**SERMON PREACHED BY THE RT. REV. LEON GOLDING**

**SUFFRAGAN BISHOP OF MONTEGO BAY**

**AT THE SERVICE OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST**

**WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24, 2019**

**Intentional Disciples: Instruments of grace and hope.**

Considering our theme for Synod, **Intentional Disciples: Instruments of grace and hope.** I have chosen for our meditation and reflection words from the letter to the **Ephesians. 2: 4-5, 8-10**

*4But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us 5even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—*

*8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— 9not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.*

The text points to two things.

1. **First** that we are saved by grace and it is the gift of God.
2. **Secondly** it speaks of us being created in Christ Jesus for good works.

The letter to the Ephesians is primarily concerned with unity. This unity that we are called to is not of our will or our making, it is of God’s will and making. It is the gift of God.

We have been brought into this saving relationship with Christ through a gift, the grace of God. None of us was and is worthy of the grace of God, which is something emphasized by Paul in Verses 1-5

*You were dead through the trespasses and sins 2in which you once lived, following the course of this world, following the ruler of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work among those who are disobedient. 3All of us once lived among them in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of flesh and senses, and we were by nature children of wrath, like everyone else. 4But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us 5even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—*

Grace is a gift we cannot earn and have not earned. We have been saved through the free and unmerited favour God. Through God’s grace we have been included, made part of the family of God, by adoption in Christ Jesus. This we celebrate in the sacrament of baptism. We are who we are as christians because of the grace of God. None of us are deserving of God’s grace.

Our text basically tells us that despite us, God has chosen us. This is manifested in the ministry of Jesus who reached out to all, sinners, publicans, prostitutes, leapers and gentiles and embraced whosoever would come in love. GOD is the God of all.

The Church is because of the God’s grace made known in Jesus Christ. We have been welcomed by God despite our sins. The Church, as followers of Christ, disciples, is called to be a community of grace that welcomes all and accepts all.

At Confirmation the Bishop when laying hands on us prays,

*Confirm O Lord this your Servant with your heavenly grace that he/she may continue yours forever and daily increase in your Holy Spirit until he /she comes to your heavenly Kingdom.*

We are to become instruments of God’s grace. If we are instruments of God’s grace then as God has received us, we must be willing to receive all persons despite who they are and their failings and conditions in life. This is not an easy road for us to travel, but the church is for sick persons, sin sick souls, who like us need the love of God. We must be a community welcoming all. I am going to say something which may be controversial, we must welcome even those who belong to the LGBTQ community. This means we should be a community where people can come no matter who they are and experience, compassion, acceptance, love and **forgiveness**. We have all sinned and come short of the glory of God. We are not always a compassionate and forgiving community.

If we have not read Orville Taylor and Gordon Robinson’s articles in last Sunday’s Gleaner, I invite us to do so. I found them worthy of the church’s reflection. The heart of the gospel, the crucified and Risen Lord’s message is God forgives.

*8For by* ***grace*** *you have been saved through faith, 10For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works. . .*

Those who have received God’s grace are chosen for good works. We are to share God’s grace with others. God’s grace gives us the desire and power to do God’s will.

A definition for ‘Grace’ which I rather like given on Wikipedia defines it as follows:

*The Divine influence that operates in humans to regenerate and inspire virtuous impulses, and to impart strength to endure trial and temptation; and as an individual virtue or excellence of divine origin.*

Implied in our text and the definition read, is that the person on whom grace has been bestowed is to be an instrument for good. Those who have received God’s grace in Christ Jesus, who are a new creation in him are called to good works.

It is in performing good works, becoming actively engaged in lives of people, the poor, the broken hearted, captives blind, and oppressed, that we give hope. The life of grace is one that response to the goodness of God in ones life and to others simply because they are human beings in need of love, and respect. It is a life that will emulate the life of Christ in seeking to make life better for all who have no voice and are forgotten or pushed to the margins of our world.

A study of the Greek word for grace, Charis, (** reveals some interesting things. The English translation of the word **, grace, speaks of a gift that brings delight, joy, happiness, good fortune, gratitude. Of note the word Eucharist, which means thanksgiving ********** has as its root **, Charis.

It seems to me that if we are to be instruments of hope in the world, we must be a people who live with gratitude, thanksgiving. We are to be a Eucharistic people, a people grateful for live and the blessings of each day. We cannot win the world for Christ with long faces, and continuous complains. Grace filled lives are lives that express joy and gratitude even in difficult situations, working for a better world.

The church grew because those who suffered martyrdom, suffered with joy for the sake of Christ in the confident expectation of God’s faithfulness. In life and in death they were instruments of hope.

Only as we are a people grateful to God for God’s saving grace will we be instruments grace and hope in a despairing world.

**Conclusion:**

As disciples of Christ we are called to be instruments of God’s grace giving hope to the world. This calls us to be a church welcoming and forgiving of all, a church created for good works who in response to God’s goodness give hope.

Let us always bear in mind these words,

*8For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God— 9not the result of works, so that no one may boast. 10For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works,* **Amen.**