

We Proclaim Service

1 Peter 4:10

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 6, 2019

Last week if you were with us, Curtis preached a sermon on a “New Year's Goal” from Philippians chapter 3. And he told us how to prepare for this day and get ready for it. But now, it is upon us, we are in 2019. And if you're in your 30's like I am, 2019 was some kind of Sci-Fi movie when you were growing up, right? People were going to be flying around in spaceships and whatever, that kind of stuff. And now, we're here. This is actually 2019, which means this is a good time for us to talk about our goals as a church. It's a good time to talk about what we're trying to do as a congregation and let those things sink in for a moment.

Some of you remember this, but when I was at the Grace Advanced Academy several years ago, they asked us to write a Vision Statement for our church that talked about what we are trying to do, what our plans are, what we hope to accomplish. And the opening paragraph of the Vision Statement - by the way, this is online. You can read this online. And we also have a pamphlet that looks like this. It's on the table out in the foyer ... It's gonna take time guys. I got a Canada hat the other day for Christmas and I'm really proud of it. But the “eh” and the foyer, I'm working on it. I was showing it to somebody, they said, “Hey, it's a hockey cap.” And they said, “Our hockey team lost the other day.” That's too bad. I just got a cap and they lost. But you can see this in the lobby to your right on the way out. But the opening paragraph of our Vision Statement says this, it says,

Our vision is to proclaim “grace upon grace” to Chilliwack, British Columbia and to the ends of the earth. John 1:16-17 says, “For of His fullness we have all received, and grace upon grace. For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.”

And then the next paragraph of the Vision Statement says,

At Grace Fellowship Chilliwack, we believe salvation is all of grace and not of works. We believe it is something that God alone accomplishes in our lives, and nothing we contribute to ourselves. We believe it is unmerited favour, where Jesus earns the Father's approval and, in His mercy, gives us the benefits of that through His shed blood on the cross and victorious resurrection from the tomb. And since we have received all of this, it is our vision as a church to proclaim grace upon grace in several ways.

The vision statement goes on to list those, so they're up here for you on the screen. It says we proclaim grace upon grace through the Bible. We do it through worship. We proclaim God's grace through evangelism and service. We do it through counseling and leadership. And then finally, on the board here, we proclaim grace upon grace through equipping the saints. And if you want to read more about each of those points, they're on the website.

But this is what we're trying to do as a church. This is our vision. We want to proclaim God's grace to people. We want to tell them salvation is all of Him and none of us. And I think this is

important because most people today don't get this. Would you agree with that? Most people today are confused on the topic of grace.

We just finished up the holidays, a very religious time of the year for many people. It's one of the few times it seems like everyone gets religious for a little bit. And I remember going to a holiday service years ago and talking to a relative afterwards who told me that Jesus came to save us after all that we do. That's what he said. That's what Christmas meant to him. Jesus came, He was born, died on the cross to save us after we do our best. Now, let me ask you, does the Bible say that? It doesn't say that. It says He came to save us in spite of our best. Amen? He came to save us in spite of all that we do. But he said that because he didn't understand grace. It's a very common problem today. You hear people say, "Jesus came to save the poor and needy, but not me. I'm fine. I'm okay." Or they say, "Jesus came to be a good example." Well, He did come to be a good example, but He also came to be our substitute, and die on the cross. There's so much confusion on this. So, it's our vision as a church to help with that and tell people salvation is all of grace.

This morning, I want to talk about the fourth point of that vision statement with you. "We proclaim grace upon grace through service." It's a fourth way we do this. Darren actually mentioned that a moment ago. We proclaim grace upon grace through service. We've talked about those first three points in the list; the Bible, worship and evangelism. You can listen to that on our website. But this morning, let's look at the fourth point. It says this,

Because we have received His grace, it is our vision to see every member of our church serve one another in love. First Peter 4:10 says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God." God loves it when His people show their love in good works. He loves it when we help, bless, and minister to each other selflessly and sacrificially. God gave everything He had for us on the cross and we want to do the same thing for others in our church. He held nothing back when He saved us, and we want to hold nothing back when we give to the family of God.

Just a few comments on this paragraph here. One mark of a healthy church is that people serve each other, right? We all get that. We understand that. They hold nothing back from each other. Jesus said, "They will know you're My disciples by your..." what? "...by your love for one another." He didn't say, "They'll know you're disciples by your sound doctrine." As important as that is, we love sound doctrine here. It's a key hallmark of our church. But he said, "They'll know you're My disciples by your love." Not preaching and music - those things are important, not your fancy building and your nice website. They'll know you're a Christian by how you treat each other.

In other words, if you don't love people, you're not a church. Whatever else you may be, if you don't love people, you're not Christian. Because this is what Christians do. D. L. Moody said, "You can be a farmer or a lawyer or a doctor without love, but you can't be a Christian."

In fact, if you remember the book of Revelation, this is one of the things the Lord rebuked churches for. He told the church in Ephesus, "I have this against you, that you have left your first

love.” He actually says earlier in that passage in Revelation chapter 3, He says, “I know your deeds and your toil and your perseverance, and you cannot tolerate evil men and you even do it for My name's sake. Good job in all those areas, way to go, but you have left your first love.” If Jesus was speaking to us today, He might've said, “I know your programs and your ministries. I know your doctrinal statement and your great music. I know your church is full every Sunday, you're standing up for the truth, you're bursting at the seams, but I have this against you, you've forgotten what it's all about. You don't love people anymore. It does you no good to teach sound doctrine if you do it in hatred.”

We all have seen churches go that way. We don't want to do that here. I mean, it's one thing to tell people Jesus died for your sins and plead with them to come to Christ, it's another thing to throw rocks at them while you do it. We don't want to throw rocks here.

The story is told of a businessman who was driving a brand-new Jaguar, a \$60,000 car, down the street...I guess that's how much jaguars are. I have no idea...When a little boy threw a rock through the windshield of his Jaguar, just tossed it in there, which infuriated the businessman. He pulled the car over, he was going to give the kid what for, when the little boy said, “I'm so sorry, mister, but my little brother just fell out of his wheelchair and I don't know what to do, can you help us?” I think sometimes we can be like that businessman. As a church, as Christians, we can get so caught up in our brand-new stuff, our ministries, our programs that we forget what we're doing it for. We forget the point of this whole thing. We're supposed to be loving people.

I was talking to one of our church members the other day about a young person we were counselling. And they said, “You really seem interested in what they were going through. You really seem interested in their clothes and their hobbies and their sports. What's the secret? How did you do that?” And I said, “Because I'm interested in them.” I don't really care about their clothes and their hobbies and their sports, not ultimately anyway. I'm trying to get into hockey, but it's taking time. There's blue lines and I don't know what the blue lines are for, and he gets penalized for hitting him, but they're shaking hands over there. I don't get the whole ... but I care about them. And if they play hockey, I care about hockey. That's what we're supposed to be doing as a church. We care for people.

As we start the New Year, as we have our first service of 2019 and kick things off, this is how we want to do it - by proclaiming grace upon grace through service. To talk about that, I want to invite you to open your Bibles to the book of First Peter with me. If you would, open your Bibles to the verse that we have up here on the screen, First Peter 4:10. And as you're doing that, if you were with us when I first came to Grace Fellowship, you'll remember this was one of the first books that we went through as a church because it's on the topic of suffering. When I first came here, some of you were having a tough time. You were really in a hard place for several reasons. And so, we went through this book together because that's the theme of First Peter. It was written to a church that was suffering.

Chapter 4 starts off with the word “therefore”, which means this is an application of all Peter has said so far in the book. As a matter of fact, there are five “therefores” in the last two chapters of this book because this is how it ends, with an application and a call to action. Peter says, “I've told you all this stuff about suffering in the first three chapters. I've told you how Jesus handled it

and how you should handle it as a husband and wife, as servant and slave.” He puts all that in there. And he says now, “Therefore, this is what you ought to do.”

As he goes through chapter 4, he comes to verse 10 and he says, “You need to serve one another. That’s what you need to do. You need to serve one another.” If you read in First Peter 4:10, it says, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” “This is how you apply this,” Peter says – “This is your call to action. Serve one another.”

Actually, if you look up above that in verse 8, he says, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another.” We just talked about the importance of that. Peter says, “This is how you love one another through service. Get your eyes off yourself for a moment and think about others. Stop dwelling on your pain and your misery and your hurt, which is what this book is about, and think about the suffering of others.” A lot of people think the way to deal with pain is to focus inward to “think all about me and my problems and my pain.” Peter says the opposite here. He says, “You deal with it by looking at others.”

It’s been said that the bright thing shining up in the sky - you guys probably forgot what that’s called this time of year. It’s called the sun and the earth revolves around it, not you. And you need to remember that. We all need to remember that and live that way. It’s also been said that if you act like you’re the only person on the planet, don’t be surprised when you wake up all alone. That’s what Peter is saying here. This is how you deal with suffering. This is how you deal with pain - by thinking about others. And that’s what I want to talk to you about this morning as it relates to our Vision Statement.

So, let’s just get into this. If you’re taking notes, in First Peter 4:10 ... this is our first sermon of the New Year. This is how we’re going to kick it off. But Peter gives us four guidelines for serving the church. So, if you’re taking notes, that’s our outline for today; four guidelines for serving the church in a God-honouring way. I do want to say at the beginning of this, we do a great job of this here at Grace Fellowship. I mean, you guys have already heard some testimonies of how you have served people this last year. We could just put a whole train of people out the door to give testimony to that. You’re a very service-minded congregation. So, this is not a rebuke as much, it’s just a reminder. I’m not telling you something you don’t know. I’m just asking you to keep doing what you’re doing. And to do that, here are for guidelines for serving the church.

The first one is this, you serve the church in a God-honouring way by remembering that each person has a gift. So, the first guideline you see here, you need to remember that each person has a gift. Every Christian has a talent or a skill that God has given them that they can use in serving others. Which means nobody’s left out of this. Nobody sits on the bench. We can all get in the game. And if you read in verses 8 through 10, just putting this all together, Peter says, “Above all, keep fervent in your love for one another, because love covers a multitude of sins. Be hospitable to one another without complaint. As each one has received a special gift...”

As Peter is giving some final instructions to the church and applying all he has said so far, he says in verse 8, “Above all (or over everything else that I’ve told you so far, overall, these

instructions about suffering as a husband and a wife and a servant and a slave)...” he said, “...keep fervent in your love for one another.” That means, “Stay earnest in it.” Some of your translations would say, “Stay deep in your love for one another.” That's the most priority, that's the most important. And if you're wondering how to do that, he says in verse 9, “Be hospitable to one another without complaint.” It's one thing to open your house to someone, it's another thing to do it without complaint, amen?

Benjamin Franklin said that visitors and fish stink after three days. We just had the holidays, let's all laugh at that. Unless your relatives are in the room, then don't laugh. Just pretend like I didn't just say that. And he says also, “Here's how you love each other, use your gifts. Use the talent or the ability the Lord has given to you.”

Just to say something about that, the word for gift here in Greek is *charisma* from which we get the word “charismatic”. That is someone who emphasizes the gifts. We won't go into this for the sake of time, but a charismatic person believes that all the gifts of the New Testament have remained for today. Especially, they can focus on gifts like prophecies and tongues. That's all for right now. I won't talk about that, but that's where this word comes from. We often say today that a person has charisma, and by that we mean they're pleasant to be around, they're really nice people. It's what this word is.

It actually comes from the Greek word for “grace”, which is why it's translated “gift” here. Because in His grace, the Lord has given you a gift to use in His service. That's what the word means. In His mercy, the Lord has given you a special way to serve. Not only did He save you out of grace, He also gifts you out of grace.

In fact, the New American Standard Bible, if you have that translation, it actually puts the word “special” in here to emphasize the fact that nobody else has the gifts that you do or the same combination of gifts. No one else has the same abilities. And what I mean is there are several lists of gifts, spiritual gifts, that we have in the New Testament. We just heard about one of those earlier in Romans 12. You see another one in First Corinthians 12. And they list out all of the gifts and they include everything from the gift of teaching to the gift of discernment and encouragement and exhortation. If you flipped to those passages, you can read at another time about the gift of mercy and the gift of administration. I often joke to my wife has the gift of mercy because she married me. Some of you men may say that's not actually what it means. But there's a gift of leadership, a gift of wisdom, knowledge. There's a gift of helps and service. There's a gift of faith and preaching, and we could go on and on. But the idea is that no two people have the same distribution of gifts, at least not in the same way. No two people have the same combination. And it's said that just as no one else has your fingerprints, no one else has your type of gifts. There're similarities, but there's differences. They're totally unique to you.

To show you what I mean, I thought about some examples of this. Some of you are gifted in the area of encouragement and administration. Which I think is a wonderful thing to have because administration can be so discouraging for some people, amen? It can be really hard. But some of you are able to put people in place and not lose friends over it. You can build people up as you oversee what they're doing. That's a gift and not everybody has that gift. Some people, if you put them in administration, the whole thing falls apart, but some of you are able to do it and keep it

united. The Lord has gifted you that way. You can lead with a soft touch, and there's nothing the church needs more than that.

Some of you are gifted (I thought this would be an interesting combination) in wisdom and mercy. Which means you see a need and you can figure out how to meet it. You see a problem and you can help without tripping all over yourself at the same time. Everybody can't do that. I've seen lots of people get in trouble in the church by trying to help, right? And get their toes chopped off or get their hands chopped off. Some of you are able to do it and keep the peace because the Lord has gifted you that way.

I like this combination. Some of you have the gift of faith and helps and service, which means you love to work behind the scenes. I have known several church mechanics who were like this. They just love to fix people's stuff in the church for free. They always had dirt under their fingernails and they were always crawling under something - under a lawnmower, under a truck, but that's how they served. And we can go on and on, but the point is that everyone has at least one of these gifts.

By the way, this can be why some of you guys have taken a spiritual gifts test. Anybody ever taken that before? It can be helpful. It can show you a lot of things, but the one weakness of that is everybody's got a unique set of gifts. But the point is everyone has at least one of these. Some of you have two gifts, some of you have three or four. But we all have something we can do for the Lord, which means a couple of things.

It means you have no excuse if you don't serve. There's really no excuse if you don't serve, because God has gifted you. God has enabled you to do something. So, you can't say, "There's nothing for me to do, poor little me. I'll just sit on the sidelines." No, you can't say that because God says otherwise. He's given you a gift. He's given you something to do. You can't say "I'm too sinful for this." No, Jesus died for your sins, remember? He said that is finished. So, there's nothing holding you back now. Let me say it this way because this is important, when Peter says, "Each one of you has received a special gift," he means everybody in the church, which means that the church would not be what it is if you didn't serve. Grace Fellowship Church would not be Grace Fellowship Church if you didn't get involved. There would be a hole left in it. There would be a vacancy. We're growing as time goes on in what we're able to do and serving people, but we are a church plant, which means it's all hands on deck. We need everybody plugged into this.

I've been at Grace Fellowship Church for a few years now. January 17th will be my two-year anniversary with you guys. I remember flying into the Vancouver Airport (Stern Stewart met me there) and my luggage came the day afterwards. And I remember the gas station in Chilliwack where he stopped and got me a toothbrush and a razor. On the way in - out of the things you remember, but that was two years ago. And as we look back over that time together, I'm blown away with all we've been able to do, amen, I mean, with all the Lord has done, because you get this, because you've been using your gifts.

We're going to put together a PowerPoint with pictures of this for you to see. We'll probably show it in a couple of months. If you do have pictures, by the way, from the last year of ministry

together, please send them to Jordan Henderson, she's putting together a PowerPoint. But I've got a couple of things on the board here just of what we've done this past year.

For one thing, we baptized four people. That was exciting, wasn't it? We saw for people give a public testimony of their faith in Christ. Two of them in a swimming pool that was heated up by some kind of hot water heater outside the ... that was a one-time thing. I've never seen that before. That was great though, at camp. What a blessing. We had three people join our church as well; Steve Colley, Brad Lott and Pat Hildebrandt, all joined this past year. They signed a membership covenant. We had a few baby dedications last year; little Jonathan Berg and Mary Brodeur were dedicated to the Lord. We have another one coming up in a few weeks, so keep an eye out for that. We hosted a men's conference with Dr. Richard Caldwell, where we had 50 men come and sit under some excellent teaching and had a wonderful time of fellowship with him. We did an outreach event on Canada Day at Harrison Hot Springs, and a few months later, we did a Lake Day there with Mission Bible Church. We had our annual family camp in September - had a wonderful time there. And a few months after that in December, we put up a float in the Christmas parade downtown. And just a quick note about that float, that was a big deal. I don't know if some of you probably know this, but it took a lot of work to make that happen. I mean, some of the men from the church had to build it. Some of the ladies had to decorate it. The worship team sang and did music on the float. The sound team set up the speakers. Our outreach team passed out like a thousand tracks. That was a big event.

But we could do it because you used your gifts. We could do it because you used the talent the Lord had given you. Listen, you don't want me building a float. I mean, it would be like that tall and probably that wide, and my kids would help me with it. I mean, nobody could sing on it. You wouldn't want me singing on the float. You guys are gifted in those things and you stepped in and you made it happen. Think of what would happen if you would've said, "Oh, poor little old me, I can't do anything." Nothing would have happened. You used the gifts the Lord has given you.

Which leads to another guideline for serving the church here. First, you serve the church by remembering that every person has a gift. We all have a place where we can serve, but there's a second guideline Peter gives us, and that is you serve the Lord by remembering that your gift needs to be used. I mean, not only do you have a gift, but you've got to use it.

When I grew up, we had a saying that went like this, you can't trust in His promises while you're sitting on your premises. Some of you will get that on your drive home and think that was really, really funny. But you've got to do something for the Lord. In fact, as we're talking about this, some of you are probably thinking, "Well, what are my gifts? What am I able to do?" Well, you learn what your gifts are by serving, by getting plugged in.

If you read on in verse 10, Peter says, he says, "As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another." The word for "employ" here is the Greek word *diakonos*, from which we get the word "deacon". It's someone who serves, or the office of Deacon is someone who leads in the area of serving. It's actually used twice in this passage. So, you could translate verse 10 this way, "As each one has received a special gift, serve it in serving one another." And that sounds a little strange in English, but you get the idea. The idea is that you're supposed to serve

with your gifts, you're supposed to use them. The word is even in the present tense in Greek, which means this is supposed to be an ongoing thing. You should serve over and over and over again, is the idea here. You should use your gifts continually.

Peter says in verse 11, if you look down, he gives an example of this. He says, "Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever." But Peter says you are to do so, you are to use your gifts.

It's been said that there is no unhappier creature on the planet than a writer that's not writing. You don't want to be a gifted person in the church who is not using your gifts. God's given them to you to use them. So, don't sit around wondering what to do - employ what you've been given. It's common for me, I meet people like this from time to time and maybe you do as well, who feel frustrated in their Christian lives. They feel discouraged as if they're missing something. And as you talk to them and get to know them a little better, you find out they're not doing anything for the Lord. They're not using their gifts, so no wonder they feel frustrated. They're not doing what God has called them to do. Or you meet people who find themselves caught in some sin. They're trapped in a temptation they can't break free from, and when you talk to them about it, you find the same thing. They're not serving the Lord. Listen, friends, you can't stand on His promises while you're sitting on your premises. You can't disobey or ignore this command of God and expect to be blessed for it. You've got to be using your gifts. If you noticed, there's a progression of thought here. There's a way God intended this to be. God saves you and He gives you gifts and you use them. It's as simple as that. That's the way the Christian life works. God calls you, He gives you a special talent, and then you use it in serving others. And when you don't do that, it wreaks havoc on your spiritual life.

We could say it this way (and this is a helpful thing to point out), none of these gifts are meant to be used in private. Does that make sense? You guys get that? None of these gifts are private gifts. You can't serve someone when you're all alone. It's not possible to do that. You can't teach someone when you're all alone. You can't administrate or give helps when you're all alone. You use the gifts for others. So, others have to be around.

A little boy was once talking to his father on the way home from church and he asked him, he said, "Dad, did granddaddy go to church too?" And the Dad said that he did, but he wasn't that involved. So, the little boy said, "Well, I guess it won't do me much good either." Well, the church won't do you good if you're not involved.

That leads to a third guideline for serving the church, and I'll go through this one pretty quickly because we've already said a few words about it. But a third guideline is that you serve the church in a God-honouring way by remembering who the gifts belong to. You remember that each person has a gift. You need to be using your gifts, and third, you got to remember who these gifts belong to or where they come from. They come from God. They are His property given to you, which means that you'll have to give an account for how you use them.

Verse 10 says, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards.” The word “stewards” there is *oikonomos* in Greek, which means “house manager”. It refers to someone who takes care of someone else's property. Peter says, “When God has gifted you, you have to remember that now, you have someone else's property. The gifts didn't come from you. They come from God. You didn't choose to be good at this or that. God chose that for you, and you need to be a good steward of it.” You're working with His furniture, so to speak. You're working with what belongs to Him.

It reminds you of the “Parable of the Talents”. Does anybody remember that parable? “Parable of the Talents”? If you remember that parable in Luke 19, Jesus tells us about a landowner who called his slaves together right before he went out on a journey, and he gave to one of them ten talents and to another one, five talents, and to another one, one talent. And he told them to use them while he was away. And the talent is a large measurement, and we don't know what the talents consisted of. But if it was gold, this was a lot of money. And he told them to earn a profit for it while he was gone. And when he got back, the master demanded to know what they did with it. He wanted to know how they used the gifts.

Peter says in a similar way, or Jesus says, “God will do that with us. He will demand to know what we did with His gifts.” Did we invest them or did we squander them away? Did we put them to good use or did we bury them in the ground and sit on them? And I won't say much more about that, other than to say this is a serious thing. It's a very serious thing to be part of the Church of God. It's a big responsibility. God doesn't give His gifts lightly.

In another parable, if you remember this one, the “Parable of the Steward”. It's the same word we see here *oikonomos* - house manager. The “Parable of the Steward”, Jesus said, “Blessed is the slave whom his master finds faithful when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the other slaves, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and he will hold him accountable for it.” Which is a heavy note, but it leads to one more guideline for serving the church that balances that out.

Just to review, the first guideline for serving is to remember that each one of us has a gift. We all have a talent we can use in serving the Lord. And it goes without saying, the second one, that talent needs to be used. You need to employ your talent and put it to work. The third one, remember who the gifts belong to. They belong to God. They are His property and we're just stewards of them. When you go to heaven, God's not going to pat you on the back and say, “Way to go with your gifts.” The glory is going to go to Him, right? They are the master's property.

Which needs to be balanced with the fourth and final guideline for serving the church (and this is an encouraging one), is to remember that the gifts are given by grace. This one sums it up and it ties in nicely with our Vision Statement. But you serve the church in a God-honouring way by remembering that the gifts are all of grace. The passage says, “His manifold grace,” - we could say, “His grace upon grace.” As our Vision Statement says, “We believe salvation is all of grace and not of works,” and Peter says the same thing about the gifts. If you look in verse 10, he says, “As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of

the manifold grace of God.” “This is where the gifts come from, Peter says. “This is what God makes you stewards of, of His grace.” And the idea is that when people look at you and they see you using your gifts, they should think of His grace. When people look at you and they see you helping and serving and doing whatever in the church, they should say, “What a great God, what an amazing Saviour.” They shouldn't think about you, they should think about Him. They shouldn't give you glory, they should give Him glory.

Let me say it like this, because this is real practical. I've heard people say this as well in the church. And maybe some of you might be thinking this as we're going through this passage. Some of you might be thinking, “I hear what you're saying, Jeremy, but I can't serve in the church because I'm not good enough.” You know what Peter is saying here? He's saying there's grace enough for that. There's grace enough for that. He says, “Manifold grace.” The word in some of your translations is “varied grace”, which means that it's multifaceted, it's multicolored. When you come across a problem, there's grace for that. When you come across another problem, there's grace for that. When you feel weak and like a failure, there's grace for that. That's what the word “gift” means. It comes from the word grace. This is something you don't deserve. You might say, “Well, I don't know what to do.” There's grace for that. You might say, “Well, do these people know what I've done?” Well, turn to the person in the pew next to you and ask them for their testimony. Let them tell you what they've done. There's grace for these things. You didn't earn salvation and you don't earn these gifts. You don't deserve forgiveness and you don't deserve the right to serve in His church. God gives it to you out of grace.

One author said that grace is like water, it flows to the lowest point. And if you were low, God's grace will flow to you. If you are humble, He will help you in your time of need. Samuel Rutherford, the Puritan, he said, “Millions of sinners and millions of hells could not exhaust the fount of infinite grace. It never runs out, it never runs dry. There is always more for us to draw from.” Friends, do you believe that this morning? Do you believe that His grace never runs out? Do you believe that it's always available for you and you can serve the Lord with it, and when you fail, there will be more grace, and when you fail again, there will be more grace?

As the New Year begins and we take some time to pause and talk about our goals as a church, will you commit to using your gifts for the church? It's been said, everybody in this room is better than me at something. And a lot of you are better than me at a lot of things. Will you be a good steward of what the Lord has given you? And will you do it because you love people? Remember, no love, no church. If it doesn't love people, it's not Christian. So, will you serve others because you love them?

I ask you this because there's plenty of opportunities to serve here. As you can see in your bulletins, we have a handout there. And we have some of these on the screen as well. There's not a shortage of ways you can serve. I mean, aside from our regularly scheduled ministries, which we have all those spelled out on our website, the ministries that we do day in, day out, aside from those, a couple of things we're doing this year: we're having our first Vacation Bible School this year. I always love Vacation Bible School because you just never know what you're going to see throughout the day. Who's going to dress up as what or how much popsicle sticks and glue the kids are going to get into. But it's scheduled for August 12th through the 15th. And we have a team from Grace Advanced coming up to teach and do lessons for the children. So, that part of

things will be taken care of. But we need volunteers to help with setting things up, watching the kids, getting the word out about it. We want to pass out flyers to the neighborhood and do things like that. We need your help with that. That's an opportunity to serve.

We also have another youth camp coming up this summer. We're going to do it either here in Chilliwack or in Squamish. So, if you like staying up all night and sleeping on dirt, please sign up for that. That's a great time. We have some wonderful young people in this church, and we've got another youth camp coming up as well. Agape Picnics, Soup Sundays - there's just lots of ways for you to serve and get plugged in. Will you commit to doing that?

A local Rotary Club once asked each of its members to tell everyone what they did for work, to make a presentation of their job. And one week, it came time for the local pastor to do that, the local minister. And as he got up, he said to the Rotary Club, he said,

I work with a global enterprise. We have branches in every country and representatives in every parliament and government in the world. We're into life change and spiritual heart transplants. We run hospitals, feeding stations, crisis, pregnancy centers, universities, publishing houses and nursing homes. We care for our clients from birth until death. We provide life insurance and fire insurance. (I thought that was kind of funny, the fire insurance part.) Our owner owns all the real estate on earth, plus an assortment of galaxies and constellations. He knows everything, can do everything and He lives everywhere. And the good news is that what He offers is free for the taking. All you have to do is believe. Our CEO was born in a hick town, worked as a carpenter, did not own a home, was misunderstood by His family, hated by His enemies, condemned without a trial, but He rose from the dead. I talk with Him every day and so can you. You can know Him right now.

My friends, I would like to say, if I could put it in this term, that our CEO's name is Jesus. And the global organization that we're a part of is the church. The church is His bride. It is His body and His family. The church is Jesus' heritage, His inheritance and the household of God. The church is the pillar and ground of truth. It's the temple of God and the assembly of the saints. It's all these wonderful things, and the most amazing thing of all, is you get to be a part of it. Amen? The most amazing thing of all is that if you trust in Jesus Christ, you can be part of what He's doing in the church. Will you do that today? Will you commit to being part of His church? Not just coming, but being part of it, plugging in. We need you. I would be amiss if I didn't say that. We need all hands on deck. But I think there's something more important at stake here. You get to be a part of this. God has gifted you in His grace to serve His Son like this. Let's commit to doing that today. I can think of no better way to start the New Year. So, let's pray and thank the Lord for allowing us to be part of His church.

Father, we thank you Lord for the privilege and the honour of being part of the church. Not just the local church, but the global church, the universal church. Lord, in Your mercy and grace, You have saved the believers in this room. And in Your mercy and grace, You have gifted them in so many extraordinary ways, and we've seen evidence of that this last year. Lord, we're looking forward to seeing evidence of it this year, to seeing what You're planning on doing in the lives of Your people.

As I mentioned a moment ago, Father, our goal is to give You all the glory and praise, and that's our prayer this morning. That you would be praised through what is going on in the life of Grace Fellowship Church.

Lord, I also pray for those who are not believers this morning, as they hear this talk about Christ and what He has done and grace and mercy, and they don't know that in their own personal lives, Lord, I pray You would draw them to Christ. Let them know there is grace upon grace. There is manifold grace more than they could ever imagine if they come to the cross. I pray You would save some today.

Lord, thank you for this time. May You be glorified in it, we pray in Jesus' name, amen.