

Sermon on Titus 2:11-15 prepared by Jonathan Shradar

Titus 2:11-15

Jesus is worth it.

I struggled to find the right way to ease into this text. What cute story could I tell to engage all of you? What contrast with the world could we clearly strake and build a case against? Or what hero could we elevate to inspire us? I wondered if this was a question of identity... or something more.

I keep coming back to cost.

Following Jesus is tremendously costly. It will actually take everything you've got.

I don't mean merely economically, though your finances will be reprioritized if you follow Jesus. But I mean holistically, in every category of life, vocation, relationships, dreams, leisure, you name it, following Jesus will cost you. And to be honest, at times it will be more than you are willing to give.

Where our moment declares the self-as-center of all things, that which must be cherished, prioritized, made to be god... Christianity says something different, it is good, but it will take everything you've got, and then some.

Not a new story. Humanity from our earliest moments chose self over Creator. History is the story of image-bearers of God, stumbling around trying to become god, by doing so storing up wrath against sin (missing the mark of God's way).

As a remedy to the tragedy, the great God and Savior, Jesus, came himself into humanity and our experience and in that appearing lived always hitting the mark, obediently before the Father, and gave his life to bridge the divide and to grant us identity and real life in him.

There has always been a remnant of people clinging to this truth and living in light of it. Given Scripture to anchor us in reality, and show us what life can look like.

Titus is that for us.

Last week we encountered gospel living - sobriety of mind, self control, and care for each other that are marks of Christian life. And we talked about why we live this way - to adorn the gospel. Today, we are meant to see how we live this way.

Holding before us the *grace that trains*, and the *hope that sustains*, when we realize the cost we are also meant to realize that **Jesus is worth it**.

Grace That Trains

Let's think about how we approach grace.

“Unmerited favor” gives us what we could never deserve. Promise of redemption, belonging, identity as a people... saturates Scripture and becomes a covenant with those who believe in Jesus by his blood shed on the cross.

“Grace is the basis for the Christian faith. We believe we are saved by faith through grace. God's grace is usually defined as undeserved favor. Grace cannot be earned; it is something that is freely given. We count on God's grace and the bridge he built in our relationship with him.”

In the church we rightly see grace as the instrument of forgiveness, of inheritance. Saves us, secures us, even when we go on sinning it covers us.

True, but grace does more.

Here Paul makes clear that it brings salvation. Jesus in his first appearing brought salvation. Rescue from death, from the slavery to sin, redemption. We rejoice in this rescue.

But it also changes us.

Titus 2:12 “training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age,” (ESV)

We are rescued and given a life to live. Taught to say no to wickedness and passions the world says we should run after.

And this is costly. See it in the invitation from Jesus himself.

Mark 8:34–38 “And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. [35] For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. [36] For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? [37] For what can a man give in return for his soul? [38] For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.” (ESV)

“Deny yourself” is not bumper sticker material! But it is where true life is found. The grace of Christ will change us and as it does we let go of the things the world says we need to hold onto.

Training - progressing. Increasingly rejecting ungodliness and worldly passions.

God’s grace in the gospel (v. 11) does not merely save from sin. It “teaches” (like a parent instructs a child, with nurture, encouragement, information, and, when needed, discipline) the inner person and transforms the outward life.

It is this training we aren’t familiar with.

I love the thick application of grace. No one is too far gone, no sin too great that the grace of Jesus can’t handle it. I am a grace junky! My own experience is the need for regular application of it.

But there can be a denial of grace if we see it as permitting, or giving a pass to the pursuit of desires Jesus has deemed unhealthy, ungodly.

Cheapening of grace.

Bonhoeffer, *The Cost of Discipleship* “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance, baptism without church discipline, Communion without confession, absolution without personal confession. Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate.”

“Costly grace is the treasure hidden in the field; for the sake of it a man will go and sell all that he has. It is the pearl of great price to buy which the merchant

will sell all his goods. It is the kingly rule of Christ, for whose sake a man will pluck out the eye which causes him to stumble; it is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.

“Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock.

“Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: "ye were bought at a price," and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.”

This covenant of grace requires sacrifice, surrender to the way of Christ. Renouncing ungodliness and worldly passions and saying yes to living self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in our present age.

Any notion of grace that fails to turn sinners away from evil is not the grace of God as taught by Paul.

“We are also to say no to “worldly passions.” This means we are to deny ourselves not only external conduct that betrays God but also similar internal impulses, what the King James Version simply describes as “lusts” and other versions variously translate as worldly “appetites,” “desires,” or “cravings.” There is no question that sexual compulsions are included in the term, but there is also concern about anger, hatred, ambition, and other urges that result in uncontrolled speech or behavior.” BC

Grace ensures freedom not only from sin’s punishment but also from its power.

The “grace of God” is the removal not only of judgment but also of the power of sin. Grace, therefore, enables sinners to live righteously in the present age. Jesus died to secure not only forgiveness for his people but also their faithfulness.

Christ takes every idol of culture (sex, power, money, and all the rest) and requires it to bow before him. If those idols are beginning to control our thoughts, actions, and anticipations, then we are bowing before them.

It is by this grace we learn our way beyond idolatry, sin, and unhealthy desire. In it you taste something sweeter.

Clinging to the trustworthy word of redemption becomes and stokes in us an affection for Jesus that is expulsive in nature - greater than lesser desires - motivates us to the life described in Titus.

Godly not for gain but from the gift of salvation.

We live between the appearing of grace, the “it is finished” of the cross and the “it is done” of Revelation 21. Jesus is purifying a people of his own possession that are zealous for good works.

Godliness is not a consequence of human resolution or willpower. It is a relationship with God that results in a life honoring to God.

“God’s grace disciplines believers to live just and godly lives in the present by beckoning them to look back at Christ’s first coming and forward to his second coming. When Paul speaks of the saving grace of God that has appeared (2:11), he is referring to Christ’s first manifestation that climaxed in his death and resurrection. By virtue of our union with Christ, his death was our death, his resurrection our resurrection; as such, we have died to sin and have been liberated from its rule (2:14a). As we look back at what Christ has accomplished, the fitting response is to “renounce ungodliness and worldly passions,” things that characterized our former existence in the realm of sin and death (2:12a).”
Paul Jeon

This grace makes it worth it. To be rejected by the world, to be thought less of for pursuing these things.

Even though Christians are not yet what they will be in the age to come, God’s grace nevertheless has transforming effects on the sinner’s character in advance

of that day. Grace does not produce perfection in this life, but it does decisively change the direction of the sinner's life.

“Godliness in all the areas of life that the apostle specifies for instruction about grace will prove terribly costly. What can ignite sufficient zeal for such priorities and purposes? The answer is, overwhelming love for him who gave himself for us.” BC

A hope that sustains.

Hope that Sustains

Titus 2:13–14 “waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, [14] who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (ESV)

Actively waiting, eager for his return. To be with Jesus, to see him face to face. For the end of death and sin, for restoration of all things in him. This is the hope that sustains us when it gets hard. This is glory that gets us through.

That all of this, perseverance and sacrifice is worth it... to belong to Jesus and witness this appearing.

“The Christian life is not just a function of becoming what we already are in Christ Jesus; it is also motivated by the unlying God's promise of life eternal and material bliss in the new heavens and the new earth. Thus, we live devoid of guilt and overwhelmed with excitement, because “the best is yet to come.”

It is actually the only way to live - anchored in hope - from an encounter with Jesus.

The knowledge that our God is coming creates expectancy in believers that stimulates faithfulness in daily endeavor and grants perseverance in times of trial. Because Christ is coming, we desire to live in fidelity to him. And knowing that he will deliver us from trial and will vanquish all his and our enemies, we can live in faithfulness to him.

What Titus and the church proclaim. The basis for encouragement and rebuke. A hope that shapes our lives so no one will disregard us.

Hope that invites us to live for something better than fleeting desires, than false identities, than the whims of idols.

This hope is our dynamite, our fuel, our power to live.

Hope is not wishful thinking; it is confident expectation that God will do as he has promised. Paul often uses the term to refer to the return of Christ and the renewal of all things that will accompany that return—including the believer’s own resurrection from the dead (e.g., Rom. 5:2; Gal. 5:5; Col. 1:5, 27; 1 Thess. 4:13).

Romans 5:1–5 “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. [2] Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. [3] Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, [4] and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, [5] and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” (ESV)

Hope for the deliverance we will know at Christ’s return and the renewed presence of the Deliverer who will bring those blessings - he who is “the hope of glory.”

We give our life for this.

And it is worth it because Jesus made clear you were worth it when he gave himself to redeem you.

Jesus is worth it.

Live this life - Pursue godliness, self-control, uprightness, in community. Encourage and rebuke, point each other to Jesus and live his way.

Stay tethered to Hope - Sink the anchor of your life deeply into the grace of Christ. That which saves you and trains you. Both his first appearing and his soon coming appearing. That you are his and he has given you a life to live. Hear it, read it, repeat it. Ask the spirit to douse you with this hope. That Jesus would be your treasure. That you would truly live.

This week I reflected on a conversation with a friend who had sacrificed career, community, and security to proclaim the grace of Christ. In a particularly hard time she ask herself and others if Jesus was worth it. And eventually she could only answer yes.

There is no other savior, no better way, no better life. It is costly, this life, but it is good, because Jesus is worth it.

Romans 8:18–25 “For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [19] For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. [20] For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope [21] that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. [22] For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. [23] And not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. [24] For in this hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? [25] But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience. (ESV)

May our lives declare this hope.