

Grass and Flowers

Greeting: Grace and peace to you from God the Father and from our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Who here is a grass person? No, not the hallucinogenic type of grass – I'm referring to people who prefer to have an expanse of grass in the back yard so they can lose themselves chasing the mower around.

What about flower people? – Not a hippie from the 70's – I'm talking about people who love the colour, shape and aroma that flowers bring to the garden?

And let's not forget the vege growers – who here are avid vege gardeners like Rosie and myself? What a joy it is to plant some seeds or seedlings – then later – God willing, enjoy the fruits and colours of the garden. I reckon there is nothing more grounding – excuse the pun – than getting your hands and toes into the soil and fiddling in the garden. It keeps you connected with the soil from which we have all come and where will all return – in God's good time.

Or do we simply marvel at all the wonders of God's creation in all parts the garden remembering that it everything depends on God providing the sun and rain for them to grow and produce their beauty.

As we are now at the end of yet another year, and we look back at what 2018 has been; how is your garden – you know, yourself – how have you weathered the storms and dry spells that have blown your way this last year?

Are you still like a luxurious green lawn or blooming flower patch? Or has the last year dried you out, left you exhausted and feeling drained and uninspired like chaff blowing in the wind? We will come back to this question again soon.

The text chosen for today's address is 1 Peter 1: 22-25: ***Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart. ²³ You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God. ²⁴For "All flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, ²⁵ but the word of the Lord endures forever." That word is the good news that was announced to you.***

Before we go back to the grass and flowers in the garden, let's have a look at the first few verses of today's text because they ask us some searching questions.

1 Peter 1: 22 says; ***Now that you have purified your souls by your obedience to the truth so that you have genuine mutual love, love one another deeply from the heart.***

That sounds all pretty wonderful doesn't it? "***Now that you***" – that's us – "***have purified our (your) souls***";

But hang on! – Purified souls? What does Peter mean by purified souls? Are our souls pure? When I look back at 2018 I find it quite difficult to remember any standout inspiring or beautiful moments. All I seem to remember are apocalyptic images of worldwide political mayhem,

terror death and destruction. Images of a withered and dying world. Certainly not of a world living in the peace, mutual love and tranquility that a pure heart desires.

Maybe I am allowing all the negative press we are bombarded with to cloud my judgment and blur my vision. If you are in the same boat, we need to realize that when, for us, the world looks tired, broken and lost, we are under attack from Satan. We need to now, probably more than ever, pray for deliverance from Satan's power and cry out, '**Help me Jesus!**'

So; who or what inspired Peter to paint such a fresh and vibrant picture? How does he get to say that we have purified our souls?

By your obedience to the truth is the answer Peter gives.

I think we might like to think of *obedience* as faithfulness to Christ.

First comes faith in Christ, and then next is how we respond to that faith - how we use that faith in our every-day lives.

And how have we been faithful to Christ? Better still, how **can** we be faithful to *The Truth* and made alive in Him?

Verse 23 tells us plainly and clearly; ***You have been born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God.***

You and I have been born anew!

How? Through baptism.

You see; the promise that comes with baptism is imperishable, just like the imperishable seed that is ***the living and enduring word of God***, which gives us the promise of life eternal.

Now; I don't know about you folk, but I reckon Peter is onto something here in these first few verses, there is a bit of a pattern going on here which we see St Peter use on more than one occasion.

Peter worked out how we can purify our soul. It's like a three-part pattern with our purification being the glorious result.

Part A – the first part is our baptism where we ***have been born anew***.

Part B – is our obedience ***to the truth*** – our faith, belief and trust in God and His word.

But parts, A and B, by themselves cannot make us pure and holy. It is only when A and B are added together, that is; when we are baptized and believe, and with the Holy Spirit's power and help that part C happens.

So; just as Peter told the multitude of listeners at Pentecost, **A – Baptism + B – Faith and Belief, that is, obedience to the truth = C – being made pure.**

Now; this purity is not a transient thing. Greek grammar tells us that this purification is a past, present, and on-going gift from God. It never dries up and withers like old grass and flowers – it's everlasting!

And as Peter says; this purity has a flow-on effect in us – it inspires in us a mutual love for each other, a love that is ***from the heart***.

Our challenge and calling, is to demonstrate and live that faith and love with our family, neighbours and the world. The daily news bulletins are a stark reminder that this the love the world needs now.

Now back to the garden – back to the grass and the flowers:

Have you ever sown a packet of seeds that either only partially germinated or did not germinate at all? I know I have and it can be quite frustrating – right?

In the text St Peter talks about seed that never goes out of date or loses its ability to germinate, seed that is guaranteed to produce.

This imperishable seed is ***the living and enduring word of God***. And this word of God is **love** – everlasting love.

But honestly; as this year comes to a rapid close, and as we reflect on what we have done or what we have failed to do in 2018, can we really say we have honoured God's call to love Him with our whole heart, mind and soul and our neighbour as ourselves?

In all honesty I know I can't – how about you?

When we come to Confession and Absolution don't we confess that we have **not** loved God with our whole heart, and our neighbour as ourselves? Deep within our hearts **we know** that we are 'by nature sinful and unclean,' and that our very thoughts, words and actions **are sinful**?

As Martin Luther identified, that is the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, making us come to the realisation that we are indeed sinners and are in need of God's grace and mercy. That is why we can say, 'Thank God for Christmas'.

The Good news of Christmas is that our Almighty God does have mercy on us, over and over and over again, even though we do not deserve it – because He loves us.

So, as we reflect on **THE** greatest gift God gave the world, His only Son, who – though born an 'infant lowly,' was exalted on Calvary's Cross taking all our sins and grief and pain – all the crud we thought, said and did this year – and He fixed the whole stinking lot permanently on that cross so we don't have to bear their burdens or wear their stink any more.

The Good News is that we, undeserving as we are, come invited by His Word to His Holy table where we receive new life in His body and precious blood. In this Holy meal we **are** refreshed, renewed and strengthened; we are ***born anew, not of perishable but of imperishable seed***.

So, friends in Christ; as this year rapidly draws to a close, let us make a resolution that we can only keep with God's divine help; let's resolve to **not** seek the perishable things of this world, the things that fade and wither. Instead – let's resolve to seek that which gives us eternal life, let us seek the ***imperishable seed, through the living and enduring word of God***, so that we are able to, with confidence and with a pure heart, call on Him to help us face what the world has in store for us in 2019 – and beyond.

'Grant this Lord to us all'.

Prayer: And now may the peace of God that transcends all human understanding, guard and keep your minds on Jesus the Christ, the Messiah who has come as our brother.

Amen.