faith through your faithful parents bringing you here through infant baptism on your behalf and then Confirmation etc, otherwise someone came to you with the Good News of Jesus, and you accepted the words that were told to you. And either of these acts can be ongoing because mission work never stops, it is continuous

We, as Christians are all called to do mission [give others what we're having], by bringing others into God's kingdom so that none may perish but that all may inherit eternal life. This relationship we are endeavouring to do

in having relationships with others are to be more than a fleeting liaison though; and a bit more than a fleeting acquaintance of friendship.

It should become a deep and close relationship in the deepest most intimate way of agape love that God has for all of his creation. More like people being welcomed into a home than a meeting on a street: because after all, we are all being given access into the heavenly kingdom with a gilt-edged invitation by God himself. We are going to be family members living together for all eternity, so we should start behaving like it now.

Jesus says, in verse 40 "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me." The one being sent; God's messengers if you like, are now described under the title of "prophet" and "righteous person", and those messengers could actually be you or me. The added bonus about being a sent one; is that there is a reward attached to it; so if you are a

prophet you receive a prophet's reward and likewise with being a righteous person who is being sent. You know within yourself how you meet, greet or welcome people into your confidence and world. You and God know the criteria of what you are capable of, not other people.

How is this sounding to your ears at the moment? Do you feel that someone has been sent by God to you: and that the word stops with you and that it need not go any further? We may all feel that way, but let me encourage you that there is a work in progress happening right now, and we [you and I] are it! On Friday just gone, we just had a Lutheran pastor's Fraternal, and the Bible study centered on Timothy who as a young person is being urged on by the Apostle Paul to know that he has gifts **that will hold him in good stead when he goes out evangelizing in the world where he will come up against persecution as Paul had done.**

Most of us are of the opinion that Timothy was a teenager who was being groomed as a young apostle to be sent out among the wolves to be slaughtered. Not so! He had gifts given to him from God before he went out. The point that struck all of us was that not only the obvious gifted people are disciples and such, but that each and every person; that all followers of Christ have gifts in which some of us haven't even used yet, in being followers of Christ.

We all have been prepared for ministry with gifts; the difference is we need to recognize them, grow them, and then use them as the gifts that have been given to us to further increase God's kingdom. Remember it's all God's work and we are responsible for doing our little but for the kingdom. Are you holding on to gifts that you haven't been using for God's glory? I am guilty and I am making a confession that: I should be playing the guitar a bit more [it's a bit hard when I lead the services], but

excuses aside, I have been using it at Concordia Kindy though.

Now back to the thought-teaser I made about *not attaining or achieving what has been offered to us*. Jesus responded that the two most important conditions of loving your neighbour are the two greatest **commandments; love one another, and love God with all your heart, mind and soul.**

Sounds fairly simple enough to achieve doesn't it? Why is it such a stumbling block? Jesus said, "I have come so that you may have life in its fullest!" not many attain this fullness in their lives. And when people don't attain anything they lose it, just like the faith they have been given, let's face it, many have walked away from their faith.

Without being too hard on these folks though and I pray that these people are in a state of limbo waiting for the

right conditions to happen so that their faith is reawakened. I can understand and I'm sure you do as well, know why a lot of people hold back and don't take God to be the fulfilment in their lives like they should? First of all we all have the Old Adam nature bugging us and then there's the Devil doing his bit by nagging us all the time, there's the "Cares of the World" that always takes a lot of our focus, through bills to be paid and everyday living.

But most of all, we don't accept the fact that we have gifts that we can use to help us live a life full of God's blessings. We also have the forgiveness of our sins, a freedom and fullness in Christ that allows us to get through each and every day in his strength.

When we don't reach fulfilment, then the gifts that have been given to us become dormant and then loses its gloss and sheen until some people give up altogether. And this doesn't happen exclusively to young Christians or late

bloomers, it happens to the disciples, and the top class leaders as well. It occurs throughout the whole spectrum, no one is immune from losing their focus and belief in whom they are and have put Christ aside forever.

But contrast that to what happens when we do all to reach fulfilment? When someone is sent to you or you are sent to someone by taking the Good News of Christ to them, then that message can only be sent from Jesus and from God himself. And those hearing and accepting that message receive all the goodness and rewards that come with that message. There is forgiveness of sins and eternal life, and the promise that you and all the saints will be in God's kingdom receiving the fullness that God offers for ever and ever. We don't lack anything even now, because we have accepted what Jesus had brought to us. Amen.

The peace of God which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.