



Good Morning,

Welcome to our September Reflection where as promised we continue to offer a reflection from God's Word to all who miss being able to come to church in these days despite the story of gradual restriction allowing us to attend church again and spend time in God's House meeting with our Fellow Believers and using the time affirm our thanks and praise to God for his abiding presence with us through this difficult time.

I trust you will all have enjoyed the glorious warmth of the Sun's rays as we have just had perhaps one of the finest of summers in many years. While swathes of people voiced their dejection and distress at not being able to get to these Sun kissed beaches that they loved to go to across Europe and elsewhere, God in his goodness brought the warmth and heat of the noon day sun to our shores.

As some of you may know, Wilma and I have just returned from a wee break down in Cumbria where we were both reminded of how beautiful many parts of the UK can be at times. We often think Scotland's rugged West coast, highlands, islands and lowlands are like no other and often refer to it as God's Country. I have to concede that there are parts of England where the beauty of God's Creation is there for all to see and if you haven't been to Cumbria before I recommend it.

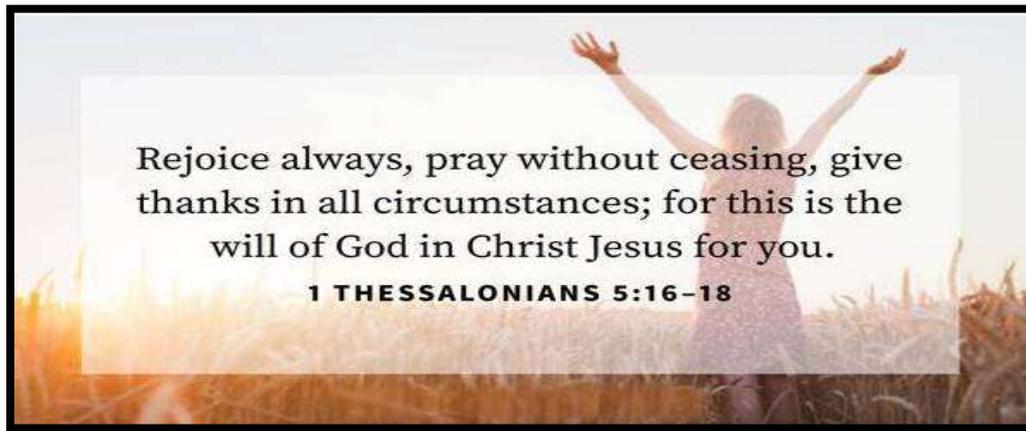
As summer comes to an end and Autumn formally begins, we have seen the gradual reduction of restrictions impact across all sectors of society and business. Perhaps the biggest frustration at the moment is that churches in one way appear to be left behind as so many other sectors open more fully, (restaurants, pubs, night clubs, theatres & Cinemas and of course the venues for Rugby and the 'Fitba') , churches remain almost unchanged in terms of Lockdown restriction and things don't appear to be changing any time soon. It's Frustrating to say the least. That being said we work through these things and no doubts common sense will eventually prevail... I hope.

It can be so easy to become dejected by these things and in these times but I am reminded of a line in an old Hymn,

***"Put your Trust in Jesus,
He will guide and keep you,
to the Journey's end"***

Good advice for this and every situation. Have a good week Folks.

Calum D. Macdonald



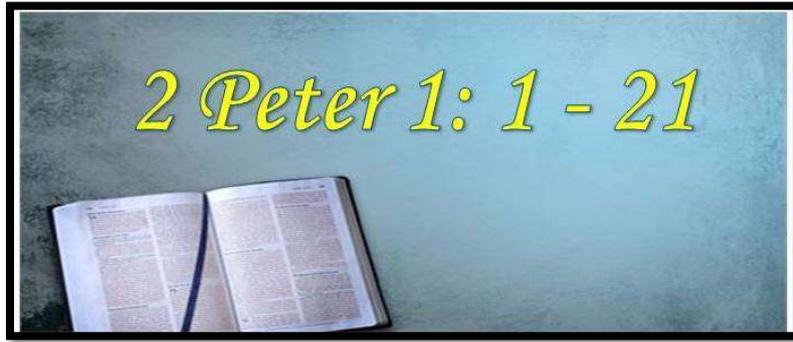
Let us Pray

Father God, We want to use this time as an opportunity to demonstrate our gratitude, our thankfulness for your sustaining power at work within us, your love for us and your promise to us. Yet again we have an opportunity to dwell on the extent of your love that goes beyond anything we can see or imagine. We are able again to reflect on the sovereign power You hold, where Kingdoms may rise and kingdoms may fall but Your Word remains forever.

As we come before you on this first Lord's Day of a new month at the dawn of the Autumn season, we come first and foremost with a heart filled with gratitude for sustaining us through these summer months where the sun and its warmth has been there for us to enjoy. As we have come through another week and now stand at the threshold of a new week full of new beginnings, blessings and challenges, help us Gracious God to start each day with your Word. Stir within us a deeper desire to move further into our relationship with You and be able to hear you speaking to us more closely and more deeply.

We recognise that the things that hold us back from this are on our side. We have not always been consistent in our faithfulness towards You unlike You where Your mercies are new every morning. We have not always been diligent in serving others as you have called us to do and have often thought of ourselves first instead. Forgive us, our Father in Heaven and teach us to be more like Jesus that we might follow his example better. By your Holy Spirit, move in our hearts this day. Refresh us and revive us, that we might be fit to take the Gospel of your love and mercy to all whom we come in contact with. Give us a hunger for Your Word and truth that we might discover how we may be obedient to Your Call upon our hearts this day so that in all we may say and do, we may honour You by being blessing to others in the case of the Gospel for this we pray in Jesus' name...

Amen



2 Peter 1: 1 - 21

New International Version

1 Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:² Grace and peace be yours in abundance through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.

Confirming One's Calling and Election

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

¹⁰ Therefore, my brothers and sisters,^[a] make every effort to confirm your calling and election. For if you do these things, you will never stumble, ¹¹ and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Prophecy of Scripture

¹² So I will always remind you of these things, even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. ¹³ I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, ¹⁴ because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. ¹⁵ And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.

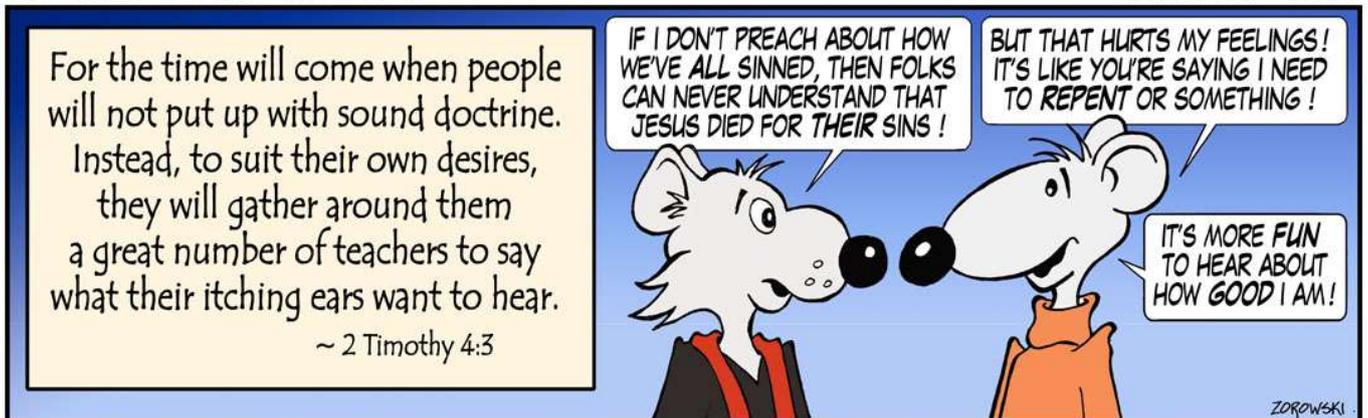
¹⁶ For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. ¹⁷ He received honour and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from

the Majestic Glory, saying, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."^[b] ¹⁸ We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain.

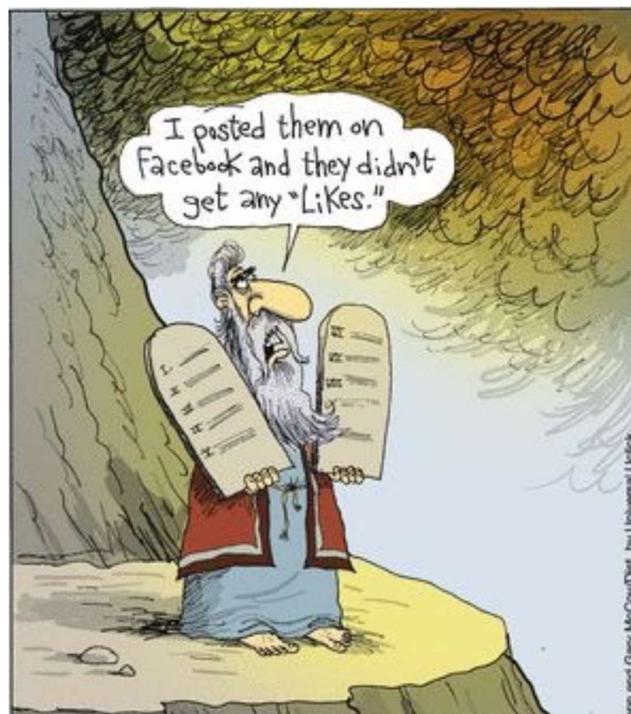
¹⁹ We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things. ²¹ For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Church Mice

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Hi Everyone,

I chose this reading for our thoughts this month as I was reading from 2 Peter Chapter 1 this week and while doing that came across an image where I saw a young couple walking into the woods with their child where the title of the image was, 'Leaving a Legacy of Faith'. The image struck a chord with me because before going off on holiday I received word from friends of my University days that one of our friend's wife had died. Upon our return from Holiday Wilma and I knew that we would be going to the funeral over in the outskirts of Edinburgh next door to Broxburn.

Since finishing my time at University, Wilma and I kept in touch meeting regularly some 3 or 4 times a year. There were about eighteen of us in total, including husbands and wives who formed the group called Uno (How we got that name is a long story and for another time.) We all who passed out of our probationary periods together entering life in Parish Ministry in one form or another and have kept in touch ever since being of great support as we sought advice from one another and prayed for one another. Being at this stage a lady in her early 80's, Margaret was the oldest of us and she was latterly, the one who was most physically frail of our hallowed group. She was a lovely lady with a gentle unassuming character who was devoted to her husband and my friend Richard as her husband was no less devoted to her. She was not someone who had spent years in the study of Theology, Pastoral Care, Ministry

and Church Procedure in the hallowed corridors of Glasgow University listening to lectures from the academic giants of the day and yet I saw my friend give what was a lovely, from the heart tribute, to his wife's life, the things she did, people she met, the kind of person she was and in particular he spoke so warmly of the impact of her life on others and how behind it all stood the Legacy of her Faith.

Over the time of these past 18 months we have at times dipped into that part of God's Word often referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. Many make the mistake of majoring so much on the teaching of the apostle Paul that they run the risk of discarding the golden nuggets from God's Word in the Pastoral letters as having little to add. We need to remind ourselves at times that Peter writing to the early church is no less important than what Paul had to say and in conjunction the accounts of Jesus' ministry and early life in the gospels along with all the other books of the Old and New Testament forming a composite whole that we often refer to as the Inspired Word of God. An old minister I knew spoke of how he believed it to be the inspired Word of God from Cover to cover because it said on the outside "The Holy Bible".

How then, can these words inspire us today as we reflect on 2 Peter Chapter 1 or at least some of the verses in it. The context of Peter's first letter was one where he was writing to a scattered group of Christians who had endured persecution of all kinds and who now scattered across what we would now refer to as Asia Minor in what is modern day Turkey and Syria. He was seeking to offer encouragement through these days of hard testing. The tone of his second letter shifts looking to emphasize the importance of consistency of Christian living and those in the early church had also to discerning about the rise of false and bad leadership and who we should be wary of.

There are three things that stand out to me as we consider what we might want to have as the Legacy of our Faith.

- a) Being able to share in the privilege of Christian Faith - a Gift that is God given and is not something we can earn for ourselves. (Vs 1)
- b) Faith gives us everything we need in the Service of our Saviour (Vs 2-3)

c) A Legacy of Faith allows the Gospel to Continue

a) Being able to share in the Privilege of Christian Faith

Many of us have made the serious mistake of thinking that the faith we have is something that we have either won for ourselves or earned by the merits of the life that we have lived and in both cases they are seriously mistaken. At the heart of our Presbyterian Tradition sits an understanding that sees there is absolutely nothing we could have done in the past, nothing we can do now or ever do in the future that would merit God's Grace and favour. Such Favour is only granted to us through and as a consequence of the life of Jesus, his sacrifice on the Cross and his Resurrection. Martin Luther, the 16th century reformer, even way back then understood that and declared that the only ground for the merit of God's favour was by Sola Fide, a Latin term for "Faith Alone".

In our reading this morning we are reminded of having received something very precious - specifically our Faith.

"who through the righteousness of our God and Saviour Jesus Christ have received a faith as precious as ours:"(2 Peter 1:1)

We are incredibly privileged and we should never take that for granted. The nature of Christian Faith is that of a Gift from God himself. I wonder if the Queen's Lord Lieutenant of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth came to your Door tomorrow and presented you with a solid gold medal for services rendered to Queen and Country - what would you do with that gift? I suspect you might give it a pride of place on a mantel piece that was there for all to see or perhaps place it in a lit display cabinet perhaps even on a velvet cushion to highlight it for all to see as a centre piece standing out drawing all who came into the room to look and see what her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II had given - the obvious reaction to that premise being - well rightly so. Yet Christians will hide the gift of Precious Faith from all other eyes. This gift given by the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, where did the idea that we should hide our faith away from prying eyes because it is something private and not to be spoken of with others come from? Certainly not from what the Bible teaches. Jesus certainly did not approve of hiding ones light under a bushel way back when he walked this earth and I am sure he feels that way now every bit as much as way back then. The Legacy of Faith is not

something to withhold from others rather it is to be seen so that others too might become recipients of this most precious gift.

b) **Christian Faith gives us everything we need for a Christian Life to Flourish**

Verse three reminds us that we have everything we need. We live in a time where so many people have such aspirations to have what others have. Some years ago there was a Reality TV series which looked at the multi million pound homes of the current music, entertainment and sport personalities of the day, be they actors, footballers or rap singers. Interviewing many youngsters at the time there was a feeling that many simply aspired and even expected to get to the top by the short cut of quick fame and fortune so they could get the lifestyle that comes with it. There was no sense of working their passage and earning their way to the top. They wanted it all and they wanted it now. I read an article last week regarding an Irish lady called Margaret Loughrey who won some £27 million pounds on the Lottery who years later spoke of how winning was her deepest regret. Indeed there have been some who have tragically taken their lives as a consequence of winning such sums. Many Today mix up needs with wants. A wise Christian Said to a Christian new to his faith, "God supplies your needs not your greeds!" I confess that certainly puts into perspective my passion to have a spitfire. While it might be something I desire - it is not something I require. In any case what would I do with it. Maybe leave it in the manse Garden for all to see - what a waste!

More importantly is knowing that faith enables contentment in life no matter the circumstances. The first thing our friend Margaret did when she and her husband Richard came home from the hospital having just been told that her cancer was terminal was to get pen and paper out and plan her funeral before anything else because she passionately believed in what Paul the Apostle Spoke of, "for me to live is Christ - to die is gain." (Philippians 1: 21) The Legacy of her Faith meant that she could not only face the problems the life brings but also contend with that which the door of death presented because Peter was right when he said "*His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness...*" (2 Peter 1:3)

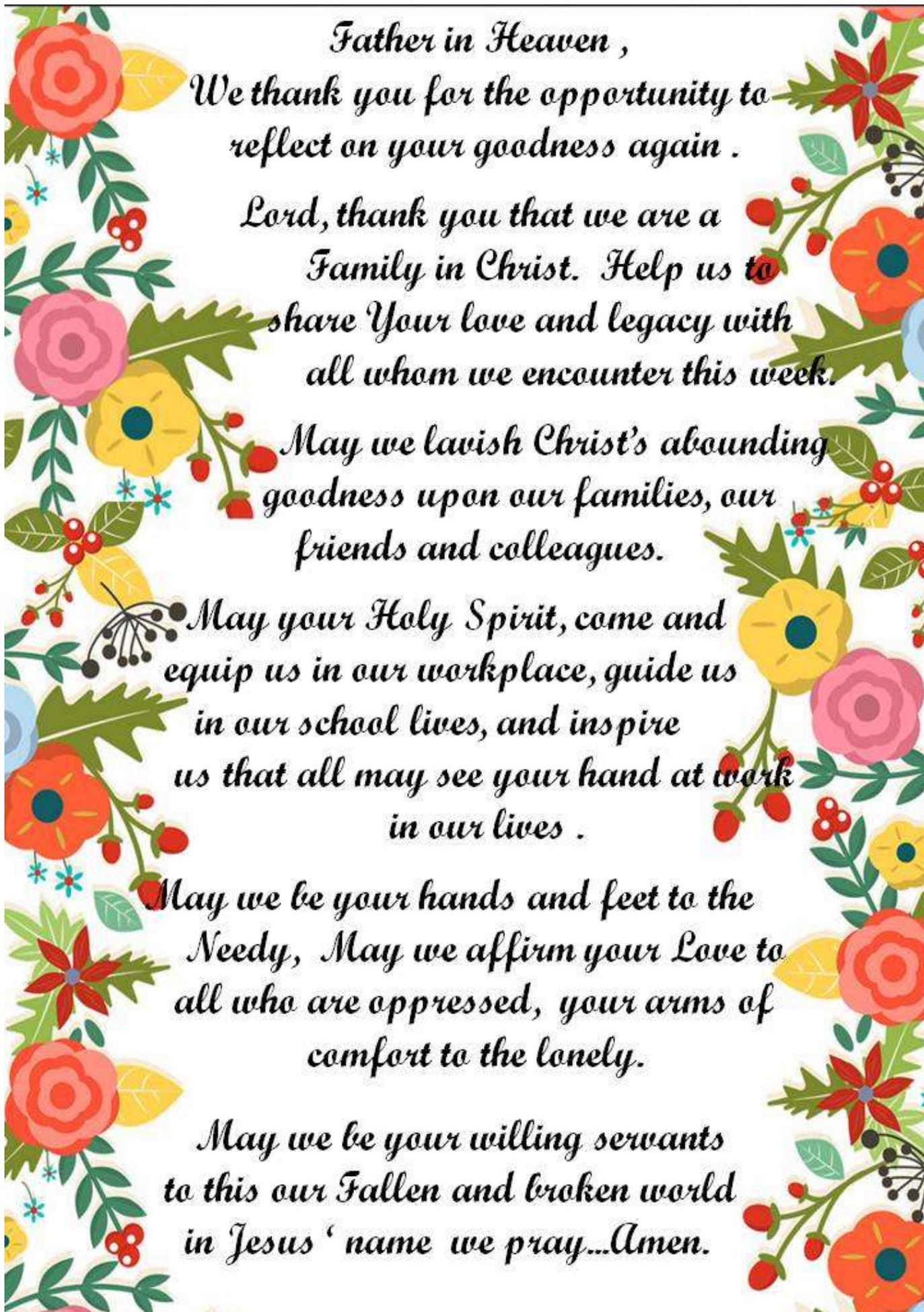
c) Our Legacy of Faith allows the Gospel to continue

The American Gospel Singer/songwriter Bruce Carroll wrote a song called "I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day. the legacy of a life lived in faith is wrapped up throughout that song. 2 Peter 1: 8 speaks of how when we "*...For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ...*". The qualities spoken of in the previous verses remind us how the legacy of a life lived in faith can be seen. The value of such a legacy of a life lived in faith is that the Gospel continues to reach others. When someone has lived their life following their Saviour, others in time will take notice and see the relevance of Christian Faith for daily living today as well as for securing our life for eternity which is the greatest goal. For our churches to flourish, people outside need to see that the real hope of the Gospel is real to those inside the Church. Our faith communities need to become more than just a club for us to go to at the weekends. They need to see that Christian Faith is something real and important and something that guarantees our hope for Eternity. What kind of Legacy of Faith do we intend to leave our children, our families, our friends, our neighbours, our colleagues at work or at the golf club, the bowling club or the fitba' supporters club. At the heart of a life lived in faith lies an evangelical desire to see what you have discovered to be true to become a heartfelt desire true for others as well.

I hope all in our families can see in us and say of us, that we have left a Legacy of Faith for them to take hold of and that they themselves may one day pass the Legacy of faith to others.

Have a great week

Calum



*Father in Heaven ,
We thank you for the opportunity to
reflect on your goodness again .*

*Lord, thank you that we are a
Family in Christ. Help us to
share Your love and legacy with
all whom we encounter this week.*

*May we lavish Christ's abounding
goodness upon our families, our
friends and colleagues.*

*May your Holy Spirit, come and
equip us in our workplace, guide us
in our school lives, and inspire
us that all may see your hand at work
in our lives .*

*May we be your hands and feet to the
Needy, May we affirm your Love to
all who are oppressed, your arms of
comfort to the lonely.*

*May we be your willing servants
to this our Fallen and broken world
in Jesus ' name we pray...Amen.*