

Ephesians 2:4-10 NRSV

⁴ But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us ⁵ even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ-- by grace you have been saved-- ⁶ and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, ⁷ so that in the ages to come he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. ⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God-- ⁹ not the result of works, so that no one may boast. ¹⁰ For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life.

John 3:16-17 NRSV

¹⁶ "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life. ¹⁷ "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him.

Matthew 5:38 - 6:1 - NRSV

³⁸ "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' ³⁹ But I say to you, Do not resist an evildoer. But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also; ⁴⁰ and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well; ⁴¹ and if anyone forces you to go one mile, go also the second mile. ⁴² Give to everyone who begs from you, and do not refuse anyone who wants to borrow from you. ⁴³ "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' ⁴⁴ But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, ⁴⁵ so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.

⁴⁶ For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? ⁴⁷ And if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? ⁴⁸ Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

The Values of St. Andrew UMC

25 years of ministry means 25 years of worship, of weddings and funerals, youth groups and ski trips, laughter and tears, potlucks and bible studies. These 25 years have been packed with activity after activity, and yet the importance of these years are more than just a list of activities. They are about a family – a community of faith – that has lived out ministry and changed lives for a quarter of a century. Such milestones necessitate a retrospective look on the past on the values that we have lived out and a look into the future at the values that we will live into for the next 25 years.

For the last year, St. Andrew staff and lay leaders have entered into a conversation clarifying the vision, mission, and values of St. Andrew. The last sermon series dealt with the new mission of the church – “Calling the Christian^{ish} to become Passionate Servants of Christ.” This sermon series, entitled “All-In” looks at the values of our church:

What makes values Christian?

Recently in the political arena, there has been much discussion over the concept of values, religion, and morals of those running for President of the United States. While St. Andrew is not entering into the political fray, the world in which we are surrounded talks about Christian values, or “Judeo-Christian” values, begging the question – What makes values Christian?

In short, Christian values are values that Christ held and that come from being in tune with the Holy Spirit. When Jesus met a scorned woman alone at a well (John 4), Jesus showed her love when the rest of the world only showed her condemnation. When Christians read scripture, we learn not only facts about Jesus’ life but also about how Jesus lived. We are able to apply that to our own lives.

In fact, much of the New Testament is comprised of letters from Paul and others that follow Jesus, living out Jesus’ values in different circumstances. Paul, for instance, writes in the book of Philemon about how a Christian should treat a runaway slave. Based on Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection, Paul urges this Christian to take back his runaway slave “no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother.”

Christian values are these – the ones that imitate Christ

Abundant Grace Unexpected Extra Radical Hospitality Can-Do Confidence

St. Andrew lives some out some of these values extraordinarily well. We will have to work on all of these and hold one another accountable to these values if they are to define us as we move forward into the next phase in the life of St. Andrew. Our future depends on our ability to articulate these values and live into them.

Abundant Grace

If there is any word that defines Christian theology, it is the word “Grace.” Put simply, grace is unearned love or favor. Grace is what happened when we were little and we messed up and instead of yelling at us, they gave us a huge hug. Grace happens every day in little and small ways from the way we treat people in the checkout line of the grocery store to the way that we forgive those who have deeply wronged us. As Christians, we understand that we show grace because God first showed grace to us.

The Christian story tells us that “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” We have not loved God or our neighbor as ourselves, and yet God showed us love when he could have shown us hatred. Even when we have violated God’s commandments, God offers us salvation – or as it says in the verse from Ephesians above: “It is by grace that you have been saved.”

God has shown us love and so in response to that love, we are called to love others – to demonstrate that grace to the world. Unfortunately, this value of Grace is not always lived out by Christians. In one of the young adult connection groups this fall, we started discussing the statistics of people in our age group who view the church as judgmental. Everyone in the room had a story that they could tell about Christians who chose to be judgmental rather than show grace to others.

I suspect that we all know stories when we have chosen to be judgmental rather than show grace to others. In my life, the times where I chose the comfort of judgment rather than the value of abundant grace still haunt me. I remember times in my own life where I knew that someone needed to hear a kind word and needed to be shown love and I chose to ignore them.

By articulating a value of Abundant Grace, St. Andrew is declaring that we choose to follow a God who shows us love even when we don’t deserve it.

When we follow this God, we are called to show love to others even when they don't deserve it. We are called to show "grace upon grace" – Abundant Grace – to all those that we meet.

Unexpected Extra

I was once at a Pizza Hut with a group of United Methodists where there was only one waiter and he was not up to the task. He had messed up order after order. He had taken much longer to bring us our food than was acceptable. And he was having such a bad day and was so frustrated with his obvious failures that he knew that he would be lucky to receive even a 5% tip. Without aiming for recognition, one of the preachers there gave the young man at least a 100% tip. He said a kind word to the struggling kid and went on his way.

In one instant that person's day went from horrible to great. My preacher friend did not need to do what he did. He would have been justified in giving only a few dollar tip and yet he knew that he was called to do something more – something so unexpected that it might turn around someone else's day.

This pastor understands the part of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount where he tells those who listen that if someone asks you to go one mile that you are to go two; those who follow Jesus are called to go the Unexpected Extra.

It is important to note that for Jesus, the Unexpected Extra is more of a value than a strategy. A strategy is a calculated action to bring about a desired result. A value is an action that flows out of our character. It is easy to see how the unexpected extra could be a strategy; consider a man bringing flowers to his wife. Is he doing that as a strategy (because he did not take out the trash?) or as a value (because he loves his wife and wants to demonstrate it)?

As members of St. Andrew, we are called to do the Unexpected Extra – to look for those times when doing that extra bit might transform someone's day. We do so not as a strategy, but as a value – something that simply flows out of our character. What would happen to St. Andrew if everyone lived out this value of unexpected extra? What would happen if we all went All-In? God went All-In for us – might we not go All-In, even to the point of doing the Unexpected Extra for someone else?

The All-In Prayer

John Wesley, the founder of Methodism, wrote this prayer and called it a "covenant prayer." We believe that each of us are called to be passionate servants – to be All-In for God. We begin that process by opening us up to the Holy Spirit through prayer. We are asking all of those at St. Andrew to pray this prayer every day during this series and see how God might use us when we are willing to be "All-In"

I am no longer my own, but thine.
Put me to what thou wilt, rank me with whom thou wilt.
Put me to doing, put me to suffering.
Let me be employed for thee or laid aside for thee,
exalted for thee or brought low for thee.
Let me be full, let me be empty.
Let me have all things, let me have nothing.
I freely and heartily yield all things to thy pleasure and disposal.
And now, O glorious and blessed God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
thou art mine, and I am thine.
So be it.
And the covenant which I have made on earth,
let it be ratified in heaven.
Amen.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

Here is the idea: We are all called to live out Christ's values in this world. St. Andrew lives out those values in a particular way, that we have defined as Abundant Grace, Unexpected Extra, Radical Hospitality, and Can-Do Confidence. These values have defined us and hopefully will continue to define us even more as we live into our next 25 years.

Abundant Grace: How have you been shown Grace? When did someone show you love when you didn't deserve it? To whom is God calling you to show love today? Is there someone in your own life who is desperate for someone to show them compassion? How might we all receive God's Abundant Grace and then offer that same gift to someone else?

Unexpected Extra: When has someone gone above and beyond what they were expected to do? How did that make you feel? When have you done that for someone else? How might we make this value so ingrained within our nature that it is something that flows out of our basic character and daily activities?

Daily Bible Readings

Before reading each passage, take a few minutes to get a sense of the context. Your study bible should help. Jot down a few questions that come to mind from your reading of the passage.

<p>Monday, Romans 3 Humanity's sinful nature and the need for Grace</p>	<p>Tuesday, John 3:16 – The Thesis of the New Testament</p>
<p>Wednesday, Philippians 2:1-11 God's All-In Commitment to Us</p>	<p>Thursday, John 4 Jesus showing Abundant Grace to Samaritan Woman</p>
<p>Friday, Acts 3:1-10 Peter and John offering the Unexpected Extra to a blind man</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Weekly Joys and Concerns</p>

Scott's Tuesday Lunchtime Class

We meet at 11:45 in room 127 on Tuesdays.

We will not meet this week as Scott is leading a trip to the Holy Land.

When we return, we invite you to join us whenever you can.

Bring a study Bible.