

Not Lacking | Glimpses of the Kin-dom

Alexander von Wascinski
Sermon on 1 Corinthians 1:1–9

::: ZERO :::

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” [1 Co 1:3](#). (NRSV)

::: ONE :::

Dear Sisters and Brother,

You might have realized by now, that this is the phrase I start all my sermons and meditations with.

Today you have heard this phrase already in our scripture reading.

It is a sentence written to the congregation—the church of God in Corinth.

Recalling that the congregation in Corinth was not easy at all, rather leading a church life with lots of conflicts and struggles, this wording is quite striking.

Paul himself as an apostle was not uncontroversial at all.

Paul makes a connection with the readers. He avoids being recognized as the great apostle on the high horse.

He rather stresses a peaceful and graceful relationship—despite all the struggles, fights and quarrels which exist in the congregational life in Corinth.

This address is—I'm sure—a first **glimpse of the kingdom of God**.

::: TWO :::

A second **glimpse** surely is Paul's reception of the congregation in Corinth—or rather an assertion he makes towards the Corinthians:

"...to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours." (1 Co 1:2.)

He even continues in an almost praising manner:

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that has been given you in Christ Jesus, 5 for in every way you have been enriched in him, in speech and knowledge of every kind— 6 just as the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among you— 7 so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift ... (1 Co 1:4-7.)

Wow, I say... These are surely words I would like to hear the bishop say about us, about Peace Church.

Again, only a few verses later Paul will clearly address all the shortcomings of the congregation. He will address the divisions, immoralities, lawsuits, etc.

But his starting point is very different.

::: THREE :::

Paul's starting point is different. If he had been German, he might have started with criticizing straight away. His word's may rather sound shaped by Anglo-Saxon, Asian, African or American politeness...

But this is not about politeness. This is about the fact that among followers of Christ mutual recognition and relationship is different. Followers

of Christ are called out of the world—and therefore out of the ways of the world.

The followers of Christ are the ‘called out people’, the ‘ecclesia’. And among these ‘called out’ people, the people of God, it is about living in and out of the love of God who makes all of us his children.

Most—if not all—of you know that among siblings not everything is always nice and easy. Even among people in the same family there are fights, quarrels, even breakups between spouses, siblings, even between sons and daughters and their mothers and fathers.

This is the reality we face. A reality we even face in church congregations. And we know that Peace Church has its own history with breaking up.

::: FOUR :::

BUT this is not the starting point—and it is not the final stage.

Learning from Paul’s words , we need to go back to the center, the source of what we are as people ‘called out of this world’ and ‘called into the kingdom’ of God.

We're not speaking about the ability of humans to be grace- and peaceful among others.

We are speaking about the ONE who gave his life on the cross to restore peace between us humans and our creator, the God of creational love. He did it, not to appease the Godhead's anger but to find rest as created beings in the palm of our makers hands— to find grace where we count our peas against each other.

When we share the Peace, as we always do in our communion services, we do not share our peace grown out of our limited ability to not use swords against each other. We share the peace of the one who flooded this world in creation with his peace, his Shalom.

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Paul's words now take a turn towards the expectations of the congregation and the individuals:

"[...] as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful; by him you were

called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.“ ([1 Co 1:7-9](#))

As we keep to the *testimony of Christ* (v.6), we will be strengthened, we will learn on and on to live through God’s grace, peace and forgiveness. We will learn to be gracegivers, peacemakers, enemylovers, justicebringers ourselves.

We are and will further learn to be people of God’s kin-dom and his Shalom for the whole world.

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This is how we are church, a beacon of God’s love and Shalom for all the world.

Sometimes we might think and even feel that we are too small and the task is too big for us.

But Paul told the Corinthians back then— and through his words in the Holy Scripture us, his people today, that we are the church, HIS church.

As Rev. Derek Weber phrases it:

“Our text [...] includes Paul’s assertion that the church has everything it needs to be the church. That’s an amazing and powerful statement of faith. Too often, we spend time wishing – wishing

we had more people or more resources or more volunteers or more activity.

But what if, instead, we were simply thankful? Let's be thankful for the gifts we have, for the people we have, for how they give of themselves and their resources and give thanks for the mission and witness that we are able to do week by week.

Of course, we want to encourage more. But not because we are lacking.

No, we encourage more because we don't want anyone to miss out on the joy of being the body of Christ, the joy of serving, the joy of worship. We come from an attitude of abundance and not scarcity. “

(Derek Weber @
<https://www.umcdiscipleship.org/worship-planning/glimpses-of-the-kin-dom/second-sunday-after-the-epiphany-year-a-lectionary-planning-notes> 2023-10-14)

::: SEVEN :::

So, we will move on, as the 'called out' people of God, people of Peace, of his Shalom. And as we go, we learn.

We learn to live and share the peace. We strive for christian perfection and holiness.

We may hurt each other or be hurt—but we will always be ready to forgive.

We may struggle—but we will keep to the one who gave everything up for us, to Christ Jesus, our brother and redeemer, because he will never let go of us.

So, after all, *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you may be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is faithful; by him you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”* (1 Co 1:3.8–9)

::: AMEN.